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“ WILL this avalanche of human madness ever   
stop? One knows it can't go on for ever, but   
there seems no end in sight. What will be left   
afterwards for the rising generation? Will the   
winners come off any better than the losers?   
Surely there can be nothing but debts everywhere,   
debts which no one can pay, entangling the world

and throttling it."

Reflections of the author whilst engaged on this MS in Poona, 1917

**THE**

**BAR SINISTER**

By

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CHAPTER 1

WESTON AND JONES

p7 To be a connoisseur of London clubs is an   
achievement not to be envied, but, unless you are   
such, you will probably not have heard of the   
N.R. Club, though it's famous among its own   
members, who call it by a different name. The   
term" N.R." was invented by its detractors, and   
the letters stand for Nouveau Riche: but the   
appellation has been circulated so widely that   
many talk glibly of the N.R. Club without an   
idea of the significance of the name. The   
building is neither huge like the R.A.C., nor   
impressive like the Carlton, nor is it famous like   
the" In and Out." Its members claim that it   
is select: its critics maintain that it is not. Both   
are partly correct. To be a member you have to   
be of considerable means, hence its claim to be   
exclusive. But the selection committee takes no   
account of the manner in which a man's fortune   
was amassed, nor yet of his nationality; where-   
fore its list of membership contains many names   
of men who have been rejected from the rolls of   
other clubs which it affects to despise. It was   
once described in the " House" as the " Head-   
quarters of the capitalist conspirators," and,

p 8 should England be subjected to an outbreak   
similar to that of Russia, I pity the man whose   
money is invested in the premises of the N.R.   
Club.

In the leather-covered chairs of the smoking-   
room sat two elderly men. Strangely enough,

considering the various nationalities frequenting

the building, they were English, but of widely   
different appearance. They were the two prin-   
cipals of a prosperous firm of wire merchants-   
Weston & Jones. If you studied the two men   
sagaciously you might be able to form a pretty   
accurate idea of the history of their partnership.   
Weston was a typical Anglo-Saxon: though his   
hair was now turning white and was very becom-

ing to a man of his years, you could tell that he   
had once been a blue-eyed, fair-haired youth,   
with clean, straight features. He now looked   
both refined and distinguished. The companion,   
Jones, was an extreme contrast. He was small   
and rotund. His brown hair had receded on   
either temple, leaving an isolated peninsula which .

ended in a love-lock over the middle of his fore-

head. His round face, thick nose, and coarse   
lips gave him the appearance of a pig: and his   
clothes would cause one to say at first' sight, '   
" That man is a bounder." But you could not   
leave it at that. You could not help taking a   
good look at the little man's full face. Somehow

he would interest you. It was his eyes. The

p9 vitality and activity which they displayed were   
remarkable. Like small, bright beads in his   
broad face, they flashed here and there; they   
sparkled and twinkled as he kept up a flow of   
animated conversation.

The senior partner, from his appearance, was   
obviously the son of a gentleman, educated   
probably for a professional career. Possibly he   
had started in a profession and had thrown it up   
to fight his way along in the commercial world.   
He had saved money, and launched out on his   
own. He had required technical and expert   
assistance and had come into contact with J ones,   
a ranker, who had risen by sheer ability, resistless   
push, and sustained energy. Jones had served   
under him, and made himself indispensable.   
Being the man he was, he had never allowed his   
indispensability to be overlooked, and had forced   
Weston to take him into partnership or look for   
someone to replace him. Now he was really   
the dominating partner, his influence being out of   
proportion to his share in the capital of the concern.

The junior partner was leaning over his chair   
and addressing Weston with a cigarette held   
between two very yellow fingers.

" Well, I think we can congratulate ourselves   
on a very satisfactory transaction. Of course   
there was a bit of a risk, but a good risk, because   
if -things went right, profits were bound to be

p10 large. I reckon it's the biggest thing we've

ever done."

Weston puffed his pipe and took a little time to

'answer.

"It's right enough now: but, by Jove, it   
rather shook my nerve. I suppose it's different   
for a chap like you, with everything to gain.   
But I've a lot to lose. With three 'sons at school   
and a daughter just. out, one looks at things   
differently. If anything went wrong with me   
they'd all have to suffer. Still, it's very   
satisfactory."

" Anyhow, you can safely book that moor all   
right for August. The year's results are bound   
to be pretty good now. Where's it to be this   
time? "

" Don't know yet. Lord Lupton wants me   
to take his place in Perthshire. A splendid shoot   
but he wants a big rent-£2,000. I thought   
something smaller 'd have to do."

" This has gone through just in time, then? "   
"Well, I might think about Lupton's place   
after this."

Jones gulped some whisky and soda and

cast a sly glance at Weston.

" Shooting's getting damned expensive, eh ? "   
" It's a splendid holiday for the boys, and a   
real health tonic for the family, so it's not

altogether selfish expenditure."

“ Well, it's very pleasant for the boys as long

p11 as you can go on giving it 'em. Not much of a

training for earning a living, though. Where

would they be if anything happened to you? "

" That's just what I'm afraid of; you can   
understand why I'm chary of the more risky   
business. To lose everything after working all   
these years, would let the whole family in the   
cart." Weston looked serious and puffed his   
pipe languidly. Jones changed the subject.

" We shall need an increase in the clerical   
establishment now. This show has increased   
our correspondence out of all recognition."

"I'm off to dress. We can discuss that   
at dinner." Weston rose and stretched himself   
before the fire. He was an elegant figure. His   
little colleague sent for another whisky and

soda and the latest edition of the *Evening Star.*

Dressing for dinner did not appeal to him,

The dining-room of the N.R. Club is not   
particularly noted for its cuisine ; but it *is* noted.   
At no club dining-room in London is English   
spoken with such a variety of accents. The   
partners of Weston & Jones were dining at one   
of its small tables. Over those tables, schemes   
were set afoot every day, affecting the positions   
and salaries of countless employees. Many an   
honest man has been thrown out of a job in   
consequence of decisions taken between mouthfuls   
of food at the N.R. Club; a few have been promo-

ted to positions from which they have ultimately

p12 soared till they have themselves become members.

Some members referred to their employees by

mere numbers, others by names. Many, by the

vagueness of their phraseology, proclaimed them-

selves as unworthy to be owners of capital. The

decisions of Messrs. Weston & Jones, however,

affected no such mass of labour. Being merchants

and not manufacturers their employees were mostly

clerical.

" We simply must have another clerk," Jones   
was saying as the waiter left in front of him a well

grilled steak and chipped potatoes.

" Old Simpson will go, if we don't; and we can't

afford to lose him."

Weston, finishing his last mouthful of sole   
Colbert, took a moment to reflect.

" I think," he said, " we ought to raise Simpson's salary, too."

"What, raise his salary? He hasn't asked   
for it."

"Well, he's been with us twenty years, and   
proved himself invaluable. He's only getting   
£250 a year. We can easily afford another £50."

The little man screwed up his face into an   
expression which made him feared by his opponents

in the business world, and leant across the table.

"Never give more than necessary, Weston.

Supply and demand, that's what regulates business.

Simpson hasn't threatened to go yet.

p13 It'll be time enough to consider raising his pay   
when he tackles us. No good thrusting money   
on the chap."

"I don't altogether agree with you, Jones.

It doesn't get the best work out of a fellow. I think it's

consistent with economics to pay the highest wage

one can afford; it stimulates the employee, makes him

keen to increase the wealth of the firm. The fellow's

done us well and we oughtn't to be mean with him."

Jones tapped the table with the point of his   
middle finger, a favourite attitude of his.

" Do you mean to tell me that we should be   
where we are to-day, you and I, Weston, if we'd   
handed out more money than necessary? It's a   
fallacy."

Jones was laying down the accepted creed of the

N.R. Club: There was an advanced party of   
extremists in the club, which used to meet once   
a week, and its farewell toast, at the close of each

meeting, used to be "Here's to the war with Labour."

Of this set Jones was a member.   
Started in 1909 when L.G. produced his famous

budget, it’s membership was swelled during the railway strike of 1911 by frightened capitalists.   
At .the .time when Weston and Jones brought off their big deal in copper wire during the summer of 1912, its members were assuming a most uncompromising attitude towards the Labour movement.

p14 Dinner being finished and the argument still   
unsettled, the two men left the dining-room and   
appeared in the hall with coats and hats. They   
both entered Weston's limousine and were   
carried away, still talking business, to the Royalty   
Theatre. They continued to talk business as   
they sat waiting for the play to commence. At   
the end of the second act, Jones woke up with a   
start and pretended he had not been asleep.   
Why he went to theatres no one ever knew. He   
invariably went to sleep. ", Milestones," the   
play then running at the Royalty, was the most   
interesting of contemporary dramatic pieces, but   
neither the quality of the piece nor the acting could   
ever keep Jones awake.

Jones was a regular habitue of the N.R. Club,   
but Weston seldom dined there. He had a house   
in the West End, and only frequented the club   
when his family were out of Town. Seeing   
Jones for the first time, people usually put him   
down as being a Labour Member. Imagine   
their surprise at being told that he had risen from

the ranks but was now the arch enemy of Labour.

Each was typical of a class of London business

men, but seldom can a man have severed himself   
from his previous associations as completely as   
Jones had done. All his relations and friends   
who had failed to rise were included among the   
Labour forces against whom he preached war.   
He despised them for not rising like himself, and

p15 he hated them because they took part in strikes   
which embarrassed his own designs. When   
any stranger managed to get into conversation   
with him, he usually held them spell-bound. He   
rushed from one point to another before his   
listeners could collect arguments to answer his   
last sally. Talking of L.G., whose name was   
then on every tongue, an acquaintance once   
remarked that the people had found a wonderful   
champion in L.G. and that he was bound to   
become Prime Minister. He was astounded at

the venom Jones poured forth against the Chancellor

of the Exchequer. "Why," he said, "the   
man must be a lunatic or a fraud : to think that   
he has risen from the ranks and must know the   
working man as well as I do and can still support   
Labour! British Labour is pampered. Why,   
any working man who's worth his salt, soon gets   
up the ladder. L.G. knows that. The men who   
are any good don't need him to look after them,   
and the others are better left where they are.   
Because a man rises from the bottom people   
think it's wonderful. I tell you, it's the easiest   
thing in the world; a working man's son starts   
at an advantage compared with the son of a   
gentleman. He's not hampered by precedent,   
or family tradition, or useless public school educ-ation.He's born to the world a free man, with everything to gain and nothing to lose, and if he means to push, nothing can stop him. You say p16 L.G. will be Prime Minister. You can trust us   
to prevent that.”

People never forgot their meeting with Jones ;   
he was the most extraordinary mixture of irreconcil-   
able qualities. He admired the pusher and the   
forger, especially if they were better men than   
himself. He would use anyone to assist him in   
his progress, and would drop them as useless   
when he had finished with them. Once he had   
beaten a rival, he despised him as beneath contempt;   
but, so long as the struggle lasted, he respected him.

The partnership of Jones with Weston was   
often a topic of conversation in the N.R. Club.   
Members wondered how Weston could possibly   
tolerate Jones as a partner.

Weston was regarded as a very good chap,   
and quite a clever business man; in fact, it was   
said that he was one of the shrewdest men imaginable

in his younger days.

But as the senior partner: how could he   
manage to keep Jones in his place?

The answer, of course, was that he didn't.

Weston had arrived at the time of life when he   
didn't want to work too hard himself. Jones   
had a large enough stake in the business to look   
after it for his own interests, so Weston gave him   
practically a free hand. Weston drew the   
dividends produced by Jones' enterprise. They'd   
had five bumper years. So the partnership   
suited both of them.

P17 It was known that Weston lived at a very

extravagant rate and if anything happened to the   
business he'd be likely to come a cropper.

When Jones broke off the conversation by   
falling asleep in the stalls of the Royalty, he and   
Weston had decided to postpone the discussion   
about increasing their clerical staff till the next   
morning. Weston was adamant about raising   
Simpson's salary, but J ones remained unconvinced.

At ten-thirty next day they began the argument   
over again in the office. Jones was in his   
element, fighting for one of his strongest principles,

but never had he found Weston so firm,   
and after some strong words on both sides the   
subject was adjourned.

Half an hour later Simpson appeared in   
Weston's office. Simpson was a confidential   
clerk who knew his place; his manner in the   
presence of the senior partner was always one of   
deference without servility. Each felt a certain   
comfortable friendliness towards the other. It   
was obvious to Weston from the way Simpson   
approached him that morning that he was un-   
comfortable. Weston sat quite still and waited   
for Simpson to speak, a habit of his that often   
disconcerted his interviewers. If you opened   
your interview with a statement, Weston would   
never help you out with a remark: he would go   
on sitting quiet at the end of your statement and   
wait for you to make another. The only way to

p18 begin an interview with such people is by asking   
a direct question. Simpson knew this and had   
carefully prepared himself.

" I wanted to bring to your notice, sir, that   
my twenty years service with the firm are up   
to-day, and I want to know whether you can see   
your way to increase my salary? "

Weston paused: he would like to have sat   
silent, but the question was there and had to be   
answered.

"I'm afraid this is a matter which needs   
consideration, and I shall have to consult Mr.   
Jones. What is your idea of a rise, Simpson ? "   
" Another £100 a year, sir."

"Your present salary is £250; do you mean to   
ask us to raise you all at once to £350 ?"

" Yes, sir, I don't think it's a large salary for   
my position here."

" I think. it is ridiculous to expect us to agree

to this."

" Well, I'm sorry, sir, but I've thought it over,   
and if you can't see your way to it I shall have to   
sever my connection with the firm."

"I never heard such nonsense, Simpson. I   
advise you to go away and think it over. I can't   
possibly mention such a proposal to Mr. Jones.   
A small rise, perhaps we might manage, but   
£ 100 a year, absurd ! "

"Perhaps I ought to tell you, sir, that I have

an offer of £400 a year with prospects of advance-

p 19 ment but I have to decide at once whether to   
accept it."

"Accept it, I should. No good staying here   
if you can do better. I'll talk to Mr. Jones   
first, though."

Weston went into Jones' office doing his best   
to conceal an inward feeling of satisfaction. He   
sat down in an empty chair, facing Jones across   
the writing desk.

"Simpson's just been in and asked for a rise   
of salery to celebrate his twenty years service."

Jones lent back in his seat and put his hands   
in his pockets.

" Didn’t think he'd got it in 'im to ask us," he

replied " and I've no doubt you dealt with him   
as the situation demanded."

"No I can't say I did. I think it would be

rather serious if we lost Simpson, and he

told me that unless we could see our way to   
raise him £100 per annum, he'd have to leave us."   
 Jones screwed up his eyes and pursed his lips.   
" Probably bluffing," he answered, " let's call   
the bluff and leave him to stew for a day or two."

" No use I’m afraid. He's actually got the   
offer of another place at £400 a year, and he's got   
to decide at once whether he's taking it."

Jones reflected for some time without speaking.

He did hate being bested by his employees in this manner . As a rule, if a clerk came and demanded   
a rise, one could afford to be fierce and tell him

p20 to go elsewhere if he wasn't satisfied. To have a

pistol held to one's head and have to glve way

under protest was bad for the discipline of the

whole place. Rather than this, it would probably   
be better to lose even Simpson. And yet he'd   
be a difficult man to replace. None of their   
own clerks could replace him, and yet if they got   
a good man from outside, they'd have to pay him   
at least as much as Simpson was asking for,   
possibly more. And another point, Simpson was   
honest. One did at least know that. One was   
regularly hearing of firms being swindled out of   
large sums by their head clerks or cashiers.   
There were always opportunities for men in such   
positions. Yes, Simpson was worth a lot to   
them; it would be bad business to let him go.   
All this ran through the little man's brain with   
great rapidity. True to form, he acted promptly   
when he had gauged the position.

" We'll have to do the best we can with him.

Try him for less than he's asking, but keep   
him."

" Well," said Weston, rising and moving to

the door, " I'll see what I can do." .

Simpson got his £350: but Jones, to this   
day, believes that he was put up to it by Weston.   
His senior had got the best of him this time, and   
Jones inwardly admired him for it. A rise of £100   
was a bit of a staggerer, more even than   
Weston had ever contemplated. But both were

p21 well aware that £350 was no large salary for one   
in Simpson's position.

“We are going to give you an additional clerk," began

Weston, after announcing to Simpson the   
firm's consent to the rise.

" We'll pay £2 a week: you can get a sharp   
lad for that, I suppose."

" I think so, sir, and I know just the boy, if I

may suggest him."

" Well, who is he ? "

" It's one of the office boys, sir, Briscoe."

" What, that impertinent youth! What's   
he know about clerical work? "

" He can write English, French and German,   
and he knows as much about our business as I do,   
sir"

" Well, knowledge isn't everything."

"He's keen, sir, a real pusher, educating   
himself all the time. He reads all the dinner

hour and any other time when he isn't on the   
run. We shall have to find another in his place   
whether we promote him or not. He won't   
stay any longer in his present job."

" But he's so impertinent, Simpson, always   
answers back when I have to find fault with him."   
 "He'd answer anyone, sir, but he'll get on for   
all that."

"All right, send him along to me to-morrow.

I’ll ask him a few questions. What's his pay

now? "

p22 " Fifteen shilling a week."

"A big rise from fifteen shillings to two

pounds a week, at seventeen." .

" Not much for a smart lad these days."   
Weston rather sceptically mentioned the idea   
to Jones. The latter was captivated by the   
proposal. "What," he said, "seventeen years   
old, impertinent, a pusher, writes three languages:   
he's the goods, make a first-rate man on the   
Anti-Labour League one day." That was Jones   
all over: he'd sum up a chap in a second, wild   
with enthusiasm or bitter with contempt. He   
never could take a middle course. The idea of   
a pusher always sent him into an enthusiastic   
frame of mind, except when the pusher took   
compassion on those he had left behind in his   
path of progress. The idea of promoting Briscoe   
thoroughly appealed to the little man. A small   
thing in the world of commerce, perhaps, but   
all his principles were involved. It enabled him   
to indulge his theory that the thruster is the   
man to choose. "Push and push and push," he   
would say, "and you can get anywhere."

p23

CHAPTER **II**

JIMMY BRISCOE

JAMES BRISCOE first appeared in a small mining   
village in the Midlands as a child of four. At   
least, his biography could be traced back no   
farther. Whose child he was IS not known.   
Whether he was the son of a gentleman, or the

son of a working man is a question which his   
friends often debated but never solved, and it was   
their firm belief that James Briscoe himself would   
not tell them, if he could. He was brought up   
in a typical miner's cottage with a miner's children.

Jimmy's story really begins from the time he   
went to school. From that moment his fame   
spread steadily. At the age of five years he was   
playing tricks on the master and fighting his

contemporaries. At this period his tricks lacked   
originality, and were merely cribs of what less   
intelligent boys of more advanced years have   
done before and since. His jokes at first varied   
from frogs in the master's desk to tablets in the   
ink, but even these pranks were an accomplish-   
ment, far ahead of anything usually done by a   
member of the infants' class. But his great joy   
was fighting: he was always the aggressor and   
often got badly beaten for his pains by some   
dignified youngster of seven or so. Next day

p24 he would be at it again just the same. Every   
night he had a dust up with the other children at   
the cottage. When he wasn't fighting or playing   
tricks he was learning to read to himself. At six   
years old he had the most extraordinary flow   
of English and could swear like a trooper without   
repeating himself. Two or three miners would   
gather at the cottage in the evenings, and all were   
astonished at the oaths which little Jimmy would   
utter in their presence. Other children went   
home to their mothers from school and repeated   
the words which they had learnt from Jimmy   
Briscoe. One day the schoolmaster heard him   
using abusive language to another boy while   
the lesson was going on, and thrashed him for it.   
Jimmy never forgot it and declared a vendetta   
on the master from that day forward. At seven   
years old he was quarrelsome, rude and unforgiv-   
ing. The parson called him" a most unpleasant   
little boy." At eight years old these qualities   
were intensified. He was, however, the leader   
of the boys of his own age and older, and they all   
looked up to him: he helped them to steal eggs or

apples and was ready to take the blamev; he   
taught them how to make catapults. He was   
also by far the cleverest boy in the school. Al-   
ready he knew more than any boy two years older,   
and used generally to be found in the evening   
talking to the men who came and gossiped over   
the cottage gates.

p25 The most noticeable characteristic of Briscoe   
at this age was his pugnacious aggressiveness : he   
was always starting a row with someone. Either   
he would cross some of his elders in arguments   
over the cottage gate, and become abusive and   
get cuffed for his pains, or he would be leading a   
party of his eight-year-old followers in a raid   
upon some older youths who were playing cricket   
on a mud patch. He would get the worst of it,   
but he did not mind that, so long as he was   
fighting. There were three authorities whom he   
ran up against in their official capacity at different   
times; these were the lords spiritual and temporal   
of his little world, in other words, the parson, the   
policeman, and the schoolmaster. Each of them   
had some regulations which they wished to impose   
upon him, and against which he kicked. The   
parson and the policeman handed him over for   
justice to Mr. or Mrs. Tilley, the miner folk with   
whom he lived. Tilley administered the neces-   
sary chastisement with a strap and Mrs. Tilley   
beat him with the remains of an old broom handle,   
but they were always friends. Tilley was proud   
of the boy's success in school and took delight   
in relating the tales of his escapades over the   
" pub" bar; the lad gained him a sort of   
prestige among the local gossips.

Several tales are told in the district about the   
military successes gained by Briscoe against his   
various antagonists. His first triumph was over

p26 the local policeman. He and the bobby had   
crossed swords several times, and the result had   
usually been to the latter's advantage. No one   
admired Briscoe's pertinacity more than the   
bobby, and he had always dealt with the miscreant   
lightly, but Tilley's strap had frequently been   
applied in answer to his polite request. Briscoe   
was always on the look out for an opportunity,   
though he believed in keeping- outside the range   
of that strap, if possible. The opportunity came   
when Tilley sold the constable a very savage bull   
terrier; it was such a terror among the neighbours   
that the keeper of the law thought it would be   
useful to keep watch over his premises, while he   
was on night duty elsewhere. He had the dog   
tethered on a long chain which gave him a fair   
range of activity in the confined area of the   
garden. One of the few people with whom the   
dog was on friendly terms was Master James   
Briscoe, and the sight of the animal tethered in   
his enemy's garden inspired his fertile brain with   
a mischievous desire. By casual conversation   
with Tilley he discovered which nights in the   
week the policeman was on duty, and well away   
from his house. On one of these nights Briscoe   
got out of the cottage after the others were all   
asleep, and, finding the road clear, made his way   
to the policeman's house. As he peered over the   
gate the dog growled, but on hearing the boy's   
voice he became quiet. Jimmy had brought a

p27 long piece of cord in his pocket, and, having   
unhooked the chain, he fastened one end to the   
dog's collar and the other through the last link.   
By this means he so increased the animal's area   
of operations that it could reach the path past the   
policeman's gate. The boy hoped his enemy   
might be bitten on returning home. The result   
was very different from what he intended. The   
village grocer, returning from a night out, was   
just passing the gate, when an infuriated animal   
dashed through the hedge, and seriously mauled   
his leg besides ruining his best trousers. The   
policeman was informed that he must make good   
the damages or legal proceedings would be taken,   
and he thought the former course was more in   
keeping with his position. The constable had   
to settle in hard cash, but public opinion grew so   
strong as the result of the stories spread about   
by the grocer's wife, who was on the scene when   
the tragedy occurred, that James Briscoe's enemy   
found it better to get rid of the dog.

The strike which Jimmy organized amongst the   
school boys is local history: so complete was his   
authority that not a single boy turned up to   
school one morning. The master arrived and   
sat in an empty room for some time, then, he   
departed to investigate the matter at some of the   
cottages close by; meanwhile all the boys, who   
had been hiding in an outhouse, sneaked into the   
school room and when the schoolmaster returned

p 28 with certain of the irate mothers, who assured him   
that they had despatched their children to school   
at the proper time, he found them all assembled   
and Briscoe delivering a lecture from his own   
desk. What the mothers, who believed in the   
innocence of their young, said to the school-   
master is not recorded, but women don't mince   
matters in mining villages.

By the time Jimmy was ten years old, he was a   
confirmed atheist. All the religious instruction   
which the school teachers and the parson tried   
to cram into his skull was as pearls cast before   
swine. He studied the stories of the Old Testa-   
ment and knew many of them by heart, but he   
looked upon them as interesting old tales, and   
you might as well have asked St. Paul to believe   
in the mythology of Homer as have tried to force   
upon this boy a belief in the first chapter of   
Genesis. Nothing would induce him to go to   
church after he once felt sufficiently independent   
to do as he pleased on Sunday. He went to a   
small newspaper shop, and by offering to take the   
Sunday papers round to all the customers in the   
district for less money than they had to pay to the   
drunken old tramp who was doing this for them   
at the time, he got the job. It meant a walk of   
not less than ten miles, and the papers which he   
distributed ran into several scores. He could   
not manage the weight of all these himself, but   
he found another lad whom he dissuaded from

p29 attendance at church; between them they

managed the job and shared the proceeds.   
Jimmy used to take part of his pay in kind, he   
received one copy each of the *Downshire Weekly   
Sentinel* and the *Citizen;* sometimes he used to   
substitute the latter for a copy of the *Observer.*he received a few pence besides, which varied in   
ratio to the number of papers he distributed.   
before he had been doing this many months, the   
shop increased their customers, and he had to   
take papers farther afield. He undertook to   
deliver all papers by two p.m., and covered not   
less than twelve miles. His reward for this was   
an evening in Tilley's cottage studying the papers   
he had brought home, learning all about the   
celebrated people of the day and revelling in the   
political fights described in the Radical *Citizen*or the Tory *Observer.* He fought the battles over   
in his own head, and at intervals broke out into   
wild enthusiasm or hatred before Tilley and his   
wife. Every Sunday he became more and more   
of a Radical and only read the other paper for the   
purpose of disposing of its Tory views.

One Sunday, as he was taking the paper to the   
parson's house, he met that gentleman coming out.   
" Good morning, Briscoe, you're the very boy   
I want to see," began the Vicar.

"No time to waste here now, sir. P'raps  
to-morrow'll do. I've got ter get these papers  
round by two o'clock," returned the boy.

p30 " That's the very thing I want to see you about.

I think you ought to come to church; if you.   
come a few times you might change your mind   
and get to like it."

" Can't spare the time for church, sir; Sun-   
day's the only day for making a bit of money and   
reading something good, when a lad's at school."   
" I can't understand you, Briscoe, I shall have   
to speak to Mr. Tilley about you."

When Jimmy returned from his day's work   
that Sunday wet through and covered with mud,   
Tilley was sitting over a bit of fire.

" Look 'ere, young 'un," began Tilley. "I'm   
taking you along to church next Sunday; I've   
bin 'aving a word with the parson about it, and   
'e ses a lad like you ought to come and 'ear   
somethin' O’ God, so I'm just takin' yer there,   
that's all."

" I've got a job on Sundays and no time fer   
church," replied the boy.

" Well," said Tilley, "you've just got ter   
give over this paper business: and you're comin'   
along wi’me to church next Sunday."

Jimmy knew well enough when it was advisable   
to resist and when not: he just said nothing and   
laid his plans accordingly. He got hold of one   
of his friends to take the papers for him, and   
agreed to reward him in money, while he himself   
received the two papers as usual. On Sunday   
morning Briscoe went to church along with

p31 Tilley, who was a regular churchman and occu-   
pied a pew in a prominent position.

All went well, until the parson began to say   
the Lord's prayer and the congregation followed,   
when Briscoe in a loud voice began to recite the   
prayer in French. Everyone stopped and looked   
round, but Jimmy kept it up and droned it out   
to the end. Old ladies put up spectacles and   
looked at the small boy, then at Tilley: and that   
worthy man felt so uncomfortable that he swore   
to himself that he would never bring Jimmy to   
church again. The following Sunday found him   
carrying the newspapers as usual.

Before he was twelve Jimmy was easily top of   
the village school, and the schoolmaster suggested   
to Tilley that he ought to be sent somewhere   
else, but when the latter mentioned the idea to   
the boy, all the answer he got was, " You let me   
alone; I can educate myself all right now; don't   
want to learn any of the rubbish they teach in   
schools."

So far James Briscoe had only been famous in   
his own village for the wild tricks he played, and   
for his quarrelsome and argumentative nature.   
He soon had a chance to win for himself real   
fame throughout his own county. In 1909 the   
Lords had thrown out L.G.'s famous Budget,   
and the political deadlock which ensued was to   
be decided by the general election of 1910.   
Jimmy was fifteen at the time. He had followed

p32 the progress of the political struggle in his,   
Sunday papers. He had not missed a point.   
He almost knew by heart L.G.'s speech in defence   
of his Budget. He longed to take part in the   
struggle on the side of Radicalism. He could   
think and speak of nothing else. He remembered   
but vaguely the 1906 election. All he recollected   
was a gentleman on a platform being shouted   
down, and a street riot between the rival parties.   
Now he was big enough to take part in the real fight.

Many still remember that cardinal folly of   
1910, when the Unionist party appealed to the   
country against L.G.'s Budget, and fought the   
election on the question of Tariff Reform: one   
night the small mining village was condemned to   
listen to the Unionist candidate, supported on the   
platform by all the eminent gentry of the neigh-   
bourhood. Somewhere in a dark corner at the   
back of the room sat a youth with a slip of paper   
in his hand. On this paper he had noted five   
questions for the embarrassment of the candidate.   
Most of them have been forgotten, but one who   
was there managed to remember something of   
what Jimmy Briscoe said: "Are you going to   
tax food? " he shouted out at the candidate.

" No, I've told you that," was the reply.

" You've just said that the country must be

made self-supporting." '

" Yes."

" How do you propose to make it self-support-

p33 ing, unless it grows its own food?" Jimmy   
stood up waiting for his blow to strike home   
while the room cheered, and laughed, and when   
they looked round and saw that it was" that lad

Jimmy," they cheered still longer. That night

Jimmy made his name as a heckler. Next night   
found him on the top of a wall addressing a   
gathering of enthusiastic supporters. Hurling   
catch phrases from the *Citizen,* spitting forth   
venom against the other side, he soon filled the   
road up with men returning from the pits.

Jimmy didn't have it all his own way. One   
night a party from the other side kidnapped him,   
and put him in a pond to cool his ardour; but he   
was up again next day, keener than ever, and   
news of the hostile assault upon him did the   
Unionist cause more harm than good. The   
Liberals had decided not to contest the seat so

, ,

the struggle lay between the Labour and Unionist   
candidates. So famous did Briscoe become in a   
few days that he was sent for by the Labour   
candidate and asked to fire off his venomous   
phrases in other parts of the constituency. It   
was during this campaign that Jimmy, for the   
first time in his life, had a ride in a motor car.   
Nothing did more to, increase his socialistic   
leanings than that ride. He was mad to think   
that some people travelled like that every day,   
comfortable, warm and dry, while others trudged   
along roads through rain and mud, and that there

p34 was only one difference between them, the posses-   
sion or non-possession of money.

The election ended in a decisive victory for the   
Labour party and in making the name of James   
Briscoe famous throughout the constitutency.   
The Labour committee offered him a clerical   
post in their offices. It was an easy chance of   
bettering himself, and would have offered him   
fair facilities for self-education, since his pay   
would have enabled him to buy books and papers.   
It was a wonder that he did not accept it, but the   
fact remains that Jimmy refused the offer, and a   
few days later he disappeared.

Mr. and Mrs. Tilley found a letter on the   
table one morning which read as follows :-

" DEAR MR. AND MRS. TILLEY,

" I am off to London, where I have got a   
good job. The Police. will know my address.   
Thank you both for all you've done for me.

" Yrs. till we meet again,

"JAMES BRISCOE."

Tilley just remarked, "That lad's all right."   
Mrs. Tilley said, "Jimmy'll come back a   
Member O’Parliament some day." Other people   
asked where he was, and the reply was" Dunno,   
I suppose 'e's got some political job." None   
ever guessed the truth. All took it for granted   
that he had got some" big job," and there the   
matter ended.

p 35 Jimmy had decided to make off to London,   
trust his luck, and devote as much time as possible   
to self education. The recognized forces of   
education he always despised. He was never   
envious of those who went to public schools,   
where, he maintained, they were taught how to   
hit and kick a ball about, and very little else, and   
received no stimulus to ingenuity.

On arriving in London he went to a motor   
garage, and as he knew nothing whatever about   
cars, he obtained a job as cleaner at ten shill-   
ings per week. He afterwards confessed that   
washing cars on a cold wet winter's morning   
was one of the most unpleasant occupations, and   
he could never see a bright limousine gliding   
through the streets in winter without feeling   
sympathy for the washer.

Jimmy's object in going as a cleaner was   
something more than earning his bread and   
butter. He had to get twelve cars cleaned by   
eleven o'clock every morning: sometimes one   
or two were required by six or seven a.m., and   
they had to be cleaned ready. But those cars   
were nearly all of different makes, and he set out   
to get a very good knowledge of each. He   
worked his way into the good opinions of the   
drivers, who were usually far too exalted to take   
any notice of the cleaner, but, when they saw how   
keen he was, they took an interest in explaining   
everything. They gave him the booklets issued

p36 by the firms on the various makes. These he   
studied hard by himself, and compared the   
diagrams, which named all the parts, with the   
corresponding cars.

Some of you may have been compelled through   
shortage of cash at some time or another to dine   
at one of the Soho restaurants off an eighteen-   
penny dinner. The frequenters of this feeding   
place in 1910 and 1911, used occasionally to have   
arguments about the nationality of a certain   
waiter there, who boasted a healthy complexion   
and close-cropped hair. In spite of the fact   
that he spoke in German he looked unmistakably   
English, and had the appearance of one living in   
the open air. He was once questioned on the   
subject by two young students, who had been   
spending a holiday on the Continent and fancied   
themselves a little as judges of national types.   
Greatly to their surprise he appeared to under-   
stand English imperfectly and declared himself a   
German. Though he looked very young, the   
most noticeable part of his features was the jaw,   
which was exceptionally strong and gave him a   
face of great determination. Altogether it was   
not surprising that people who noticed him felt   
that there was something unusual about him.   
The man in question was none other than Jimmy   
Briscoe ; he was learning everything he could   
pick up from the greasy German waiters who   
infested the London eating houses in those years

p37 For something over six months he acted in the   
dual capacity of motor cleaner and waiter. By   
that time he had learnt all about six different   
makes of cars, was fluent in German and had a   
smattering of Italian, besides being an expert at   
selecting dishes and wines. That was his idea of   
self-education. When asked once, in his later   
years, whether he considered the result worth the   
drudgery, he laughed.

" That's the very point, where you people are   
mistaken," he replied. "You always look upon   
learning as a drudgery, you sit at a desk with a   
book open and get away from it as soon as possible.   
I don't wonder you were bored with trying to   
learn French and German that way. No man   
who's got any spirit can learn like that. But the   
practical education, the education by experience,   
it's the finest thing in the world, and so damned   
interesting that you don't want to chuck it all   
your life. If they'd substitute that for your   
rotten system, if they'd only make a man learn   
his job by doing it, you'd all be educated by the   
time you're nineteen instead of a lot of blase louts."

At the end of six months he thought it was time   
to turn his attention to some new form of educa-   
tion, so he determined to learn something about   
business. He also wanted time to read a little   
more and pick up the thread of politics, which he   
had relaxed during his labours in garage and   
restaurant. The second General Election of

p38 1910 was coming on, and Jimmy found himself   
unable to resist the longing for battle. L.G. was   
out for the scalps of the House of Lords, and the   
*Citizen* was urging even more extreme measures   
than those which were proposed. The articles   
in the Socialist press expressed sentiments very   
similar to those which must have animated Henry   
II when he gave forth the utterance which led to   
the murder of Thomas a Becket. The chance   
seemed too good to miss, and the youthful   
enthusiasm of Jimmy naturally inclined him   
towards the extremist party. So he decided to   
hunt for suitable ground in which to sow the   
seed of murder against those turbulent Lords   
who had dared to resist the budget which he and   
his fellows decided to support. It was not until   
he was required to contribute to the National   
Health Insurance scheme that Jimmy realized   
that it would be possible for him to have any   
quarrel with the radicalism of the Chancellor   
of the Exchequer. Youthful enthusiasm always   
tends to run to extremes if it be real, and Jimmy's   
was very real, but he afterwards admitted that if   
the House of Lords question had been fought out   
after the introduction of the National Insurance   
Scheme the result would have been different,   
and certain bitter fighting speeches of his own   
would have been undelivered. Be that as it may,   
the fact remains that Jimmy continually hammered   
the Lords from upturned soap boxes, and the

p39 steps of taxi cabs. He went round to his old   
friends at the garage, and persuaded them all to   
his way of thinking and they, in turn, brought   
others for him to convince.

Those were days, as Jimmy afterwards re-   
marked, when we believed that the country's   
salvation depended upon the return of this or   
that political party to power, while, in reality,   
each party only stood for the interest of one class   
against another, and aimed at a class triumph rather   
than the establishment of a sound political principle.

Jimmy was once more brought into the lime-   
light while the elections were on, but he disap-   
peared just as suddenly when they were over as   
he had done after the previous occasion. Again   
he said his education was not complete. "If   
you wish to educate others, and do some good in   
the world, you must educate yourself first."   
That was his maxim which he was constantly   
repeating. He was very much inclined to go as   
a taxi driver, because he thought it would give   
him a great opportunity of studying the various   
types of people who travel in such vehicles; he   
also considered the advisability of going as a bus   
conductor. On second thoughts, however, he   
decided to learn something of the business world,   
and of the capitalists who had become such a   
power in England, so he became an office boy in   
the firm of Weston & Jones.

He was engaged by Mr. Simpson, the head

p40 clerk, in his peculiarly phlegmatic manner, who   
proceeded to give details of his day's work, as   
though he were talking to a machine. As   
propounded by Simpson it sounded a formidable   
proposition, but when the details were sifted out,   
it became evident that it would afford him consi-

derable time for leisure.

Jimmy started well; he entered Mr. Weston's   
room to hang up his hat, stick and coat, and saw,   
to his astonishment, that the senior partner was   
none other than one of the Unionist candidates   
whose chances he had done so much to defeat.

"Good morning, Briscoe, you're the new   
office boy, I understand," began Weston. " What   
were you doing before?"

" The last week or two I've been doing my best to   
see that you were not returned to Parliament, sir."   
" What! Are you an election agent or   
something ? "

" No, sir, but I do a bit of canvassing, so to   
speak, when there's an election on. We all did   
our share to see the Lords defeated. They   
won't stop any more bills."

" That'll do, send Mr. Simpson here."   
When Simpson arrived he found Weston   
marching up and down the room.

" I think you sent for me, Mr. Weston," said   
the head clerk.

"Where did you get this new boy from?

He seems a most extraordinary youth, a red hot

p41 Radical, and rather inclined to air his views."

" I got an excellent character with him; of   
course, if he doesn't do his work we can get rid   
of him, but he seems to be a very sharp lad :   
he's picked everything up right away."

"Do all these youths hold political opinions   
now, Simpson?"

" There's nothing unusual in it: it's the new   
education, sir. Things are altering: all office   
boys expect to become partners."

" I suppose we shall have to put up with it,   
but it's a serious matter; all right, then, we'll   
see how he goes on."

Whilst he was with Weston & J ones, he   
worked desperately hard. Briscoe had saved a   
few pounds up-to-date from the money he earned.   
Every hour, when he was not answering the beck   
and call of his employers, was spent in studying   
political, social, and religious writings. When-   
ever he got a chance for an argument with the   
clerks he started some controversy. He proceeded

on the principle of never agreeing with   
anyone, which he considered to be the best   
method of obtaining new ideas. In the evenings   
he let off his quarrelsome spirits in a boxing   
school. By 1912 when he was seventeen years   
of age, Jimmy Briscoe had a knowledge of more   
languages, trades, and phases of life than ten   
ordinary Englishmen, and Mr. Simpson had   
become duly impressed.

p42

CHAPTER III

THE CHOICE

ONE afternoon in August 1914, two young men   
accosted each other across the street of a country   
market town in the Midlands. Their respective   
means of transport were a two-seater car, and a   
bicycle, a fact which fairly accurately represented   
the difference between their purses. Bunny   
Fenton and Tony Jackson had been at Oxford   
together for the past three years. The former   
owned the two-seater and was a Magdalen man   
with rooms overlooking the" High," while his   
less opulent friend belonged to Wadham and had   
rooms in Beaumont Street. Fenton hunted, led   
brawls in the streets, and belonged to the Bulling-   
don, whereas Jackson worked, played games,   
and debated in the Union. So far apart were   
their ways set, that they would probably never   
have known each other, had they not hailed from   
the same neighbourhood and travelled to and   
from Oxford in the same train. From the time   
they parted on Oxford station at the beginning   
of each term, to their meeting on the same spot   
when the term ended, they saw little or nothing   
of each other. Nevertheless, they were the best

p43 of friends and always spent a great deal of the

long vac together.

" Hello, Bunny, been wanting to have a chat   
with you," began Jackson. "A little ale wouldn't   
do us any harm. What say you ? "

" A capital notion, Tony. I've quite a useful   
thirst. Let's see what Mr. Bass can do for

us.

Car and bike were left beside the pavement,   
and off they walked.

"What's yours, Bunny?" Jackson said as   
they sat down at a marble topped table in the   
King's Arms.

" No, this is mine, Jacker."

" I asked you first, so that ends it."

" You are still a kid at the 'Varsity. I've gone   
down and can't be stood drinks by one who is still   
*in statu pupillari."*

" Don't be a fool. I've left too, if it comes to

that."

" Since when? Only a week ago you told me   
you were staying another year."

"There's a lot happened since then. You   
don't suppose anyone will go back to Oxford   
now? "

" What, are you chucking up everything just   
because of this jolly old War? "

He went to the bar and ordered two pints of   
bitter.

"That," retorted the other, as he sat down

p44 again, "is just what I wanted to chat about.   
What are you going to do, Bunny ? "

"Well, as far as I'm concerned this is the   
finest thing that could have happened. Here am   
I, loafing about at a loose end, and this is the   
very job for me. I shall have the best time in   
my life for about a year, unless it's over in less.   
Fine sport, having a dash through the Germans   
on a good horse."

" A cavalry commission? "

"Expecting it any minute. Three damned   
good years at the 'Varsity and then the Kaiser   
kindly gets up a war to keep me from feeling dull.   
What luck ! "

" Wish I saw it in the same light."

The beer arrived, and they chinked their   
mugs together and both took a deep draught.   
F enton offered - a cigarette and lit one himself.

" Of course," he said, as he held out a lighted   
match, "it's different for you; a clever devil   
who likes work doesn't want to go messing about   
with war. His work would be thrown away.   
What you want to do is to stay up at Oxford,   
take finals and get a good degree, then you'll be   
able to get some job in the War Office or some-   
thing where your brain will be some use; prob-   
ably the War will be over by then, and you can go   
to the Bar, or anything else in the normal way."

"Sounds nice and plausible, but you don't   
really think that."

p45 "Why not? We're not all cut out for the   
same job. Damned good thing too. You're   
meant to do something clever, and I'm made for

charging Germans." .

"Wish I felt like that; don't you think we'll   
all be wanted?" Inwardly Jackson was longing   
to clutch at the straw which Fenton had offered   
him.

" P'raps if the situation gets desperate they'll   
want you, but not in the firing line. No good   
throwing away brains as subalterns, or we shall   
soon run out of them."

Jackson hesitated. Did Bunny really think   
that, or was he leg-pulling? Surely not; Bunny   
was too open for that. It seemed then, there was   
no obligation on him to join the Army, and he   
certainly didn't want to, if he could avoid it.   
Tony Jackson was a very normal individual; he   
wanted a quiet successful career, rather than   
adventure, his physical courage was normal and   
no more, he was not lacking in imagination of the   
horrors of warfare, and he did not want to die.   
The desire for self-preservation was strongly   
assertive within him. To such instincts Fenton's   
arguments made a strong appeal. But, whatever   
his nature, Jackson was a young man of character.   
It was the character derived from good health, a   
sound upbringing, and a public school education;   
 reliance, conscientiousness, and loyalty. Unless

p46 he could reconcile Fenton's arguments with his   
conscience, they must be put aside. And he   
couldn't.

" Not seen any 'Varsity folk lately, have you? "   
said Jackson, by way of changing the subject.

" Having lunch in Coventry yesterday I ran   
into young Barton. Fancy that little blighter,   
they've given him a commission in the Flying   
Corps."

"Damn it all, Bunny. That lad took the   
finest first in Mods that's been got for years.   
What about wasting *his* brains? "

"He's an awful little worm. Never played   
games, never made friends. No one ever saw him   
except in Schools."

"Bunny," said his friend, thumping his fist   
on the table, "You are drinking with me now.   
I've left Oxford. If young Barton can go, I   
must go-Two more, please," he shouted to the   
man at the bar.

The drinks arrived; the two chinked glasses   
together, wished each other the best of luck,   
swallowed their beer and departed.

There were many hard things said during the   
first few months of the War. None, save those   
who had to make them, realized the decisions   
which many young men were called upon to take.   
The struggle in many a young man's soul was a   
desperate one, and each individual case was   
.different. It was very easy for elderly men who

p47 had made a mess of their lives to say they wished   
they were going; it was not difficult for many a   
middle-aged man, who had contracted an un-   
congenial marriage, to seek a little freedom in a   
regimental mess; but, for some of the young   
men, who had worked hard during the last ten   
years to fit themselves for a career, especially   
those who had been tolerably successful, it was a   
hard decision, a very hard decision. There were   
some who thought it was only necessary to possess   
a wife to be able to prate of home ties and con-   
sciences and point the "finger of scorn at the   
unmarried youngsters. They found it easy to   
justify themselves by saying that they were not   
called upon to go until the unmarried shirkers   
went. The truth is that all healthy young men   
of twenty or so instinctively cling to life, especially   
if they are ambitious and have attractive prospects   
before them.

Although he had made up his mind during the   
conversation with Bunny Fenton, Tony Jackson   
felt far from comfortable. Perhaps he was one   
of nature's cowards: at any rate, he certainly did   
not want to die, but his logical self-control got   
over that. After all, he would have to die some   
time or other. But the thought of giving up his   
career irritated him beyond measure; like most   
young men of his age he was somewhat egotistical.   
Nor did his parents do much to dissipate his   
mistaken ideas as to his importance to the world at

p48 large. He felt too that if he went, contemporaries   
and competitors of his would stay behind, and   
he would find they had outstripped him when   
the War was over. Like the married men, he   
wanted conscription, not because he wanted   
others to go first, but so that his competitors   
should go along with him.

On the very day when Tony Jackson was   
making his decision with Bunny Fenton in the   
bar of a country pub, another scene was being   
played in the offices of Weston & Jones. Weston   
was sitting in his revolving office chair, perfectly   
groomed as usual. The office boy had just hung   
up his silk hat and was going out of the room.

"Call Mr. Simpson," ordered the senior   
partner; he always started the business of the day   
with this remark. In a few moments the head   
clerk appeared. Weston finished lighting a   
cigarette.

" Good morning, Simpson. Anything exciting

to-day? "

" The War Office have asked us to submit   
samples and quotations to the board to-day,   
and there's a 'confidential' from Huerter &   
Sons." Simpson handed an envelope to Weston,   
who opened it. He read it two or three times,   
and then getting up he strolled round the room.   
Suddenly he decided and made for the door.

" All right, I'll take this to Mr. Jones." He

p49 passed out and left Simpson wondering what was   
in the air.

On entering Jones's office, Weston closed the   
door with unusual deliberation. He then took   
a seat at the opposite side of the writing table   
and faced his partner.

" You seem to be arranging a big deal with   
Huerter & Sons."

Jones leant back in his chair and returned his   
gaze.

" Oh, it's come to you, has it? Is it on? I've   
been keeping it quiet till I had worked it out.   
We've got the final option and it'll be a big coup.   
We've got to thank young Briscoe partly for   
this. He gave me the idea."

" Well, you'd better read this," said Weston   
curtly, handing over the letter.

Jones put it down, leant forward and began   
earnestly: "P'raps I'd better explain a bit.   
The beginning of last month that young blighter   
thought there would be a European war of some   
sort, and from studying the conditions of modern   
warfare, he came to the conclusion that wire   
would be wanted in enormous quantities. I   
thought at first he meant telephone wire, but no,   
he meant barbed wire. As you know, this new   
patent fencing has been boomed a lot lately,and   
the price of barbed wire has slumped a bit. I   
know it wasn't one of your deals, Weston, too   
much on the heavy side, eh! Anyhow, I've been

p50 quietly buying up odd stocks of barbed wire   
where I could get them cheap; we now hold   
about 5,000,000 yards of the stuff. About a   
fortnight ago, Huerter's wrote and inquired   
about it for the French Government. Thinking   
there would be other competitors in the field I   
made the price pretty hot. They've been scour-   
ing the country since. This letter should show   
whether they have been successful in finding   
what they want elsewhere." He picked up the   
letter and read for a moment; the little eyes   
began to sparkle and his face twitched with   
excitement. "Yes, they've had to come to our   
price. I thought as much."

" How much," began Weston, " do we stand   
to ... wait a minute, who's there? Come in.   
Hullo, what is it, Briscoe? "

Briscoe carefully closed the door. He had   
grown since 1912, he was broad-shouldered and   
had less of the hungry look, his eyes were bright,   
and his chin more determined than ever.

" I want to warn you not to carry out that

deal with Huerter & Sons." "

" What on earth--" exclaimed Jones, but he   
checked himself before Briscoe's glance, and   
rapidly pondered what the youth could be driving   
at.

" Since we have come into the War, things   
have altered," Briscoe went on, "that wire "is   
wanted for Germany."

p51 "How do you know?" This was from   
Weston, who always liked a deal once the money   
was in his pocket.

" Last night I was in Soho, and got in touch   
with some of the waiters. You see I know the   
ropes down there. I learnt that Germany was   
badly in, need of wire for entanglements. I   
casually suggested that Huerter's could find the   
stuff for them if they were quick, and one of them   
gave the show away. It's all for Germany.   
Even before we came in, the Germans thought it   
better to take no risks, and so they said, it was for   
France."

Jones threw down the papers and declared it   
was all rot, and that they as a firm could not   
possibly be expected to know where the stuff   
ultimately was meant for. Both partners decided   
it was a legitimate deal. Weston, being in no   
mood to lose his share of the profitable coup, was   
full of arguments to justify the deal, patriotism   
actually being one of them. Briscoe, therefore,   
had to face the pair of them, united to an extent   
never before known by the prospect of profits to   
be shared.

" You think it's an honest deal then, gentlemen.

I call it trading with the enemy. Suppose we   
ask the law to decide." With this Briscoe turned   
to leave the room. Jones forestalled him and

stood with his back to the door. The little   
man's mind was working feverishly. If that

p52 chap Briscoe blew the gaff, all their wire

might be confiscated, and the firm would crash. Briscoe,   
he knew, was at least as determined as himself.   
It would never do to take that risk. Briscoe   
must be won over or the deal cancelled.

" Huerter & Sons are a neutral firm; surely   
they can buy what they like, Briscoe," began   
Jones in a conciliatory voice.

"That's because our government are such a   
weak crowd, and won't take action to shift these   
aliens, but they can confiscate that wire before it   
gets to Huerter, if they decide it is intended for   
Germany."

Weston decided to throw his weight into the   
scales.

" You, Briscoe, are a man who is out to make   
his way in the world. . You have pushed your   
way along very successfully so far over every   
obstacle. Without being meticulously scrupu-   
lous can't you see that this is an honest business   
deal, and we've run a great risk by anticipating the   
market. Suppose we had been wrong, what   
should we have lost on all this stuff? A big risk   
entitles one to big profits."

Briscoe thought Weston was about the last   
person in the world to lecture him on the subject   
of taking risks, but he controlled the impulse to   
laugh outright:

" As a deal between two men or firms, this is   
good and legitimate business, Mr. Weston, but

p53 firms can only deal in their own property, and

this barbed wire just now is the property of England,   
made by England's labour, out of materials found   
in England's soil. It will be wanted in a few   
days by its rightful owners."

"Will they pay for it, Briscoe? Will they   
give our price? "

" I should say they'd give enough to leave you   
with a profit."

"A very' bare profit, perhaps," rapped out   
Jones, with a flash of beady eyes, " but quite in-   
commensurate with the risk we've had to take.   
You don't appreciate this point, Briscoe, because   
you're not financially interested. Now suppose   
we give you a partnership in Weston & Jones.   
We'll give you something worth toiling for: the   
profit on this transaction alone will put you on   
your feet. Now what about it?"

Jones had mentally summed up the situation,   
and decided that a trump card would have to be   
played, or the whole deal would be frustrated.   
That young man would be satisfied with nothing   
less than a big step up. No time to consult   
Weston, better take the bull by the horns. He   
looked keenly at Briscoe to watch the result of his

suggestion, but the latter showed no sign of excitement.

Briscoe looked steadily at Jones and shook his   
head.

“I'm afraid a partnership's no use to me: I

p54 came in to tell you that I'm going to join the   
Army."

This was a staggerer, even Jones was taken   
aback.

" Army !" he fairly exploded. "Thought   
you were a pusher, Briscoe; you're not going to   
chuck up the sponge, and become one of the   
ordinary crowd. Impossible. Have half an   
hour to think it over. A partnership in Weston   
& Jones, or the other thing."

It was marvellous that Briscoe did not succumb.

A partnership in a firm like that, at his age was   
a mighty big temptation, and just when he   
. wanted money.

"With £10.000” Jimmy used to say, "I   
should be able to do anything, and I could have   
saved that in four years."

The low reputation of the British Tommy   
among civilians before the War was well known.   
He was regarded as a person of the swearing,   
drinking and spitting variety, a bit too rough for   
ordinary society. The city clerk, on the other   
hand was usually a most eminently respectable   
individual who could hardly expect to get a direct   
commission, but could not quite fit himself in   
with the beer swillers in the ranks. It was hard   
indeed, in the early days, for men of this type to   
take a decision which they felt would lower their   
social status to that of manual labourers. But   
they did it in their thousands, the more credit

p55 to them, and some of us are not likely to forget,   
nor are the Germans, the onslaught of a division,   
known as the "Human Stylos," in May 1915   
Some of those who fought so gaily at Festubert   
were among the men who had found it hardest   
to make the choice.

How near Briscoe was to giving way it is   
impossible to tell. He was always a keen con-   
scriptionist, because he believed that a strong   
British Army would prevent war. Now that   
war had come he felt that conscription alone could   
remedy our muddling habit of putting square pegs   
in round holes. When the passing of the Con-   
scription Act hung in the balance in 1915, there   
were many who thought that if only they had   
refrained from joining up themselves, necessity   
would have brought it about earlier.

Briscoe did not answer Jones's last ultimatum.

He turned the door handle slowly, pulled the door   
towards him and went outside. He had half   
disappeared when Jones winked at Weston, as   
much as to say, " I think that'll square him."   
But before the door had closed he was back   
again, looking down at the two partners with his   
lighting spirit up, and his chin thrust out in its   
most aggressive attitude.

" Mr. Jones," he said, "this wire must be   
offered to the War Office, and I'll just go and   
draft you a letter to that effect, if you'll be good   
enough to sign it." With that he left the room.

p56 " You've met your match this time," sneered   
Weston, "Uppish young devil. Fancy losing   
this business. Your fault, Jones, for promoting   
such a youth."

Jones did not hear. His mind was searching   
for any possible means of retrieving the situation,   
but could find none. Briscoe returned with a   
typed draft and envelope ready, for signature.   
It informed the War Office that the firm had

5,000,000 yards of barbed wire, and would be   
pleased to' offer the refusal to' H.M.'s Govern-   
ment. Jones read it and threw it over to' Weston.

" If you'll be good enough to sign, I'll post it   
on my way to the recruiting station.'’

" Suppose we don't," snapped Weston.

"I shall report the firm to' the police, for   
trading with the enemy. I'll leave you for   
five minutes to' talk it over.'

Ten minutes later Briscoe left the office with a   
letter in his hand. That was how he made his   
choice on August 10th, 1914.

If the sacrifice which Tony Jackson had been   
called upon to make was a large one, Briscoe's   
was infinitely greater. In 1912 the latter had   
obtained the position of clerk with Weston &   
Jones at £2 a week. In 1913' he demanded   
another pound a week and got it. In August   
1914 he was about to demand another pound   
when the storm burst. He had not wasted the   
last two years any more than he had wasted the

p57 earlier years in the mining village. He could   
both speak and write German and French, he   
was studying law and was ready to join an Inn   
and sit for his examinations. In the next five   
years he intended to save enough to risk his   
chances in that fascinating profession. His self-   
confidence was superb. "Get me on my feet,"   
he used to say, " before an English jury and I can't   
fail. I know 'em all too well." The offer of a   
partnership in Weston & Jones was, of course,   
unexpected. It now placed independence within   
his grasp. To join the Army at this juncture   
meant the jettisoning of all his plans. There   
was no force which could compel him to do so.   
Such action was absurd for anyone who was bent   
on personal success. But his conscience told him   
otherwise and Briscoe unhesitatingly obeyed it.

p58 CHAPTER IV

THE MOULDING

HAVING taken the plunge, Tony Jackson got into   
touch with the officer commanding a new Terri-   
torial battalion which was in process of being   
raised. Along with one or two friends he was   
nominated for a commission and in due course   
gazetted. The moulding of an army unit out of   
a mass of raw human material was a most interest-   
ing process. Equipment of all sorts was scanty.   
At first uniforms were not available. Owing,   
however, to the enthusiasm which pervaded all   
ranks at that period, the transformation was   
accomplished in remarkably quick time. Jack-   
son found the life more to his' liking than he   
anticipated. There was none of the boredom   
associated with peace-time soldiering. There   
was so much to be done and learnt in a short   
space of time that body and mind were fully   
occupied.

The battalion was quartered in the grounds of   
a country mansion situated not far from an   
industrial centre of the Midlands. The house   
itself acted as barracks, and huts were erected   
to provide the surplus accommodation. The

town from which many of the men were recruited

p59 was about three miles distant; through it the   
battalion route marched at weekly intervals.   
Though it was very pleasant for the men to be   
able to go home and see relations and friends in   
the evenings, the keener spirits among them were   
soon anxious to get moved into another area.   
When a unit was stationed in the area of its   
recruitment it was apt to be regarded as something   
of a joke by the local inhabitants. No. I2345   
private" Somebody" was apt to be looked upon   
as the butcher boy, or whatever he was before   
he joined up, rather than the soldier which he was   
aspiring to be. He felt a bit of a fool marching   
down the street with a swagger stick instead of a   
meat basket, and sometimes one of his old pals   
would laugh at him when he was in the ranks,   
and the company were supposed to be "at   
attention." When, therefore, rumours of a   
move reached the officers' mess they were greeted   
with no little satisfaction. It was a long time   
before the rumours were translated into fact,   
but at last the expected command arrived.

Jackson was commanding a platoon in those   
days, and immediately dashed out of the ante-   
room, opened his despatch box, and looked   
through the various books on military training   
to discover what were the duties of a platoon   
commander when troops were being moved by   
train ; nor was he satisfied with this information,   
but decided to know all about the duties of a company

officer as well. They were all enthusiastic   
p60 in those days, and being a new unit, were not   
bound by any of the absurd rules and precedents   
which have grown up through the ages and   
become established as law in Regular regimental   
messes. They had no law against talking   
shop. It was highly probable that the colonel   
would ask the officer who happened to sit next   
to him at mess that night some questions   
relevant to the movement of troops, and they   
never knew who was going to sit next to him.   
He used to take hold of some officer or other in   
the ante-room and lead him into dinner, and it   
might be anyone. Jackson thought it might be   
his turn, and at any rate, he would be well armed,   
and even if the question were put to someone   
else it might be passed on unanswered, and he   
should score a point if it reached him. As it   
happened the C.O. did not take Jackson in with   
him, but during the course of the meal he said to   
the adjutant, "How many officers can tell me how   
you proceed to entrain a company on reaching   
the station?"

" More than half I should say, sir," returned   
the other.

" Well, look here, Harvey, I am willing to   
bet you a whisky and soda to a bottle of Bass   
that one-quarter of them cannot tell us. How   
many are there? "

p61The adjutant counted heads carefully, and then

said, "Thirty-four, sir, including ourselves, the   
quartermaster, and the doctor."

" I'll bet you there are not eight who can tell   
us; will you take me ? "

“Yes,Sir.

" Look here," said the colonel, addressing the   
mess as a whole, " I've got a bet on here, and I   
want every officer to write down on a slip of paper   
what he thinks is the proper method to entrain   
troops on reaching the rail-head. Anyone who   
does not know need not say anything, and you   
need not sign your efforts. Just pass them along   
here when you have finished."

" Harvey, order me a bottle of Bass, please,"   
said the colonel.

" How many have you got, sir?"

"I don't think they are all in yet," replied the other.

"Then ask 'em."

" Are there any more theories on the subject   
of entraining troops? If so hand them in,   
please," said the adjutant looking round.

" I think we've got 'em all, Harvey."

"how many, Sir .

" Eight altogether."

" Then I've won, sir."

" Oh, no, my boy; only two are right. Whose   
do you think they are ? "

" Well, I should say the major would be one,Sir”

p62“Yes I know by his writing , and the other?”

I haven’t the faintest , Sir” “take that over to Jackson

and ask if it’s his” So Jackson earned the reward of his

keenness and the Colonel won his beer ,

The battalion had arrived at the country town   
of Upper Misenden, Essex, and all enjoyed   
settling down in their new quarters. On the   
third morning Jackson was sent for by the   
colonel.

"Jackson," he said when they were alone,   
" I've got to provide a draft of men for guard-   
duty at the G.H.Q. of the Eastern Command,   
situated at Weston Manor, the residence of   
Lord -. The men will have to be billeted   
in Mowdon, which is about three miles away.   
I propose to put you in charge of the party.   
If should be rather a pleasant and interesting   
job, and you will have some responsibility. The   
guard duties at the G.H.Q. have previously been   
carried out by Regular troops, and you will have   
to show that you are just as good. On home   
service, a battalion is largely judged by the   
manner in which it performs its guard duties, and   
this is a great chance for us. You will have   
picked N.C.O.s and men, and will yourself be   
personally responsible for maintaining the discip-   
line and efficiency of the men who are off duty.

p63 Any breach of discipline should be dealt with   
severely. You can have one other subaltern   
who will bring the men down. You yourself   
will proceed to-morrow to Mowdon and prepare   
to .take over everything from the party you are   
relieving; the men will follow you next day.   
You will take all your instructions as to guard   
duties from the D.A.A.G. Eastern Command

H.Q."

" I'll do my best, sir," replied Jackson, standing   
to attention with special stiffness.

"I think you'll like it, Jackson; and I've   
chosen you because I think you are keen. After   
all.' it's the first chance we've had of doing some-   
thing really useful; we are releasing Regulars for   
the front."

" Who will the other officer be, sir? " replied   
the subaltern.

" Who would you like? . Of course, he must   
be junior to you."

Those were the days when a week's seniority -   
counted for much. Jackson's own commission   
was not six months old,. and yet he was being   
given charge over another officer, and a hundred   
men.

" I should like Bremner to come, sir," he said.   
" Very well then, send him to me when you go   
out."

" I should like my own platoon sergeant Sir,

if it makes no difference." ,

p64 On looking back afterwards Tony Jackson   
often laughed over the manner in which he   
presumed to dictate terms to the C.0., but both   
of them were so enthusiastic about doing the   
thing as well as possible that neither of them   
seemed to think of it at the time.

" I'll ask the adjutant and the sergeant-major   
to select twenty-five men from each company.   
Who is your platoon sergeant? "

On being told, the colonel agreed as to his   
merits, so he was selected.

Jackson left the colonel, feeling no end of a   
man, and rushed off to find Bremner. He was   
even more enthusiastic and whispered that it   
must mean a captaincy for Jackson and two-stars   
for himself. They did not learn, till they got to   
France, that it is the custom in the Army for   
junior officers to do senior officers' work and get   
no promotion. Bremner came back from his   
interview with the C.0. full of enthusiasm.

" My God, Jacker; it's simply great. You   
are an absolute blood. You'll have to stay on in   
the Army; the C.O. must think you the deuce   
of a man. You'll be a captain in a week or

two."

Jackson spent a day in Mowdon making   
arrangements to take over from the Regulars.   
At first, they were tempted to treat him rather   
with scorn; like all Regulars, they affected to   
look down on the others at the beginning of the

p65 War, but the C.O. had armed him with self-   
confidence, the manuals on infantry training   
had given him a store of knowledge, which he   
did not hesitate to apply in front of professional   
soldiers. The men he was relieving came from   
one of .our smartest regiments, and his accuracy   
in details of ceremonial rather won their admira-   
tion; though he himself, educated in the Oxford

school of thought, inwardly despised such atten-   
tion to meticulous detail.

During the afternoon he went to the Army   
Headquarters; he found it to be a typical country   
mansion, with a splendid park full of very fine   
timber. It seemed extraordinary to see the   
tables and coach houses full of soldiers, and   
sentries in front of all the gates; the house was   
simply full of generals. The general officers   
commanding the Army, the Division, and the

Brigade in that neighbourhood were all quartered   
there with their staffs. It was a regular pageant

of brass hats and red tabs. Staff officers were   
taking horse exercise in the park, and a magnifi-

cent car was standing at the door which had just   
brought the Army commander down from London.

Jackson went and looked at the sentry   
posts. There were ten sentries on at night, and

some of them were in very unpleasant places.   
The house was surrounded on three sides by a   
dense shrubbery, and rhododendrons were so

thick that you could not see through them in the

p66 day time. One sentry had to pace up and down a   
path in between these bushes; any place more   
creepy and lonely on a cold, dark night, can

scarcely be imagined. Every sound in the

bushes would have startled many a person out of

his life. ,'He felt sure of that another sentry

had a beat along a flag-stone walk in among

some monuments, with a fountain in the middle

and stone lions at the corners, rather after the

style of Trafalgar Square.

A raw soldier, who had drunk a little too much

beer, might well feel uncertain of himself on this   
beat. All these items he took in at the first tour   
of inspection. He was introduced to the   
D.A.A.G., who at once said that he supposed   
some senior officer was coming in charge of the   
party. Jackson put on his most dignified man-   
ner and replied in the negative, but, for all that,   
he felt that he was unable to conceal the youthful-   
ness of his complexion and the badge of rank on   
his shoulders. He was given to understand that   
the responsibility of his post was very great, and   
that if any German spy inadvertently bagged the   
G.O.C. either from air or land, the great man's   
death would be laid at his door. A less enthusias-   
tic person might have been seriously perturbed,   
but all this only increased Jackson's delight that he   
was doing the real thing at last; .and he just   
revelled in the responsibility.

He had billeted himself on the people living

p67 at the most pleasant-looking residence in   
Mowdon, and went to bed that night full of his   
own importance. The following morning he went   
again to Weston Manor; intending to inform   
the D.A.A.G. that he was going to take over next   
day, and. also to look. at the place more closely,   
with a view to planning the dispositions of his   
sentries, and trying to improve upon those ,of his   
predecessors. However, he suffered one of the   
most unpleasant shocks of his life, when he was

shown into the D.A.A.G.'s· office and informed   
by that. gentleman that the G.O.C.'thought he was   
rather junior to be entrusted with the keeping of   
his life, and that his C.O. 'had been asked to send   
the Captain in command of the party. 'It was in   
vain that he pointed out that 'he was an expert   
upon guard duty, and that the possession of an

extra star did not mean' extra'keenness and   
efficiency. He even expostulated on the present   
positions of the sentry beats, and proposed   
improvements. At the 'end of it the staff   
meerly patted him kindly on the shoulder and

said, " It is a capital thing to be keen, my boy;

but we must obey the orders of the G.O.C."

Then it was that Jackson realized more clearly   
than he had yet done that he had ceased to be a   
civilian.

That afternoon Bremner arrived with a hundred   
N.C.O.s and men. "I shall not be in command   
of this show ; they want a captain: G.O.C. says

p68 “I’m too junior” Jackson told him as soon as they met.

“Rot, my dear man, they’ll make you a temporary

captain, that’s all” replied the other .

In the morning a letter arrived for Jackson from

the C.O. it ran as follows :

“DEAR JACKSON”

" I am sorry to disappoint you, but they   
want a senior officer in command of the party.   
I am sending Captain---- to-morrow. Look   
after things till he comes.

Yours sincerely, etc."

Jackson did look after things, and looked after   
them for more than one day; like a sportsman   
the colonel decided to let him have a small   
innings, and, for a few days, for reasons best known   
to himself, it was impossible for Captain **--**to get away. For these five days he was king of   
Mowdon. His sentries were posted, and the   
guards inspected by day and night; the other   
men were drilled and taught musketry, and he   
was in charge. It was the time of his life, and   
everything was carried out so smoothly that   
D.A.A.G. and G.O.C. both forgot to ask whether   
the captain had turned up, and although they   
required that a captain should be in charge, they   
were quite content that all the work should be   
done by Jackson,

p69 On one of these days at Weston Manor, after   
inspecting the guard, Jackson sat down on the end·   
of a bench in the doorway of what was really a   
saddle room, but was now given up to the N.C.O.s   
on duty. He was looking on to the fine old   
stable-yard, surrounded by buildings of the   
Queen Anne period. There were some cavalry   
quartered in the buildings, and while he was   
sitting there a sergeant of the Hussar regiment   
was making some defaulters do pack drill, and he   
got a fair chance to see how they dealt with such   
offenders in smart regiments of the Regular Army.   
Each of the men being drilled was carrying a

soldier's kit bag, stuffed as full as it would hold   
with boots and equipment. With this tucked   
under one arm, the men were made to march up   
and down the yard at a pace something between a   
quick march and a double, and they were kept at   
it too. It must have been fair hell. He was   
wrapt in admiration for the sergeant and the   
brusque comments with which he amplified his   
monotonous orders. This N.C.O. seemed to   
make the men fairly jump every time he gave an   
order. Jackson remarked to his lance-corporal,   
who was standing by, that it was an efficient way

of dealing with defaulters, and that he thought   
their own orderly sergeants might take a wrinkle   
rom the Hussars. He would not have made   
such a remark unless he had known that the   
lance-corporal addressed was a particularly keen

p70 and efficient soldier, and one very unlikely to   
have been brought before a company officer for   
any misdemeanour. The retort fairly knocked   
him out : "Since you have expressed that opinion   
to me sir I should just like to point out that the

, , ,

New Army are not Regular soldiers, and don’t

expect to be treated in the same way; they're   
men who've turned out because the country   
wants them. They want to learn how to defend   
this old country as efficiently as possible, but   
they don't want to become showy soldiers fit   
for ceremonials."

"But don't you realize, Lance-Corporal   
Briscoe, that soldiers are useless without   
discipline ? Undisciplined men are no good."

" If that's what you call discipline, Sir, march-   
ing men up and down a yard under a torrent of   
foul abuse till they can't stand, it's a mistake.   
It's individuality we shall want if England's to

pull through this time." .

This was the first time Jackson came into touch   
with the personality of Lance-Corporal Briscoe.   
Up to this time the latter had been known to him   
rather as a number than as an individual, though   
he had noticed his smartness on parade, and, at   
the recommendation of the platoon sergeant had   
put him up for a stripe. This might have been   
expected, he first came into prommence by reason   
of an argument. Jackson sat and looked at him.   
Being an officer it was unseemly for him to be

p71 drawn into controversy with a lance-corporal;   
such behaviour would be an offence against that   
very law of discipline which he had just cham-   
pioned so strongly; but Briscoe was one of those   
who could never be ignored.

"Do you think," he said, "that a mob of   
undisciplined individuals will be any use in a   
battle? Don't you, as a non-commissioned   
officer, expect your orders to be obeyed? "

Briscoe looked up for a second, as though he   
were mentally summing up his officer, then said   
very slowly and deliberately, " A good man, sir,   
an get orders obeyed and still treat those beneath   
him as though they are men. He can control   
them without destroying their initiative. I think,

ir, that it is our present boast that we are fighting   
for freedom against autocracy; the army of a   
free nation will always be an army of men; the   
army of autocracy must be an army of machines."   
He hesitated a moment, and before the other

ould reply, completed his remarks by saying:   
" I venture to predict, Sir, that before the War is   
over we shall be thankful that our soldiers have   
retained the individual initiative of their private   
life."

"Briscoe," said Jackson, "you interest me   
very much; we shall see."

Jackson went away full of thoughts and   
speculations; but one thing was indelibly im-   
pressed upon his mind-the personality of

p72 Lance-Corporal Briscoe. If he forgot the words   
in the meantime, they were brought back to him   
some months later on a ploughed field in France,   
when the battalion were being addressed by the   
G.O.C. Division, and he said, as many another   
general probably said: "We have now done   
everything possible to prepare the ground for   
your assault; we can do no' more. From the   
moment when the barrage lifts and you leap from   
the trenches, upon your own *individual efforts*will depend the issue of the day."

Those five days during which Jackson held   
command of the party in Mowdon were five days   
of bliss ; it was his first experience of independent   
military authority. He forgot all about the   
responsibility which should have lain heavy on   
his young shoulders, and was very surprised to   
notice that the captain who was sent to take   
command seemed to dislike having the life of the   
G.O.C. Eastern Command on his hands, though   
why anyone should wish to deprive the dear old   
gentleman of his life appeared to be a secret.   
The enemy were far too cunning to worry about   
killing harmless old men, who would be replaced   
with younger and more energetic ones. Whilst   
engaged on this duty, Jackson had his first taste   
of the minor excitements of soldiering; up till   
now everything had seemed mere routine.

It was the duty of one officer to inspect the   
guard at midnight, and they used to take it in

p73 turns to leave their comfortable billets in Mowdon   
and proceed to Weston Lodge on a motor bicycle.   
Jackson arrived one night on the very stroke of   
twelve o'clock, and was properly challenged by   
the sentry at the gate. Suddenly he heard a   
sound as though someone were being murdered   
behind the house. There were two sentries at   
this spot, and he felt a little uncomfortable at the   
thought of what might be going on among the   
bushes and monuments. However, he put on his   
most courageous air, and went round the back.   
He saw several figures on the grass patch as he   
rounded the corner, and mentally remembered   
that his only weapon was a useless sword which   
he had to wear when he was an orderly officer.   
He seized his electric torch and advanced. A   
noise was still proceeding from the direction of   
the rhododendron walk, along which one of the   
sentries had his beat. The figures on the lawn   
were jabbering excitedly but stopped on hearing   
his footstep on the gravel.

" Who are you? " shouted one of them in a

Shakey voice

"Visiting rounds," he answered in a tone   
scarcely less shaky. Then he struck it.

" What the hell is the matter with your con-   
founded sentry? He sounds as though he must   
have gone mad." The speaker was the G.O.C.,   
who was clothed in his pyjamas; he was   
surrounded by his staff, who were In various

p74 stages of undress, and it was cold too.

" I'll go and see at once, sir," said Jackson,   
and rushed off in the direction of the noises half expecting to be shot, as although the men had

ceased to have a round in the breach because of   
their frequently mistaking deer in the park for   
dangerous persons approaching their posts, they   
still had five rounds in the magazine.

On arriving he saw the most absurd sight   
imaginable; there was the sentry half doubled   
up and prancing about, pointing with his bayonet   
in a dangerous manner towards another figure,   
who -seemed to be finding it difficult to elude the   
weapon. At the same time the sentry was   
shouting for all he was worth: his general idea   
seemed to be that he had got hold of a spy and   
wanted the guard to turn out and arrest him.   
How it was that he never stuck the other man   
was a mystery. Jackson's voice brought him   
to his senses, and much to his relief he brought   
his rifle to the" slope," but he saw by his electric   
torch that the sentry was shaking like a leaf, and   
that there was a mad look in his eyes. The   
other man was the sergeant of the guard; he   
had lost his dignity as well as his cap and stick,   
and presented a rather humorous figure. Jack-   
son inquired into the cause of the disturbance   
and it transpired that the sergeant had decided   
to put the sentry to the test in order to discover if   
he were awake, and had employed a rather idiotic

p75 method of doing so. Taking advantage of the   
splendid cover afforded by the rhododendron   
bushes, he had crept up behind the sentry and

suddenly thrust himself forward with a fearful   
rustling of leaves and crackling of twigs. No   
man alive could have failed to be awakened by

such a noise, and the sentry who was new to the   
game, and very nervous, lost his head and shouted   
like mad, using his bayonet to ward off the ser-   
gant whom he failed to recognize. Jackson   
hastened to the general, and, without telling him   
the full story, apologized for the false alarm;   
the latter found it so cold outside in his scanty   
clothing that he was ready to accept the explana-

tion, adding: "These new chaps have a lot to   
learn, but don't put that man on sentry here again."   
With this, he and the staff hurried off to bed, while   
Jackson had the sentry relieved at once, and

determined to have the sergeant reduced for   
being a fool. By such episodes as this were men   
turned from civilians into soldiers.

After being in Mowdon a month or so Jackson   
and his men rejoined the regiment, which had   
been transferred to a comparatively large manu-   
facturing town, considered by high military   
authority to be an important link in the northern   
defences of London. The chief reason for going   
to enable them to learn something of   
digging, and at the same time to produce

something useful from their experiments; they

p76 were to dig part of the system of trenches which   
were the last line of defence round the capital of   
the British Empire.

The reception accorded to the battalion in the   
town to which they were transferred was very   
different to anything they had experienced else-   
where. Hitherto they had encountered enthusi-   
asm and hospitality wherever they went. Here   
they might almost have been an army of occupa-.   
tion from the ungracious way they were received,   
Jackson noted particularly the large number of   
young men, still in " civvies," who made disparag-   
ing remarks to some of his own men as they   
marched up the road, and generally got them   
returned with interest. In the street where all   
his platoon were billeted, quite a number of   
young men were hanging about, apparently   
loafing. In other places he had found people   
particularly anxious and willing. to do all they   
could for his men; here he went into some of the   
houses, and found nothing done to prepare for   
their reception, although the police had informed   
every house of the number who would be billeted   
and the time when they would arrive. The   
government were paying the people half-a-crown   
per day for each man, and this always left the   
householders a comfortable profit after giving   
the men a bed and food. A cottage with four   
men billeted would receive ten shillings per day,   
whereas the inmates had probably never earned

p77 more than a pound per week. At Mowdon he   
was pursued up the street by a woman who was   
weeping because he had no men to give her, and   
she was so persistent that eventually he with-   
drew one from each of three other cottages to   
calm her. Here he found that in many of the   
houses the men were expected to sleep on the   
brick floor, and asked the people if they were   
not ashamed to treat our soldiers like this. It   
never seemed to have occurred to them; they   
thought anything was good enough for soldiers ;   
but when he threatened to take the men away,   
they at once promised to put everything right ;   
they did not want to lose the money. This   
seemed to be rather typical of the attitude of the   
people' there. The police said that recruiting   
was progressing very badly indeed in the district,   
and that no one there seemed at all enthusiastic :   
and the returns showed it to be one of the worst   
spots in England for recruiting.

A few days after their arrival it became   
Jackson's turn for orderly officer. As there had   
been several complaints about the billets, he   
decided to go and have a careful inspection of   
these in the evening when the men had finished   
their day's work, in the hopes of finding some of   
them inside and having a talk with them. He   
intended to pay special attention to the billets   
of his own company. It was about 6.30 p.m.   
when he arrived in the street accompanied by the

p78 orderly corporal. He was oppressed .with the   
dinginess of the place, and was thinking what   
an awful thing it must be to be condemned to   
live in such circumstances all one's life. He   
noticed a mixed crowd of soldiers and civilians   
at the other end of the street, and sent the orderly   
corporal to see what it was, meanwhile he went   
into one of the houses. In a few seconds the   
corporal rejoined him. "It's Lance-Corporal   
Briscoe, sir," he said," 'e' s just a-telling 'em a   
few things."

Had he been an officer trained to soldiering in   
the old school of the Regular Army he would   
probably have at once sent the orderly corporal to   
bring Briscoe to him, but he did the very opposlte   
-he went himself to see what was happemng.   
Jackson had been fortunate enough to listen to

nearly all the best political orators of the day,

but never had he heard anything really to equal

the little harangue which Briscoe was delivering

on this occasion for force and effectiveness. He

was in the middle of a period when the orderly

officer arrived, but there was time to catch the

gist of it.

" So you think, do you, " Briscoe was saymg,

" that England is not worth fighting for; . you   
think your homes are not worth defending ;   
perhaps they're not; but have you ever done   
anything to make 'em better? You must help   
to make 'em what you want 'em to be, and if you

p79 join England's Army now, you're taking .a step   
in the right direction. If you help to win this   
War you'll make your homes worth fighting for ;   
your services will give you such a claim on the   
State, that you can't be refused. Your homes   
are squalid enough now, I grant you. But if you   
fight you'll have a chance of making' em comfort-   
able; if you don't, the best you can hope for   
is to be allowed to wallow in your present squalor,   
and the worst that may befall you is to be deprived   
of the shelter of the roof by the burst of the   
enemy's high explosive. We're not fighting   
for the old England, or even the present England,   
at least, I'm not; it's the new England we're   
fighting for, the England which you and I are   
going to build when this is over: and we are   
going to see it's fit to live in: but we shall be   
mighty jealous and shan't give much away to those   
who haven't helped us."

A voice came from the back of the crowd.   
"We're fighting for the gents, mate, that's what

we're fighting for." ,

Jimmy looked round ‘till he had spotted the   
speaker, then, with cool deliberation" he said,   
" Every man who fights now will have a right to   
be called a gentleman: we *are* fighting for the   
gentlemen, it's true, for the new order of gentle-   
men who shall compose our nation when the War   
is over, and that order'll not be restricted to men

of birth or wealth, it'll be extended to every

p80 man who renders public service to the State.   
Your .time has come now: you can all be gentle-   
men if you choose to." He looked round him   
with superb self-assurance to see if anyone else   
had anything to say against him. "Well now,   
you chaps," he finished up, "just go away and   
think about what I've said to you." He got off   
his perch and the meeting broke up.

. Some of the men who were there rushed up to   
Jimmy and patted him on the back: but Jack-   
son s presence, which had not been discovered   
before, rather broke in upon their demonstrations.   
He sent the orderly corporal to fetch Briscoe

who approached and saluted. '

"Lance-Corporal Briscoe," he said, "what

were you before you joined the regiment? "   
" A clerk in the City, sir."

"Have you ever spoken in public before ? "   
" Yes, sir."

"Well, if you turn out as good a soldier as   
you are an orator, the Regiment will have some   
one to be proud of." Then remembering   
Bunny s little speech to him on August 10th   
1914, he added, " I think the country must have   
something better for you to do, than to become   
a private in an infantry regiment."

" I shall have plenty of chance for that, sir,   
afterwards.'’,

" But suppose you get killed? "   
" I shan't get killed, sir."

p81 "How do you know that? "

"I'm destined for something different."

" You are very certain: what are you destined   
for? "

" I'm going to take a share in the building of

the New England."

"Why did you join the ranks so soon Briscoe ,

surley an O.T.C. , or something "

"I'm only educating myself now, sir, I've   
done nothing else all my life, so far; but this is   
the finest chance I've ever had. To help the   
country when the War is over, one must know   
all the people who compose it. I knew the life   
of a good many before the War, but I've learnt   
more in the ranks of this regiment than I could   
have done otherwise in half a century. There   
are all types in this battalion. It's the finest   
training of my life, sir."

"Good night," said Jackson. Briscoe saluted   
and turned about in a manner that would have   
done credit to a guardsman. He seemed to   
do everything perfectly. Jackson went round   
one or two of the billets where he had reason to   
suspect that the men were not being well looked   
after. He found some of the men inside. They   
all appeared comfortable enough, and he was   
surprised to find that there were no complaints.   
As he was leaving the last house he intended to   
inspect, he called one of the men outside, and   
asked him how it was that everything appeared

p82 so comfortable when there had been so many   
complaints the last few days.

"Oh we're all right now, sir," he replied.   
" Lance-Corporal Briscoe 'as been and told 'em   
a few things. 'E's that wonderful with his   
tongue, sir."

As he walked back to his quarters, Jackson   
cursed himself inwardly for not having joined   
the ranks.

Some days later the colonel came up to him in   
the ante-room and called him aside.

" Jackson," he said, " the mayor of this blasted   
place is arranging for a big recruiting meeting   
in the Town Hall and asked me to speak; well,   
if there's one thing I can't do, it's to speak in   
public ; so I told him we had got an officer who   
is a bit of an expert, and thought you'd go for   
him; will you? "

Jackson hesitated for a minute and then said :

"We've got a man in the ranks, sir, who can   
give me points. I think he would do it much   
better, and the whole thing would be more   
effective coming from a man who has enlisted   
himself."

" Who is this fellow? "

"Lance-Corporal Briscoe,in my platoon, Sir "

" Is he really good? "

" He's the finest speaker I've ever heard."   
The colonel always was a bit of a democrat

p83 and there was nothing he liked better than   
praising his own men, sometimes at the expense   
of his officers. He jumped at this suggestion   
,and gave Jackson full instructions to fix   
it with Briscoe.

The latter was a little against it at first; he   
thought it was an effort on the part of the officers   
to obtain for him cheap notoriety, and it was only

it was pointed out that he would be culpably   
acting a public service for which he was   
particularly fitted, that he consented to take any

part.

"Bremner," said Jackson to that irresponsible

subaltern next evening, "you're coming down   
with me to this show at the Town Hall   
to-night ."

"What sort of show? " he replied.

"It’s a recruiting meeting," replied the other,

knowing well that he would rise to the bait.   
 " Do you think I should be likely to come to   
these damned things, Jacker; do you   
think I’m going to waste a good evening listening

to fools trying talk? God knows what

good any of 'em do." .

"Well you are coming all the same," Jackson

said firmly .

"Who the hell are you talking to, my lad? "   
"I’m talking to you and telling you that you're

coming with me to this show."

"As a matter of fact, Jacker, I was

p84 going to ask you to come out with me: I want   
to introduce you to a lady friend."

" Oh, my God, not another? "

Bremner was always a one for girls wherever   
he was stationed. A few weeks before he had   
been in a great stew because the mother of one of   
them wanted to know what his intentions were.   
It took Jackson two hours hard work on that   
occasion to find a solution, and he had no desire   
to be confronted with another such task.

" Well, that settles it," he added, " you've got   
to come, my boy, if only in self-protection, and   
what's more, it's up to us both to go because   
one of our chaps is the. principal speaker."

" Good Lord, who? I didn't know we had

got any budding Lloyd Georges in the mess."

" " I shall not tell you who it is : you must come

and find out."

" What about the lady, Jacker ? "

" You must put her off; say you are on duty."   
" Oh, I haven't asked her yet, but it does seem

a pity to waste a good evening."

That was Bremner all over, such a contrast to   
his friend, who took life seriously and couldn't   
understand 'a man who cared so little about   
the social and imperial questions of the day.   
Bremner didn't know in the least what they were   
fighting about, and didn't care. They Were at   
war, and there was the chance of something new   
and exciting; that was quite enough. He was

p85 full of life and the joy of living; never still a   
minute, the sight of a man sitting in a chair and   
reading comfortably bored him stiff, He was

so brimming over with good cheer that he infused   
it into others round him. He liked one sensation   
 on top of another, and neither thought about nor   
digested any of them. He had never been to a   
political meeting except to break it up ; he never   
went to church because he could not sit through   
the sermon; and Jackson won more gratitude   
from him by taking his place at church parades,   
than by smoothing out his love affairs.

By nine-thirty Jackson had brought Bremner   
to the Town Hall, protesting all the way. The   
meeting had been timed to commence at nine   
o’clock, but he did not want to try Bremner's   
patience too far, so he calculated to get there   
about the time Briscoe would be begining, and   
he had timed it well; for just as they were pushing   
their way into his reserved seats, the Mayor   
announced that Lance-Corporal J. Briscoe of the

regiment would address the house. Bremner   
issued a grunt of disgust: "This bloke's in   
this bloke’s in our company, didn't know he was one of these   
infernal windbags; I thought he was a stout   
fellow" he snorted, and he would have got away   
then if Jackson had not been between him and

the exit.

The house was packed; only the two rows of

seats in front were reserved, the others were all

p86 free. It was a large building and took a good   
voice to fill it.

At the end of forty minutes Bremner was still   
there, and not only there, but clapping and   
cheering as Briscoe sat down.

" Now you know something about the social   
and imperial problems of the day," said Jackson,   
when the noise had died down.

"Why the hell isn't the fellow an officer,   
Jacker ? " said Bremner.

" Because he wants to educate himself; aren't   
you glad I brought you? "

"Yes, I wouldn't have missed it; it does   
set one thinking a bit when things are put like   
that. We'll take the girls out to-morrow night,   
what! "

It was just like Bremner: he couldn't keep his   
mind on one thing for a minute; but Jimmy   
Briscoe had accomplished wonders: for he had   
held his attention for forty minutes on end. Just   
as they were going in they met the colonel.

" Well, he wasn't bad, sir, was he ? " remarked   
Jackson.

" Splendid, I'll note him down for a commis-   
sion."

" I don't think he wants a commission, sir."

"What?*"*

y no .

"He wants to educate himself," answered   
Jackson, and watched the colonel pass on up the   
passage to the mess. He, too,was thinking deeply.

p87 As the winter wore on, and they began to hear   
more definite news from the front through occa-

ional friends who came on leave, their own   
training became more and more distasteful.   
They kept hearing that the British Army were   
hard pressed, and felt themselves ready to help   
them; in their ignorance they little knew the   
ordeal of modern war. They dug trenches which   
fill in with the wet. They practised drill and   
musketry; officers and N.C.O.s gave lectures   
in billets. These lectures, more than anything

brought home to them the quality of the   
material they possessed in the ranks of the New   
Army. The old Regular non-commissioned   
officer made a sorry show when he had to   
deliver a lecture to the rank and file, whereas   
many of the new privates could read a thing up   
and then give an interesting discourse upon it   
without the slightest difficulty. Jackson used   
to work out hypothetical difficulties and give   
them to the men to solve, and they used to answer   
his and put a poser back at him. When he was   
away on a special course' once, Bremner was asked   
to lecture his platoon on a wet day. He told   
Jackson afterwards that they gave him a dreadful   
time, they tied him up with questions which he

could not answer, and then answered them for

him. Bremner had not acquired the gift of   
making them think he knew when he didn't   
really. When they had put Jackson a question

p88 which he couldn't answer, he used to say,

"That's a good one: well,

Briscoe, what do you say? " and by this means   
often got the answer, and then pretended he   
knew it all the 'time.

On one occasion he gave them one of his really   
eloquent lectures on " Discipline" in the course   
of which he pointed out the danger of troops   
going too far in disregard of orders. When he   
had finished, he asked, as usual, whether anyone   
had any comments to make. One private   
said :

"I venture to suggest, sir, that before this   
war is over it will be necessary to train every   
soldier to become individually interested in the   
tactics of each battle. I think individual effi-   
ciency will take the place of blind discipline, sir."

That was a pretty clever remark from a private   
soldier. Jackson silenced the suggestion by   
saying: "That's not your own; you got that   
from Lance-Corporal Briscoe," and he believed   
he had hit the mark.

Every week rumours used to reach the mess   
that they were going abroad and on many occa-   
sions the brigade and even the divisional staff   
seemed just as certain as they were; such occa-   
sions were always treated as a fair excuse for an   
evening in "Town." Wires were despatched   
to relatives until everyone got so ashamed of   
creating false alarms, that no notice was taken of

p89 the rumours. Meanwhile they drilled and   
marched and drilled again, until the more intelli-   
gent began to get somewhat stale, and the less   
intelligent began to get a parrot-like idea of what   
they were supposed to do on each word of com-   
marid. The two men in the whole battalion   
who were most sick of it all were Briscoe and   
Jackson; the monotony of that platoon drill   
was becoming too much for them. To fill the   
time they both studied carefully every movement

of troops up to that of a complete battalion, each   
of them inwardly thinking that it might one day   
happen that he should be left the senior officer   
with the regiment on the field of battle. Jackson   
I articularly wanted to get away, because every-   
thing pointed to the fact that he would be   
alled upon to settle another of Bremner's love   
affairs in the near future.

p90

CHAPTER V

………….THE FIRING

BREMNER and Jackson sat facing one another in   
opposite corners of a London & South Western   
first-class carriage.. The former was full of   
wine and good spirits, the latter was morose and   
dour. They were off. Their training in England   
was complete; they were to be put to the   
supreme test of fire. Jackson's parents did not   
even know that he was off. He had kept it   
dark, and intended to send a wire from Southamp-   
ton. He was one of those who could not stand   
the parting on railway stations, which was taking   
place every day at Victoria as if it were a matter   
of routine. He had happened, a week or two   
before, to land on Victoria by the up-train, just   
when the daily "leave" train was about to   
depart, and it had left an unforgettable impression.   
The mothers and wives pretending not to weep;   
the men, too, trying to conceal emotion, all   
contributed to a picture so terribly inhuman and   
yet so typically English that it seemed to bring   
the War right home to him for the first time.   
He determined that he would not participate   
in any such scene, though Bremner urged him to   
have a bottle of the " boy" and go through it.

p91 Bremner was like a cork and nothing could keep   
him down for long; but that good-bye on the   
station dragged his spirits lower than they had   
ever been since he first learnt to say" Daddy."   
He was up again now : the bottle of the " boy"   
had done its work, and he slapped Jackson on the   
knee with the air of one who is going to give a   
friend a good "tip" on the way to a race-   
meeting.

" Soon be into it now, Jacker. I wonder how

we shall shape."

" We shall do all right," replied the other,   
"there'll be some reputations spoilt and others   
made."

" I wonder if any of us will get V.C.s or   
anything, and, if so, who?"

" Now don't you go and play the fool trying   
to get V.C.s, my lad, you're worth more to us   
alive than you are dead, even if you have got the   
V.C. ribbon, round your corpse."

" You are much more likely to get the blessed   
thing than I am. I can just picture you   
bringing home the C.O. on your back under   
terrific fire."

"Don't be a fool," snapped Jackson. "I   
shall take what comes my way, but I shall not go   
looking for trouble, and anyone who does is not   
doing his job."

" I wonder what that fellow, Lance-Corporal   
Briscoe, will be like under fire; he's a perfect

p92 marvel at training work, isn't he? Fancy him   
not taking a commission."

" He'll be just as good at the real thing, as he   
has been at the training. There's nothing that   
chap can't do. He won't take a commission   
because he says he's still got a lot to learn. He's   
the most wonderfully educated chap I have ever   
seen, self-educated too. You know I didn't   
really realize, before this show, that chaps like   
that existed."

" What a pity he wasn't at a public school,

Jacker ! " .

" You tell him that, my lad, and see what he   
says; he thinks it his best bit of good   
fortune, and imagines he would have been ruined,   
If he had been educated as we have been. And   
yet he says there's a barrier between him and us."

" Well, there wouldn't have been if he'd been   
to a public school." Bremner was looking   
extraordinarily thoughtful.

" I know that, but he also says the barrier   
will be broken down in a few months, and, unless   
it is, we shall be beaten."

"Do you think it's true, old man? Pretty   
awful, some of these fellows who haven't been to   
public schools." Bremner's lips curled as if he   
had encountered an offensive smell; "they wear   
such awful clothes and go about with such   
dreadful-looking women."

" My good fellow, do use your imagination.

p93 In a few days we shall have forgotten all about   
what a man looks like, and only care about what   
he does."

The discussion had not come to an end, when   
the train pulled up at Southampton, and their   
attention was required for more important   
things.

No one, who took an interest in what he   
saw and had the fortune to cross to France with   
a British regiment, could have failed to notice the   
extraordinary ignorance displayed by the majority   
of the English in the language and customs of   
that country. Geographical position always affects   
the customs and nature of a people, but   
but it is only when people visit Europe that they   
realize the isolated sense of superiority which   
those twenty-one miles of sea breed in the British   
temperament. Nations on the mainland of   
Europe have a portion of their population within   
a certain distance of their artificial frontiers who   
do not differ materially in their habits and ideas   
from those who live within a similar distance on   
the other side. Railways run from one country   
to the other, and when a passenger crosses the   
dividing mark he hardly notices it any more   
than an Englishman does when he passes over   
the border into Scotland. A Briton, on arriving   
in a foreign country, Just laughs at everything he   
sees. He is so ignorant that it appears to him   
as humorous. He laughs at the way in which a

P94 Frenchman talks, without hesitating to think   
how comical he may himself appear to a foreigner.   
He has the most extraordinary sense of his   
superiority, and never thinks of learning from   
what he sees around him; he takes his superiority   
for granted. Unlike the German, who writes   
books and makes speeches to prove that he is the   
superman, the Briton tends to accept his superiority   
as an established fact, without noticing it.

So the regiment landed in France; its   
officers were primed with a store of French   
which they had learnt between intervals of ragging   
the so-called French master at their school, and   
its men, with one or two brilliant exceptions,   
knew none at all. Jackson was considered in   
England to be a well-educated man and yet his   
knowledge of the language and customs of our   
neighbour ended with" *Qui,"" beaucoup,"* " *avez-   
vous,"* and a few other isolated words! When   
he sat down to lunch in a small hotel in Havre,   
and the French officers came and talked to him   
in English, he felt he was about the worst   
educated person on earth. It was brought home   
to him at every turn, and his only consolation   
was the fact that he was no worse than the   
majority of his fellows.

Bad as he was at the language, Jackson was   
nothing to the C.O. He was, in fact, sent for   
by the latter to assist in conversation with the   
transport officials during the tedious railway

p95 journey to Rouen. Outside Rouen were situated   
large training camps, and it was in one of these   
that the battalion was quartered. It was, indeed,   
a pleasant spot to be encamped. . The country   
was beautiful, abounding with splendid woods   
through which it was a pleasure to route march,   
and in the fine old town were excellent restaurants,   
and opportunities for amusement and dissipation.   
It was indeed difficult to imagine its proximity   
to the war area, save for the very large numbers of   
British troops mustering there. Khaki uniforms   
were everywhere.

There was, at this time, considerable jealousy   
etween the Old and the New Army; Regular   
ubalterns did not like having to say" sir," to   
New Army majors and colonels; Regular soldiers,   
through since Mons, sniffed at New Army

sargeants. The transition from the old to the

new was taking place, but was not complete.   
Rouen was full of depots, some for Regulars,   
others for Territorials, and the units of the first   
hundred thousand were mustering there before   
proceeding to the fightirtg line. One night the

C.O. announced that he had asked some of the   
officers, who were on the staff of a depot which   
sent drafts to certain Regular units, to   
come and dine with them. It so happened   
that Jackson was entrusted with the task of   
of entertaining one of these at dinner. He was a   
Captain of some ten years service in the Regular

p96 Army, and had been wounded in the battle of the   
Marne. During the course of the dinner, Jackson   
asked him about the present condition of his   
regiment, how many officers there were of the   
original lot, and how their new officers were   
shaping. His views on the new officers were   
pretty scathing. "Some of these new chaps,   
they've never been to a decent school: you can't   
lick the beggars into shape; God knows where   
they were educated." He little thought of the   
offence his rernarke must be causing to some of   
those sitting at the table.

"Do you think," said Jackson, "that we   
shall have sufficient public school men to go   
round, and supply the officers required to carry   
us through this war? "

" I'm afraid not," he replied, "but I can't   
imagine how we shall be able to pull through   
with officers like some of these we've got out   
now,"

" What's the matter with them?" interposed   
his host. "Don't they know their job? "

" Well, it's not altogether that: some do and   
some don't, much the same as at any other   
time, but men won't have any respect for fellows   
like that. There's no one knows a gentlemen   
quicker than the British Tommy."

" And what is a gentleman?" asked his host.   
" Now you have put a stumper," he replied,   
" it's almost impossible to define; there's always

p97 something about a gentleman which marks   
him off from the ordinary man."

" It's a very vague and very small class at

present," replied the other, "but we shall have   
to extend the meaning of the term: a man will   
become a gentleman by reason of his service to   
the state, and we shall have to accept him whether   
we like it or not."

" Stow it up, Jacker," it was young Bremner   
speaking, "we're going to have some cock-   
fighting now: Captain ----'s had enough of your Jaw."

Bremner always brought him back to earth   
again with a volley of his never-ending, but   
appropriate, slang. So they got down to cock-   
fighting, and threw all their energy into it;   
determined to show themselves a match for the   
Regulars. They more than held their own and

when their guests left, they flattered them-

selves that they had done something to dissipate   
the idea that they were a set of inferior beings.

Training in Rouen at length began to get just   
as insipid as training in England; they drilled   
and marched, did physical exercises, practised   
bayonet fighting, in fact, all the old things they   
had done before. They went into the town and   
had dinner in the evenings, and were robbed by   
the few old men who were left to drive taxis.   
As young Bremner put it: '' If we are going to   
do this sort of thing we can do it better in England;

p98 one can get away for week-ends there."Any-  
thing new was a welcome change from the   
monotonous routine.. Someone in the mess,   
probably one of those whose feelings had been   
hurt by the remarks at dinner a few nights before,   
suggested that they should get up a. trench dig-   
ging competition against some of the Regulars.   
It was decided that they should each produce   
one officer and a platoon, and' should be given   
three hours in which to throw up earthworks for   
the defence of an imaginary position, and that   
the brigadier in charge of the camp should be   
asked to judge the result. The Regulars accepted   
the challenge, and a platoon was selected   
under Bremner to compete with them. The   
judge was not allowed to know who had dug   
the two sets of earthworks; the platoons were   
marched up to two positions, some two hundred   
yards apart, and each was told to throw up a   
system of defence against. an expected attack   
from a particular quarter; It was then left to the   
officer in charge to make the disposition that each   
thought best. The brigadier gave a decision in  
Bremner's favour, and the Regulars were amazed   
at the efficiency of his work. It was a triumph   
for the intelligence of the New Army, and did   
much to give the men confidence in themselves.

Jackson spent some of his time learning

French from Briscoe. The latter was simply   
wonderful, and. was to be found, when he was

p99 off parade, with a party of French peasants round   
him on their way back from market, telling him   
all about their ideas on the War and life in   
general. In the evening there used to be a   
crowd of men round his tent, listening while   
he translated the War news from the French   
newspapers. He was for ever looking for   
something new to learn, and some new people   
to talk to. When others were drinking in the   
canteen, he would be down on the quay-side   
conversing with the French bargees and   
navvies. He was at home with them all. His   
personality seemed just as strong in France as it   
was in England.

When they had been in Rouen a few weeks a   
large party of Canadians came there, to supply   
reinforcements to the Canadians at the front;   
Briscoe soon made himself at home among them.   
On the whole, they did not get on very well with   
the men in English regiments; there was   
something in the independent manner of colonials   
which made the narrow Englishmen, who had   
never been abroad, rather look at them askance.   
But to Briscoe they were just men, and the new   
ideas which they brought with them acted as   
food to the hungry soul. Jackson and he were   
going through some French idioms together in   
the former's tent one evening, and Jackson   
had got rather bored with them after about an   
hour, so asked Briscoe what he thought about

p100 the Canadians. When he was on a subject which   
really appealed to him, Briscoe would let himself   
go into fascinating rhetoric and there was nothing   
to do but sit still and listen. He had evidently   
been mightily impressed by the Canadians; for   
he gave one of his most interesting discourses.   
Many of them must have told him their life   
secrets for he recited romance after romance   
about individuals in their ranks. "There are   
men in their ranks," he said, "who are sons of   
the noblest families in England. There are   
cast-offs, sent away by over-righteous parents to   
prevent scandal; now all of them have come   
back again to do the old country a good turn.   
There are many among them who won't be found   
on any family register. The old country called   
them and they've come, the unknown lost ones   
from the darkest corners of the earth; they are   
all there, in the ranks of the Canadians; de-   
prived of their inheritances, as many of them   
have been, they've borne no malice, but have   
come forward when we are in a tight corner.   
They are the most wonderful gathering of   
prodigal sons come back again, and they'll make   
good. There must be something in our country   
if all these men will come so far." .

"They have rather an aggressive manner   
which makes them a little unpopular at first,"   
said Jackson.

"Men who've always had to look after

p101 themselves, like they've had to, acquire an attitude   
of independence, sir; but they're all right once   
you understand them; there's something in   
them which appeals to me."

As usual, Briscoe had got right to the bottom of   
these men, while others were judging on their   
external appearances.

Since the battalion arrived in France, it had   
become part of an officer's duty to censor the   
letters of the men. This duty, which officers   
found interesting at first while there was plenty   
of time to spare in camp, afterwards became the   
most tedious and unpleasant work, especially   
when they were in the fighting line, and always   
wanted to snatch whatever rest they could.   
Jackson always felt that he was unconsciously   
being prejudiced in favour of or against the   
ability of certain men from the letters which they   
wrote, and in this respect the censorship was   
somewhat undesirable. But it did, on the other   
hand, give him an insight into the petty interests   
of the men under his command, and in this way   
led him to become sympathetic towards indivi-   
duals and to understand them in a manner which   
is almost impossible for an officer to do in the   
ordinary way. When he began this work, Jack-

son particularly looked for the letters of all the   
men in whom he was specially interested, and was   
disappointed when he found none from Lance-   
Corporal Briscoe. He had quite expected that

p102 he would have written some disparaging remarks   
on the censorship, or on individual officers in the   
open and frank manner which he always assumed,   
and which always disarmed his opponents. After   
a fortnight he had been unable to discover a single   
letter from Briscoe, and began to get a little   
uneasy. It seemed impossible to imagine that   
he had never written to England all that time,   
when everyone was writing almost daily. Jackson   
wondered if it were possible that he was   
cheating the censorship in some way or other,   
and, though he hated to be suspicious, yet he felt   
justified in making investigations. After all, it   
was his duty to see that no one was injuring their   
interests, and, in those days, when the public was   
full of spy alarms and other foolish ideas, the   
extraordinary efficiency of Briscoe at foreign   
languages went to increase his uneasiness. He   
did not mention it to anyone, but sent for Briscoe   
to come to his own tent. When they were alone,   
he said, " Lance-Corporal Briscoe, how often do   
you write home? "

"I never write home, sir," he replied.

"How's that?" Jackson saw in an instant   
that he had gone too far. The fire blazed in   
Briscoe's eyes. "Because, sir, I have no home."   
All the splendid indifference of which he was   
capable was contained in those few words. Long   
afterwards Jackson remembered the picture as   
Briscoe stood there at "attention" in his tent,

p103 typical of a man with all the forces of the world   
against him, and yet absolutely impervious to   
them in his self-confidence. Jackson had never   
known what it meant to be without a home. He   
tried to draw a mental picture of the situation in   
those few seconds, while Briscoe stood before   
him. It seemed that it would bring him to   
physical and moral degradation, he pictured   
himself the exact antithesis of this man, who was   
too proud to rely upon the help of others. "I   
apologize for asking, Lance-Corporal Briscoe," he   
replied. It was the only thing to say; though   
he would have liked to hear his story, he   
refrained from asking ; there was something too   
forbidding about his appearance. He appreciated   
Jackson's restraint, and in a moment all the   
hardness of his expression seemed to be relaxed :   
" Thank you, sir," he said and saluted; then he   
turned and went away. That meeting did more   
than any other to establish the lasting friend-   
ship between Briscoe and Jackson. Jackson   
never learnt Briscoe's secret; he knew it would   
have been the end of their acquaintance, if he   
had asked him for it. Some day he hoped to   
learn it, but meanwhile he often pictured Briscoe's   
father as one returning from the back of beyond   
in the cohorts of the damned ones, which make   
up the rank and file of our colonial troops. He

felt he might be lying in a nameless grave   
in Flanders, or wandering about our cities, a

p 104 cripple for life. One thing he felt certain of-   
the father of such a son had answered the call ;   
but whether the son knew any more about his   
whereabouts than other people remained a   
mystery.

When they had been in Rouen about a month,   
the colonel sent for Jackson one day. He was   
reclining in his hut, composed ,of felt stretched   
on a wooden framework. He was always a   
particularly courteous man, and it was characteris-   
tic of him that he should get out of the deck chair   
on the subaltern's arrival, and tell him to sit in it.   
In spite of protestations Jackson was forced to   
yield, and the C.O. sat on a packing box while   
his junior reclined in the chair.

"I've been thinking, Jackson, about Lance-   
Corporal Briscoe in your platoon. We shall be   
moving up to the fighting in a few days now, and   
shall very soon be needing officers to fill the gaps,   
and I think he ought to accept a commission. We   
can't afford to have men like that killed in the   
ranks."

" I'm afraid, sir," replied the other, "that it   
will be quite useless to ask him at present. He   
has his own reasons for refusing; and he's not   
the sort to be persuaded when his mind is made

up. "

…" What are his reasons, do you know, Jackson?"   
…" Well, sir, I think he feels there is something   
between himself and us. You see he's not a

p105 public school man, and he thinks we are exclusive,   
and all that sort of thing."

"Well, it's a pity to waste the services of a   
man like that: he'll probably get killed as an   
ordinary soldier."

" I don't think there is any fear of that, sir,   
he has absolute confidence that he won't be killed."

"I wish I had, Jackson; don't you?"

Jackson didn't reply. Then he said:

"Look here, I don't like the idea of the   
fellow thinking that we shan't treat him as one of   
ourselves. You send him to me, and I'll have   
a talk with him, and see if I can put the matter   
right." It was just what Jackson expected of the

old colonel : he was one of the best, and broadest   
minded men it was possible to find. As Briscoe   
afterwards said: "He was typical of the very   
best of the old school." A well-bred man, and   
perfect gentleman, he could unbend to anyone,   
without losing dignity.

" May I, sir," said Jackson, after reflecting a   
little, "offer a little advice in dealing with   
Lance-Corporal Briscoe ? "

" Go on, my boy," replied the C.O.

" Whatever you say, sir, don't give him the   
impression that you are doing it as a personal   
favour to himself, or to help him in any way.   
He has the most peculiar pride I have ever seen,   
and don't mention his family, sir; there's

something mysterious in that direction,"

p106 " All right, Jackson; send him along."   
Jackson asked the colonel some days afterwards   
what had been the outcome of his interview with   
Briscoe. "You were right, Jackson, he was   
quite incorrigible. He knows his own mind, at   
any rate. I had never heard the question of our   
exclusiveness put in quite the same way. It   
made one think that perhaps we are an out-of-date   
relic of the past. Does this barrier really exist   
between the public school man and the other? "   
" I'm afraid so, sir," was the reply, " but it won't   
exist much longer." "Don't you think that   
men like Briscoe would do more to remove it, if   
they became officers like ourselves?" "Has   
it been removed, sir, in the case of certain others   
who joined our mess a month or more ago? "   
Jackson was referring to Grant and Wilson, two   
subalterns who had joined the regiment from   
some obscure O.T.C. just before they left   
England. They were neither of them " bred in   
the purple," and their manners had not been   
kindly received by the other juniors. "No, I   
suppose he's right, Jackson," said the colonel,   
"to wait until he's proved himself: then he   
will face anybody."

The battalion were given two days' notice to   
proceed to the line: the feverish excitement of   
those days was unforgettable. Everyone was so   
taken up with seeing that his own individual   
equipment was perfect to the nearest detail, and

p107 with writing letters to people in England which   
were not allowed to contain anything more   
definite than a statement that we were moving   
somewhere, that everything else seemed forgotten.   
Jackson had been engaged for over an hour in   
adjusting pieces of equipment on his belt and   
then pulling them off again, when Bremner   
dashed into his tent. "Come and have dinner   
to-night at the 'Angleterre'; it's the last   
chance we shall get before going up; and God   
knows if we shall ever live to eat a decent dinner   
again."

" Yes," replied Jackson, "we will, but you   
shall not pay for *my* dinner." He knew Bremner   
was already heavily in debt at the time.

" Jacker, don't be a damned fool; you don't   
want to insult a fellow, do you? "

" No, you ass, I don't, but I know quite well   
that you can't afford it; and under the circum-   
stances it is not right for me to accept, unless I   
pay my own way."

" My dear old thing, what does it matter? "   
he said, producing a bundle of five-franc notes,   
"I've got the money, and we may be dead   
to-morrow. What's the good of an advance of   
pay except to spend before you die? "

" I thought you said you were going to save   
money to get married when it's all over!"   
Jackson thought this would touch him on a   
tender spot.

p108" Married be damned: who knows that I   
shall ever have the chance; and besides, one   
hundred and fifty francs won't go far towards   
getting married, but it will get a darned good   
dinner."

He was in one of his mad moods, and it was   
useless to argue with him. But Jackson got his   
way in the end. They dined at the " Angleterre,"   
and Bremner had so much good drink that he   
forgot all about the payment. He never dis-   
covered it till two days later, when they were   
travelling to the firing line. He pulled a bundle   
of notes out of his pocket to pay for a cup of tea,   
and was surprised to see how many there were.

Just before they left, Jackson's old platoon   
sergeant went sick and had to be left behind.   
Corporal Briscoe was promoted to acting rank in   
his place. The Company Commander was   
rather afraid that there would be much disaffec-   
tion about this, as there were several senior   
corporals in the battalion. But it speaks well for   
the estimation in which he was held amongst   
the men that they never objected to his promotion.

All of them felt a sort of lurking uncertainty   
as to how they would shape when the time came.   
Jackson remembered experiencing a similar sen-   
sation when he listened to the last service in the   
chapel of his old public school on the day before   
he left. He then felt that he was going to be   
launched upon an ocean of uncertainty, and

p109 wondered whether all the training that had been   
undergone for the last five years at the school   
would carry him satisfactorily through the diffi-   
culties which lay ahead. On the present occasion,   
however, there was a little difference; one's   
concern was not for the success of oneself alone ;   
one belonged to a battalion of a thousand men,   
and one's own individual interests were merged   
with theirs. How would they all stand the   
test? The example of other battalions of the   
regiment were before them, they had set a high   
standard to live up to*.* On this occasion even   
young Bremner had some feeling of his responsi-   
bility, if only for the first time in his life. Jackson   
wanted an outlet for his feelings, so he wandered   
down the lines in search of Briscoe. He was   
just preparing to translate the war news from the   
French evening paper.

Jackson took him aside and asked him how the   
men were feeling about going up, at the same   
time saying that he was particularly desirous that   
there should be no element of dissension among   
them, and asked if there were any complaints   
which he could do anything to settle.

" You've no need to worry about the men, sir ;   
you'll find them all right. They are only waiting   
to get into it," Briscoe said with confidence.

" How do you feel yourself? "

" It will be the entry into a new world for me.

The world of artificial class distinctions, cant and

p110 prejudice can now be broken down by physical   
service. It's the chance I've lived for all my   
life. If a man comes through this with honour,   
he can lift up his head with pride amongst any   
congregation of men. For a man in my position   
it's the chance of a life. I'm one of those men   
in the world, and there are many others, who   
will owe everything to this, if they get through."

"What about myself, Sergeant Briscoe?"   
" You've a chance, too, to show that you are   
not what you are by the accident of birth or   
money, but by merit."

" I hope so," said Jackson.

As they were being rushed up from Rouen,   
the War was undergoing one of its most critical   
phases. The Germans had launched their first   
instalment of gas and breached the line in front   
of Ypres, and even while the train was carrying   
them northwards the transition period which   
Briscoe spoke about may be said to have begun.   
Those wonderful men of the Old Army were   
mustered together for their last great fight.   
The remnants who had survived from Mons,   
the Marne, Ypres, and Neuve Chapelle, were   
gathered to stem the tide. They were fighting   
and dying their glorious deaths in a desperate   
but successful effort. If any period may be   
taken as the transition period between the Old   
Army and the New, it is the end of the second   
battle of Ypres. There were some then who felt

p111 misgivings as to the quality of the New; three   
years of fighting proved they were mistaken.   
From that day forward a new type of officer and   
soldier began to appear, and the professional   
discipline and prowess of thousands gradually   
made way for the amateur enthusiasm of millions

respectmg no class distinctions, and paying homage

only to service.

The intimacy between Jackson and Briscoe   
was typical of the new era. In the Old Army   
their difference in rank would have made such a   
thing impossible. Discipline, if nothing else,

would have forbidden it. Now it was all in the   
nature of things and they were as keen on the   
regiment as the best professional soldiers.

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CHAPTER VI

THE GLAZING

AMONG the numerous epistles which Jackson   
composed during their last two days at Rouen   
was one to Bunny Fenton. Within a few days   
of their meeting in the bar of their local pub,   
when his opposition made Jackson decide to join   
the Army, Fenton had obtained his commission   
in the Cavalry Special Reserve. He had proceeded   
to France in November 1914, and been in   
action almost at once. He was in the battle of   
Neuve Chapelle with a party of dismounted   
cavalry, and there he was wounded; this took   
him back to England at a time when wounded   
officers were still treated as heroes; later on they   
became so numerous as to be regarded with   
indifference. Jackson felt that Bunny had rather   
scored off him by getting into it so soon, and   
when he heard that he was wounded he felt   
hardly fit to talk to him : a wounded officer was   
in an altogether too exalted class. So it was   
with a certain sense of satisfaction that Jackson   
announced in his letter that the battalion were   
" moving from" Rouen, which, to an initiated   
person, would be liable to only one interpretation   
-that they were going into the line. Such was

p113 the efficiency of the field postal service, that on   
the very day after they arrived at a forward   
Rest Camp, and before they had got used to long   
range shells passing overhead, a reply from   
Bunny was received. His letter ran as follows :

"My DEAR JACKER,

" Many thanks for yours; I am getting on   
satisfactorily, in fact, almost too well; I'm   
afraid there won't be much leave going for me   
when I come out of hospital. By the time   
you get this, I expect you will be in the thick of   
it, and it appears to be pretty awful just now.   
When one has been out there one learns to   
read the truth into the official communiques.   
You ask how I think England has altered since   
I went out. In one respect it has altered a   
great deal. All our old friends are either   
killed or going to be; so, from the personal   
point of view, it's very different. But, in the   
broad sense, frankly, old man, I can't see much   
change. People still have absolutely no idea   
of what we are up against, and are still squabbling   
about petty little individual disputes. But   
then, the War has not affected the mass of the   
people yet. The Old Army was not the people ;   
when the New Armies get into it,

will realize what it means. There are a   
good many folks who will never want the thing   
stop. I think you remember coming with   
us once to the N.R. Club and remarking on

p 114 that little beggar, Jones; well, his firm,   
Weston & Jones, have made more money in   
the last six months than they made in the   
previous two years; but I mustn't tell 'you   
such things when you are out there. One likes   
to feel that other people are doing their share   
when one's under fire. Well, best of luck.   
I shall probably be with you before long.   
You were right to go, I hear there is no one   
up at Oxford, except one or two fellows who've   
not played up, and are looked down on by

everyone.

" Yours ever,

" BUNNY."

It was a wonderfully thoughtful letter for

Bunny. "He's changed at any rate," Jackson   
thought, as he read. it, and pictured to himself   
Jones swallowing whisky in the N.R. Club, With   
his little eyes more alert than ever. Jones, he   
remembered, had tried to break down the social   
barrier with money and had failed. He was   
admitted into certain circles, it was true, but he   
was only tolerated and not welcomed ; he would   
have been ejected at any moment had his supply   
of money been cut off; what he had failed to   
accomplish by the use of cash, others were now   
going to effect by personal service, at least that   
was Briscoe's theory. Would they, he wondered,   
fare any better? That nearly everyone had   
gone from Oxford he was well aware; their

p115 names were already beginning to appear in the   
casualty lists. It seemed extraordinary now to   
imagine himself doing anything other than what   
he was doing. He had quite forgotten that   
once it had cost him an effort to bring himself to   
take the plunge ; but there were still a few, and   
he knew one or two who had decided that their   
own careers must not be interrupted, and were   
still studying at the university. While pitying   
them for the lack of public spirit, he admired   
them for their callousness and indifference to the   
surrounding world, but felt that those who used   
to reckon them amongst friends would find it   
difficult to conceal an air of superiority when next   
they happened to meet them.

Some men in the War found it interesting to   
note the manner in which different individuals   
were affected by the same circumstances. When   
they went under fire for the first time, Jackson   
took particular notice of the effect which the   
ordeal seemed to have upon two men, the C.O.

and Sergeant Briscoe. The colonel was quite   
outside the ordinary run of men, but he contained   
the best of those qualities which are associated   
with the class to which he belonged. He was   
sporting and he was brave. But courage was   
intensified in his case to such a degree that it   
ceased to be courage at all. Instead of possessing   
the power to control the human instinct of fear

had no such instinct. Self-preservation never

p116 seemed to occur to him; consequences were   
never given a moment's thought so far as they   
affected his own safety. He went under fire   
quite oblivious to. everything. He found it   
interesting and a little excing ; that was all.   
His indifference was superhuman, and beyond   
the comprehension of the ordinary man. The   
result in Briscoe’s case was a certain excessive   
energy, manifested in the giving of numerous   
orders, and in a sharp and fierce way of speaking.   
His jaw was more prominent than ever, and there   
was a look in his eyes which differed somewhat   
from the natural. One felt that he was taking'   
extra precautions to insure himself against any   
instinctive fear, and he inspired one with the   
confidence that he held himself under perfect   
self-control. Jackson wondered what appearance   
he presented himself ; he pictured himself as   
looking blue and pinched about the lips, and   
altogether rather uninspiring; for he certainly   
felt much the same as he used to feel when going   
to the start of a race ; at any rate, he thought, he   
must look serious. He seldom felt like cracking   
jokes on these occasions, but once he let his   
tongue go he was most extraordinarily loquacious,   
and never stopped pouring forth language of a   
more or less obscene character; the effect seemed   
to be very satisfactory, and he used to keep the   
men in continuous laughter; of course, it was   
due to a subconscious fear of giving himself away.

p117 However, individual appearances don't count   
for much on these occasions. One seems to   
know instinctively what another fellow feels like.   
.Jackson always had a very clear brain, and took   
in everything that was happening around him,   
as though it might have been a game; but oh,   
how he prayed that he might run amok or go   
mad and free himself from the strain !

The battalion had been going into the trenches   
in batches with other units, to learn the ordinary   
trench routine and gain a little confidence.   
During this time they were scattered over a large   
front, each company being attached to different   
battalions in the line. Jackson himself, with   
certain other officers. in the division, was detached   
for instruction in the art of bombing and left   
the trenches before the others. The instruction   
took place at the divisional headquarters, and   
they did not see their units again for a fortnight.   
Nothing was heard from any of the officers during   
that period, but news was obtained from despatch   
riders and others, to the effect that they had had   
some casualties, and Jackson felt a sort of anxious   
excitcment when he was on his way to join them   
again. They were in the rest camp at the time,   
and when he entered the hut which served as a   
 mess " he first felt an impression that he was a   
stranger. The talk seemed to be something   
different ; it was new to him. They were

talking in a cold business-like manner of the

p118 casualties which had occurred during the tour in   
the trenches, and of the precautions which should   
be taken to prevent a recurrence in the future.

" Old -- would not have caught that one, if   
the sand bags had been a bit higher down Seaforth   
Alley," Bremner was saying, "it just took the   
top of his head off, you see." It seemed extra-   
ordinary to hear a fellow he had known alive a   
few days before discussed in this way, as casually   
as though he had been bowled out at cricket.   
This change had been effected by a few days in   
the firing line; otherwise the officers seemed   
unaltered. The C.O. was just as unconcerned   
about personal safety, and the major was just as   
fond of the whisky as when he left them. But   
they had not really seen it yet. The one man he   
did expect to find unchanged was Sergeant   
Briscoe. But he did not know him yet. He   
did not know the history of his boyhood among   
the miners' children, when he exhibited that   
passion for revenge which nearly caused the   
policeman to get bitten by his own dog.

Imagine Jackson's surprise when he went   
on parade and discovered his platoon sergeant   
giving a minute demonstration of the art of   
fighting at close quarters, so as to make it as   
bloodthirsty as possible. The platoon was   
supposed to be engaged in bayonet exercises, but   
Sergeant Briscoe was not confining it to that.   
He had worked himself into a passion, and literally

p119 breathed slaughter upon the parade ground.   
" Did you see 'em? " he was saying, pointing   
at a man in the front rank, as Jackson came up.

" You wouldn't stand there gaping if you had."

" I didn't see 'em, sergeant." ,

" Well, I'll tell you then, and you'll understand   
what sort of men you're fighting.

"lying in the bottom of the trench they were,   
groaning and praying for death amid their   
convulsions, with faces, purple, green and all   
colours; Englishmen, my boy ... think of it,"   
and he went on to give the most fearful description   
of the effects of gas upon our men that was ever   
heard.

"What are you going to do to the bloody   
swine, eh ? "

" Kill 'em, sergeant." The men were getting   
excited now.

"How are you going to kill 'em? That's   
what I want to know. Are you going to send 'em   
painlessly to heaven with a British rifle bullet?   
My God! that's an end for kings and gentlemen   
not for murderers. I'm here to show how to kill   
'em. Everyone of those poor chaps of ours has   
got to be revenged a hundred times. Would   
you die as those men have died? "

"N0, sergeant. " It was a roar this time.

" Come on and look at this, then."

He called the men out one by one, and proceeded   
to give a demonstration of killing, not with a

p120 bayonet; but with his bare hands. "There'

no room for bayonets in a trench and no pleasure

in 'em, if there *is* room. You want to feel 'em,   
like pulp in yer hands; think of it, squeezing a   
German's neck till his eyes come out of the   
sockets: there's some pleasure in a revenge like   
that." He showed them some grip or other,   
which he had learnt from some of his Canadian   
friends in the camp at Rouen, and his eyes were   
hungry with the lust for blood.

Many men, of less remarkable personality,   
saw red in this war, and yet did not influence the   
others round them. Briscoe, in the course of a   
few minutes, had carried the men away with him,   
so that they forgot everything else in a mad   
desire to be murdering German soldiers. The   
same forceful personality, which had made him   
such a fierce antagonist on the hustings, carried   
away his hearers till they had become mere   
instruments for interpreting his revenge; he   
had but to give the word, and they would have   
gone to any extreme. Jackson felt he could well   
imagine now the Paris mob in the Revolution   
being goaded to acts of wanton butchery, by the   
speeches of popular orators. Nothing could   
resist the flame of such fiery passion. Given a   
free hand, a man like Briscoe could be the dictator   
of any mob inside half an hour. It was wonderful   
and yet appalling to think what power is given   
to some individuals,

p121 " Stand the men at ease, sergeant," he said,   
after he had watched this demonstration of   
passion. Briscoe had evidently not noticed him   
before, and his expression of ferocious hate was   
somewhat abated as he gave the command to   
stand at ease.

"You've seen what it's like then, Sergeant

Briscoe," he said quietly.

" I wish you'd seen what I've seen, sir," he   
replied, "there'd be no need for conscription   
in England, if everyone had been with me three   
days back. I was attached to the 1st battalion   
of the -- on the scene of the first gas attack,   
which had taken place two days before. We had   
retaken some of the trench, lost that day, and   
found some of the chaps gassed. It'll take us all   
our time to repay what those men have suffered."

From that day forward Jackson found he was   
commanding a platoon of very different material   
from that which he had known before. If any   
of the men ever showed any signs of slackness   
or of being disinterested, in the task before them,   
Briscoe would give them one of his little harangues   
and in a few minutes they would all be raving for   
blood like a pack of wolves. The battalion had   
been given a line of trenches on their own in a   
fairly quiet part of the line. At this point the   
trench systems on either side were so strong that   
important action by either party was possible.

p122 Every day brought its few casualties from shells   
and trench mortars, and every night, perhaps, one   
wretched sentry would take a bullet through the   
head. Some got to think of the work as useless   
routine which might last for months or years and   
possibly death at the end of it. Through those   
days it was Sergeant Briscoe who kept up the   
fettle of the men; he never let them think of   
anything but vengeance. Perhaps he would be   
patrolling the trench at night and see one of. the   
reliefs sitting beside the sentry carelessly dozing,   
or he would find a man with a dirty rifle in the   
morning. "Do you remember those mates of   
ours who were gassed?" he would say to the   
offending private. "Yes, sergeant." "Aren't   
you going to get even with the Boches? Aren't   
you going to pay' em back for their dirty, low down   
tricks, do you mean to let the murderers escape? "   
" No, sergeant." "No, I know you don't, but   
you'll need to look to the work better than this ;   
where would you have been, my lad, if yonder   
Hun had come across to-night. You'd never 'ave   
bin ready to give his throat that little twist I   
showed you." Through all the various sensations   
which came upon men while holding trenches   
opposite an enemy they never saw, sensations of   
fatigue, boredom, and pessimism, he was never   
deflected from his one purpose-revenge, and he   
saw that every man, not only in the platoon, but

in the while company, kept this idea fixed before   
p123 him. It was while they were in the rest camp after   
a tour in the trenches that the papers were received   
announcing the torpedoing of the *Lusitania.*Briscoe gave the men a little lecture that day.   
"You see, sir," he said to Jackson, when the   
latter disturbed him in the middle of it, " some of   
'em don't read the paper; I've just described the   
scene so as to bring it home to them." He had   
given an account from his vivid imagination,   
which, if set down on paper, would have done   
credit to any leading journalist.

Sergeant Briscoe was not a mere talker all   
through those weary days. He did all the sordid   
work in the mud of the trenches like the rest of   
them, and then when he had finished and everyone   
else was occupied with thoughts of bodily fatigue   
or personal despair, he would never let himse~f   
forget his one object in view, and would keep It   
before the minds of others.

The C.O.'s only regret during this period was   
that the fighting was not lively enough, he did not   
like to hear the guns pounding away round Y pres   
and to think that his battalion were not in the   
thick of it; he was an incorrigible optimist, and   
always expressed a belief that the War would be   
over before they had done a big thing. The few   
daily casualties which they were sustaining were   
restricted almost solely to subalterns and to the   
rank and file. The colonel hated the juniors

taking all the knocks and almost wanted to

p124 see some of the senior officers figure in the list.

Bremner felt depressed or elated in accordance   
with the accuracy or otherwise of the British   
howitzer fire and he really enjoyed snipmg   
imaginary Germans in the mist at breaking dawn.   
But his ardour was damped badly on one occasion,   
when he was nearly court-martialled for firing   
excitedly with his revolver at a hare which   
sprang out of a shell hole on the march back   
to camp. The bullet passed through the   
major's field glasses and rendered them a valuable   
trophy but quite useless for further reconnalssance.   
Bremner had a habit of getting badly depressed   
when he was cold, and a shortage in the whisky   
or rum rations affected his spirits and fighting   
efficiency very adversely. He used to come   
round to Jackson's dug-out in the small hours ~f   
the morning to be restored to his normal condi-

tion, and there was one never-forgotten morning

When Jackson had to announce the sad tale that

the rum carriers had been “strafed” by a heavy

shell on the way to the trenches. He felt

rather a poor specimen himself ; the whisky had   
been finished on the day before, and they had had   
a bitterly cold and wet night. He felt shrivelled   
up and miserable, but he flattered himself that .he   
presented an air of cheerfulness compared with   
Bremner, who looked about half his usual size,   
and as though his very last day had come ;. he   
was blue with cold, and his teeth were chattering.

p125 But when the sun came out, he recovered his   
usual cheerfulness, and he was worth a lot then.   
When he came round for his early morning spot of   
rum he and Jackson used to discuss things in   
general and try to think out schemes for annoying   
the enemy during the next twenty-four hours.

"Do you know," he began one morning,   
" I've been thinking that that fellow Briscoe is a   
great deal more useful as a sergeant, than he could   
possibly be as an officer. He has much more   
influence over the men than he could possibly   
have if he were in our position."

" My good man, there's nothing extraordinary in   
that; they always say that the non-commissioned   
officers are the backbone of the British Army,"   
replied the other sharply.

" By the way, Jacker, that fellow was suggest-   
ing rather a good stunt this morning; and you're   
the man to do it."

" Why should I be specially selected? "

" Well, it's a bombing stunt, and you are the   
battalion bomb expert, or supposed to be. Now,   
look here: Briscoe says there are two kinds of   
fuses, ordinary and instantaneous, is that right? "

" Yes, I believe it is."

"Well, now, his idea is to fit some jam tin   
bombs with instantaneous fuses, and hurl them   
over to the Boche, unlit. Then he thinks the   
Boche will jump to the conclusion that we are a   
lot of mugs and don't understand the damned

p126 bombs, he'll then light the bombs with the   
intention of hurling them back. The fuse   
being instantaneous, the result may be judged,   
comprenez? "

" My God, that's a good scheme ; he has got a brain, that chap. He spends his whole day   
thinking how he can do down our friend over   
yonder. I'll see if we have got any instantaneous

fuse."

Jackson hunted through his bomb stores and   
managed to find a yard or so of the required fuse.   
As it was Briscoe's scheme he took him into   
confidence, and they made up the bombs between   
them. The length of fuse was sufficient to make   
about a dozen. These were hurled across at   
Fritz when he started his evening "strafe."   
Briscoe's surmise was correct; the enemy got   
one of the surprises of his life, and within a   
minute of hurling them over, they heard a series   
of explosions in his trenches. " We are one up   
on the Huns this time," said Briscoe, "did you   
hear the whistle, sir? That means stretcher-   
bearers wanted," and he smiled with a satisfied air.

There were few chances of personal distinction   
during the first few weeks, though some of them   
had their nerves considerably shaken by their   
proximity on several occasions to bursting shells   
or trench mortars, and to other forms of death   
sent over by an invisible enemy. At the end of   
the period they had suffered six casualties among

p127 the officers, and 120 among the rank and file.   
These were, however, sufficient to bring home to   
them the continuous wastage of war. There was   
no exciteme?t or glamour, just the sordid beastly   
trench fighting of modern war, with its tremen-   
dous nerve strain. All the time a new spirit'   
was gro:ving up in the officers' mess; reputations   
were being made and marred by the bearing of   
fellows in an occasional hot corner, or their   
:esource in difficult circumstances, and seniority   
In rank began to count for less than personality.   
But there. was .a general atmosphere of good   
comradeship which broke down the little cliques   
which existed among them when they were in   
training in England. There were three real   
cliques among the junior and two among the   
senior officers when they landed in France, but,   
already their six casualties had torn a gap in each   
of these, and they saw those of another clique   
whom they Ignored or almost disliked doing fine   
things under fire, and over and over again they   
reversed their previous opinions of each other.   
Then again fresh officers ilad joined the mess and   
their presence helped to sever connection with the   
old days; it was always hard for a new officer   
coming out, he was scrutinized very carefully and   
criticized very hardly by those who had been out   
six weeks, but, if he had the right stuff in him, he   
had become a veteran himself in a month and   
was well in the bosom of the mess. But the arrival

p128 of these new officers did more than anything   
else to make Jackson understand that Briscoe had   
been right when he prophesied the early change   
of the old order. On the whole, they did not   
come from the class that are usually termed   
gentlemen, but when they showed themselves   
efficient and keen the old hands took them to   
their hearts as completely as those whom they had replaced.

Bremner and Jackson were having their rum

together one morning, when the conversation   
turned on the subject of individual distinction.   
 No one gets much of a chance here, Jacker, do   
they? " the former was saying.

"Well, there's a chance now," replied the   
other, " H.Q. want to know the name of the unit   
opposite; what about getting it ? "

" My good man, how the devil am I going to

find that out? "

" Capture one of the Boches and bring him

back."

" I've been out on patrol looking for one every

night, and never seen one yet."

"The C.O. is dead keen on our battalion getting it; I think he wants us to make a raid, unless   
someone suggests something."

" A raid would be something like a show ; but   
I don't suppose the Brigade will allow that ;   
they don't want us to waste a lot of men simply   
to get the name of our opposite number."

p129" They won't need to. We shall know this

morning."

" How? "

" Briscoe asked me for leave to do it on his own."   
" How the devil is he going to find out? "

" He'll do it somehow."

Dawn was just breaking, and in a few minutes   
it would be time for " stand to "; so they left   
the discussion and wandered into their various   
sections of their trench. When Jackson   
arrived Sergeant Bnscoe was inspecting the sentry   
posts, and giving a cheery word to each. "Keep   
awake, lad, we've not paid 'em for the *Lusitania*yet," he was saying to a tired man on duty and   
the latter pulled himself together at once. " 'Aye,   
sergeant, and what about that there bloody   
breakfast the devils spoilt yesterday? "

Jackson thought from Briscoe's attitude that   
his enterprise must have failed. . He expected   
him to have come rushing to him with excitement.   
For a moment his confidence in Briscoe was   
shaken. When he had finished his round of the   
sentries, Jackson passed word down for the   
sergeant. '’How did you get on last night,   
Sergeant Briscoe?" he said.

" I think I can tell you all about the Huns   
yonder, sir." He said it as coolly as though they   
were talking over an English breakfast table.

" What," said Jackson in astonishment,   
" you've done it ?

p130 " Yes sir I said I would get you the informa-

tion and I've got it, and what's more, in case

anyone should doubt it, I've brought a proof."

" How did you do it ? "

" You know that little finger trick I taught the men, sir.

" Yes."

"Well, I got home on the flabby. neck of a   
fat Bavarian ; my God, it was great, sir! The   
thought of his grip on the Bavarian's neck made   
Briscoe lose his self-composure for a second, and   
a look of fierce triumph came over his features.

"Where did you find him?" Jackson was   
trembling with excitement.

" His head was over the top of the trench, on   
sentry duty. I saw him doze for a second, and   
it was all over. I've got his shoulder straps and   
badges."

" My God! " exclaimed the other, "I've never

heard anything like it."

" It was only one of the little debts we owe to   
Germany, here are the souvenirs,"and he produced   
the badges and shoulder-straps from his pocket.

A feather would have knocked Jackson over,   
the extraordinarily cool way in which Briscoe   
announced his achievement made it almost   
impossible to believe.

" Well, Briscoe," he said, " you must come and

bring these to the C.O. yourself, and .tell your,own   
tale. I feel quite unable to do justice to it "

p131" I don't think there is any need for that, sir :   
I just saw a German head over the trench, waited   
till he dozed and killed him, that's all there is to   
say. If you'd take 'em yourself, sir, I should be   
grateful."

There was no argument with this extraordinary   
person, so Jackson took them, but when he thought   
of the daring and skill required to lie right under   
the parapet of the German trench, and then to   
kill a German sentry within a few yards of his   
friends, he felt that Sergeant Briscoe was little   
short of supernatural. He handed the trophies   
to the colonel and explained what had happened.   
" We must get him a decoration for that," said   
the C.O., when he had finished, "it's damned   
good; when's that fellow going to accept a   
commission ? "

" That's more than I can tell you, sir; Sergeant   
Briscoe is rather a puzzle to all of us."

" Well, you might ask him, then."

He asked Briscoe right enough, but never gave   
his reply to the C.O. He just said, " I have got a   
great deal to learn yet, Sir, but the time'll come.   
The New Army and the New England are in the   
transition stage. For the present I'm better as I   
am."

Whenever Briscoe made one of his paradoxical   
remarks Jackson always used to find some proof   
of his contention within a few days. On this   
particular occasion it was a letter from Bunny

p132 Fenton. Ever since his release from hospital   
Bunny had been on some staff job at home. He   
had been out in France during the period in which   
the Old Army made its desperate fight alone.   
He knew nothing of the new period which was   
coming. There was a paragraph in his letter on   
the subject of "damned new officers." "God   
knows what fellows like that will do when they   
get into it," he wrote, " the Army will never be a   
gentleman's job again." "So the old spirit is   
there," thought Jackson, "but, Bunny, my friend,   
you'll see a big change when you get out here   
again"; and he sat out in his dug-out to compose a   
reply containing a description of Sergeant Briscoe's   
exploit. He felt that it would do to show Bunny   
something of the spirit of the New Army, and the   
more he wrote about it, the more convinced he   
became that such deeds must break down the   
wall of exclusiveness with which the public   
school fellows surrounded themselves.

A few days before they moved from that part   
of the line Briscoe received the D.C.M., the first   
decoration bestowed upon any of the battalion.   
The period of their initiation was over; they   
were now fairly blooded, and were moved up to   
relieve the war-worn troops in front of Ypres. It   
was something of an honour to go to Ypres in   
those days. It was *the* part of the British line.   
Men went up into the salient never expecting   
to come back, and the remarks of officers and

p133 others, whom they met on the march up, made   
them feel that they were in for the real thing.   
The colonel was delighted at the thought of   
real fighting, and the more he heard about the   
salient the better he seemed to like it. For his   
own part, Jackson felt a little overcome with the   
magnitude of the task which they were called   
upon to face; he felt somewhat uncertain of   
himself. The men in his platoon, Sergeant   
Briscoe assured him, were unbeatable, and such   
was his confidence in the magic of Briscoe's person-   
ality, that he felt quite at ease on that point.   
He felt though, that Briscoe ought to be leading   
instead of himself, and that he was really leaning   
on his sergeant for support. Bremner just said   
that they had better have a good drink before   
they went, because they would never live to   
have another, and there the matter ended, so far   
as he was concerned. Certain other officers   
decided that they had already seen enough regi-   
mental .duty, and that it was time to get some   
staff appointment, but the mere mention of the   
word "staff" sent the colonel into such paroxysms   
of rage, that they took care not to mention it in   
public. However, on the whole, the battalion   
went up into the salient with most of the old   
gang, and many of the old ideas. Before they   
came out of it, the old gang and the old ideas had   
been compelled by force of circumstances to   
yield to something more up-to-date.

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CHAPTER VII

THE FINISHED ARTICLE

THINGS were moving rapidly in England during   
the battalion's first few months in France. In a   
modern democratic state there is no appreciable   
part of the population which wants war for its   
own sake, with the exception of the insignificant   
few who have no other work in life, and a number   
of old maids who think that military training is a   
good cure for the bad manners of the lower classes.   
Owing, however, to an insular position which   
prevented the people from seeing an enemy on   
their territory, and to the smallness of the Army   
which confined the casualties to a narrow section of   
the public, the majority in England during the   
first half of 1915 found the reality of war some-   
thing far better than they had pictured it to be.   
The political evils which were obsessing the minds   
of everyone in the peaceful days of 1914 were, for   
the moment, in abeyance. The Irish question   
had sunk into insignificance; the suffragettes   
had ceased to smash windows and damage   
churches. Unemployment no longer existed.   
Jackson used to receive letters telling him of the   
war work which one or other of his lady friends   
were doing, and he was expected to gape with

p135 admiration. His father dilated on the butchers'   
or bakers' sons who had received commissions,   
and wondered what the country was coming to,   
while his mother harped on the fearful wages   
which girls were getting in munition factories and   
kept saying that people would soon be without   
servants altogether. It all sounded as though   
some revolution had taken place and as if England   
had changed in a day; but those at the front took   
all this with a pinch of salt. It takes something   
more than the headlines of the newspapers to   
change a great nation bred in tradition. Even   
Jackson himself, with all that he had seen in the   
last six months, knew that he had not eradicated   
his old failings, and had not yet been educated to   
any really new conceptions.

So the men abroad were sceptical about the   
war work which all the ladies seemed to have   
taken up. They suspected those whose photo-   
graphs appeared in the illustrated weeklies of being   
largely guided by the desire for publicity, nor   
were they impressed by the extraordinary self-   
sacrifice of the millionaires' wives who allowed   
British officers to share their Rolls-Royces in   
the Park. Even Bremner, that chivalrous ladies'   
man, was once heard to emit a low whistle of   
disbelief as he saw the perfectly dressed form of a   
society beauty on one of the pages of the *Tatler,*with the heading "Engaged on arduous war   
work," In certain papers the politicians were

p136 credited with having suddenly become saints,   
animated by one thought only, that of saving the   
Empire; it was announced that " none were for a   
party, but all were for the state." During those   
few months of 1915 from Neuve Chapelle to the   
day before the Battle of Loos, England seemed to   
have become a nest of self-sacrifice, reform, and   
successful imperialism; at least the press made   
it appear so. The future looked bright, and   
fools talked of the War being over in the autumn ;   
and even in France there were a few simple-   
minded people who believed it; the dear old   
colonel was one of them.

The signs which those on active service saw   
around them should have been sufficient to dispel   
any undue optimism that England had become   
suddenly perfect. Jackson &Co. had not been   
in the salient very long before they realized what   
German gunfire was like. Their trenches were   
subjected to one of the worst bombardments   
that had ever been seen, many of their best men,   
and one or two officers were buried in the debris,   
and, as they struggled hard to dig them out whilst   
possibly a spark of life remained, it was impossible   
not to reflect upon the shortage of their own

ordnance: they saw men die with expressions   
such as "Where are our guns? " upon their lips.   
Then, a few days later, they received the papers   
containing a speech from the Prime Minister

saying there was no shortage of shells.

p137 These should have been sufficient proofs to show   
that the self-sacrificing efficiency which they read   
about had yet to be learnt in England. At the   
core the old country was just the same. In   
another part of the world, too, the same bungling   
was going on, and men's lives were being wasted   
in Gallipoli in the good old fashioned way.

The one part of the news from home which   
interested Jackson was that about the officers who   
were being given commissions, and he was un-   
certain in his conclusions as to whether it was   
good or bad. He asked Sergeant Briscoe what   
he thought about it, hoping that he would have   
some views on the subject, and he was not disap-   
pointed. "You think, do you, sir, that the giving   
of all these commissions will do much to smooth   
over the prejudice of your class; I'm afraid I   
don't agree. You will never be ready to accept   
these men who have been pitchforked into   
commissions without a claim, and why should   
you? You'll only remain more aloof than you   
are at present. And we men maintain that we   
must have officers wlfo are efficient. These,   
except in a few cases, will not suit either of us.   
You want gentility and we want efficiency; and   
our point is that you will be ready to accept us,   
if we are proved to be efficient; and soon you   
won't be able to help yourselves."

" What do you propose then? " asked Jackson

" We propose that commissions are given

p138 for efficient service, and we think that those   
of us who get promoted by that means will be   
accepted by you without reserve."

" Yes, I think there is something in what you   
say. After all, the old families in England got   
their position through service to the Crown in the   
first instance."

" And all they want now is some fresh blood,   
which will inspire them with vigour and efficiency,   
while we want that culture which could be gained   
by association with them."

" And you don't think we shall be ready to   
accept some of these men who are getting com-   
missions now? "

"Of course I don't. They have neither   
gentility nor efficiency: how should they appeal   
to you? They will do us all the harm in the   
world."

" How do you propose to appeal to us ? "   
" By efficient service."

" We shall accept that, shall we ? "

" You will either accept us on those grounds,   
or disappear altogether as an important class in   
the state."

" That would be a calamity ! " said Jackson   
sarcastically.

"Do you know, sir," retorted the sergeant   
very seriously, "it would be the worst calamity   
that ever befell Great Britain."

" Why do you think so ? "

p139"Because culture and courtesy have done   
more than anything else to elevate our reputation   
throughout the world."

After they had been a month in the Ypres   
district the most popular notice that can ever be   
issued by a G.H.Q. was received by the battalion.   
It announced that officers and men might be   
allowed to proceed on leave in certain proportions.   
By reason of the casualties which they had suffered   
Jackson found himself some twelve places higher   
on the list for leave than he would have been   
before. But though his position was so much   
advanced, the fourteen officers who still came   
above him and who could only proceed two at a   
time delayed the arrival of his turn sufficiently to   
give him many anxious thoughts as to whether   
he would ever live to see it. He was highly   
excited to learn from those returning what   
England was like. The colonel was the first   
to go on leave; he went in much the same   
spirit as, when he took an afternoon off work at   
home, not as though he were going from death to   
life. He was oblivious to any fear that he might   
die before he got away, and he came back without   
a sign of that depression which characterized the   
others, after leaving those whom they might not   
see again. He was not callous or hard; he was   
one of the best of husbands, but he just did not   
understand what he was going into. He had   
seen enough of death since they came to Ypres ;

p140 he had read the funeral service over some of his   
best officers and men, yet he remained personally   
quite indifferent to it. Whether he was a fatalist   
no one could say, but his actions were always   
" magnificent," though sometimes they were not

war.

"war. "

" I went over to see your people, Jackson," he said patting the younger man on the back. "They   
were awfully keen to hear about you."

" How did you find them, sir? " said the other, feeling that thrill which people always feel when   
someone meets them in a foreign country and talks   
of their home.

" Oh, very fit. Your father's doing colonial   
remounts; got quite a useful lot ; your mother's   
licking V.A.D.s into shape. Both doing their   
bit."

"Very good of you to look them up, sir.

They're not worried about me, I hope?"

" I told 'em they'd soon be seeing you for a few   
days. They're looking forward to that. Taking   
things in the right spirit."

" Hope you found all well at your home, sir."   
 " Yes, capital. That young boy of mine's as   
keen as mustard; wishes he was old enough to

join us. Afraid it'll be over before his turn   
comes."

" Aren't you glad?" said Jackson, inwardly shuddering at the thought of it lasting till a boy   
of thirteen would be ready for the shambles.

p141"I don't know. It's better sport than fox-   
hunting, and a lot cheaper."

Such a remark from the C.O. was no mere

bravado ; he really thought so.

He told some of them afterwards in the dug-   
out which did duty as a mess that he was really   
quite glad to be back again because it annoyed   
him seeing so many eligible men still loafing   
about at home, and that was really just about the   
attitude one might have expected him to take.   
The other senior officers gradually went and   
came back again, but still it seemed a long way to   
Jackson's turn; what it must have seemed to the   
men! It was fairly certain to take at least a year   
before they could all get a turn, even if leave were   
not stopped, but then, as Sergeant Briscoe said,

they took it for granted that they would get home

wounded before they ever went on leave, and there

was always the off-chance that they got killed,

in which case they improved the prospects of the

others.

Bremner got very excited, indeed, when the   
two last before him departed, and it seemed as   
though he enjoyed those few days preceding his   
own departure almost as much as he did the leave   
itself. He was always great on the joys of antici-   
pation. The fact that he had obtained his com-   
mission a week earlier than Jackson did, threw   
him several places above his friend on the list.   
A day in the date of commission often meant a lot

p142 in the War. He and Jackson were having a   
whisky and soda on the last night but one before   
he was due to go. He was in splendid spirit s.

" Now what are you going to do when you do   
get there? " asked Jackson when they had chinked   
their mugs together. "I suppose you've made   
arrangements to see your lady friends. Who is it   
going to be ?" Bremner enjoying himself with-   
out a girl was unthinkable, and in the normal   
course of events he would have taken out a   
different one every day. Jackson wondered if   
perhaps he had altered in this respect with being   
out in France. He had, before the War, been   
rather attached to Jackson's favourite cousin,   
Joan. She and Tony always took each other   
into confidence, and he knew that she was very   
much in love with Bremner. She was one of the   
finest type of English girls, and might well   
aspire to capture the heart of any man. Bremner   
in peace time had seemed hardly a sound matri-   
monial venture, but her parents' opposition on   
that account had only made her the more in earnest,   
and Tony Jackson, who could never refuse any-   
thing she asked him, was enlisted on her side.   
But when he saw the fickleness of Bremner's love   
affairs whilst they were in training in England, he   
felt that he had enlisted on the wrong side. Joan   
was one of those whom he never could resist, and   
so he remained under her banner, and even the   
sordid horrors of the battlefield never prevented

p143 him from doing her those little services which   
he could, and reporting by letter how the, land lay.

Bremner had been forbidden to go to the   
house by Joan's excellent and thoroughly well-   
meaning father, and her last letter of two days   
before, had asked Jackson to concoct some plan   
for her to meet Bremner when he came on leave.   
As she was forbidden to write to him, and as   
Jackson knew him well enough to be quite sure of   
that, It would be fatal to let him think that she   
was after him? the matter was not easy, and   
presented considerable difficulties. He racked   
his brains as he sipped whisky with Bremner in a   
dug-out.

" Well, one may as well have a good time for   
those few days, Jacker: I shall do the best I can   
in that time."

" By all means. What form of amusement do you particularly fancy? "

"Well, at all events, I'm going to have a   
dance; do you know the Coates' of Lancaster   
Gate? . No, I thought you didn't. Well, they   
are getting up a party for the first night, and we   
are going to the Savoy."

" Which night will that be ? " said his friend

plotting to do down Bremner all the time. '

"Well, of course, I might land in town on   
Monday night, but it has definitely been fixed   
for Tuesday to prevent any possibility of going

p144 wrong; so it should be all right unless the  
Germans upset my pans.

It was now Sunday, and the dance was to come   
off on the following Tuesday week, so there were   
eight days in which to fix things up. A letter   
would take two or possibly three days, so there   
was no time to be lost. As he didn't know the   
Coates' it was difficult to see what he could do.   
Joan would not be allowed to go to a dance   
alone and to think of her people coming all the   
way from the Midlands for a night at the Savoy   
was more than idiotic. It was a poser.

Jackson could only think of one solution, which   
was that he should go himself on leave when   
Bremner went and invite Joan to come with him.   
Her cousin Tony was one of those privileged to   
take her about alone. But how was he to go on   
leave? His turn did not come till the next   
batch but one after Bremner came back. He   
knew that if he went to the C.O. and pleaded   
special family reasons for going early he would   
probably have allowed someone else to exchange   
with him and he felt no doubt that the officer   
who was going with Bremner would do so. The   
spirit of comradeship in adversity makes one   
ready to do such things. But then there was a   
chance that someone might get killed while he   
was on leave in his place. In fact, a man's leave   
might mean the difference between life and death to   
him. Jackson could not face such a chance as that.

p145 Just as he had decided that it was impossible,   
a bright thought struck him. "Bunny" Fenton   
knew the Coates. They were famous for their   
wonderful cook; he had often heard Bunny tell   
about the belshazzars he had enjoyed at their   
table.

Jackson rushed out of the dug-out leaving   
Bremner to sip the rest of his whisky, and went   
to the burrow inhabited by the regimental sergeant-   
major.

"Have you two telegraph forms for England, sergeant-major "

He was quite excited with his little plot.

" Yes, sir, I think so," returned that gentleman in his deliberate, cold-blooded way.

He sat on a bacon box with a field note-book on   
his knee, and wrote as follows.

" Ask Joan Elliot to dance with you Savoy,   
Tuesday night, 21st AAA Myself coming on   
leave AAA writing."

This was to Bunny Fenton.

"Come to Savoy with Bunny and me   
Tuesday night-21st ·AAA writing."

This was to Joan.

"Have these transmitted by the telephone   
orderly, sergeant-major, will you? "

" Yes, sir," he said, and took them off to the telephone dug-out.

As he put his head out of the sergeant-major's   
dug-out, a party of stretcher-bearers forced their way down the trench bearing a mortally wounded p146 man, mangled and torn indescribably, and   
he was forced to forget the glitter of the Savoy.

That night when he had finished his tour on   
duty and had handed over to another, Jackson sat   
in his dug-out with a guttering candle in an   
empty whisky bottle and composed two letters.

He told Bunny that he had got to get himself   
and Joan invited to join the Coates' party at   
dinner, producing a telegram from France to   
explain to Joan that her cousin couldn't come at   
the last minute. Bunny was told that Joan had   
received instructions to meet them at the Savoy   
at 7.30, and that he *must* be there, and ready to   
explain everything, and to say that she was on no   
account to go back, because, he, Tony, hadn't   
come. Of course, Bunny had to be told the   
hidden reason for all this. Jackson tore up the   
letter three times; it took him two hours to get   
the desired result, and he had but four hours off   
duty in which to get a little sleep.

Then he wrote to Joan: and persevered until   
he had got the two letters to dovetail satisfactorily.   
His remarks to her were briefly as follows. He   
began by saying that he was coming home on   
leave and simply must see her, after all this time,   
and that he knew her people would let her come   
up to Town, as he might never dance with her   
again: that she was to ask her mother to.get some   
friends of hers to put her up for one night, and

p147 that he would bring her home again on the way to his own home.

"Bunny," he wrote, " is fixing the show up, so   
you may hear from him as well, and I have told   
him to let you know what time to be at the Savoy.   
I shall be there whatever time he says," and he   
added "you simply must come, or you'll always regret it, as I shall have some news for you.

By the time he had completed this innocent looking letter, it was time for him to be on duty   
again. He had never enjoyed a night in the   
trenches before, but he did that one. It was   
great to think that one could do little services for   
one's friends, even from that godforsaken hole.

There were no answers to these letters, and   
Jackson took it as a satisfactory sign. He was

surprised to find how interested he could become

in other people's affairs, under certain circum-

stances. He could truthfully say that, from the

day when he laid his scheme, he became quite

as excited over the prospect of Bremner's leave

as he was over his own. It was up to him to see

that Bremner did go d'n leave and at the right

time. There was one danger-that owing to a

momentary shortage of officers, the C.O. might   
ask Bremner to postpone his leave until the draft,   
which was expected daily, should come. This  
was where he, Jackson, would come in, and in the   
event of such an occurrence, he decided to offer   
himself as willing to take over Bremner's work,

p148 which meant that he would have to be on duty for   
double the ordinary time. It would be a fearful   
strain but only for a few days. Here again was   
where Sergeant Briscoe came in: for Jackson   
knew very well that it did not matter whether he   
himself was on duty with the platoon or not.   
Briscoe would be able to carry on just the same   
without him, and if he did find the strain of the   
double work too much he could make Briscoe   
responsible for part of it, with perfect confidence.   
All this he thought out but never had occasion to   
put into effect; because on the day before   
Bremner was due to go, the draft of officers   
arrived. Jackson's last words to him as he   
marched down the communication trench,   
covered with mud and a beard of ten days growth   
were" Mind you have a good time in London, old   
man ! You will probably meet Bunny Fenton if   
you go to the Savoy. If you do" don't forget to   
-give him my love." He was just as glad that   
Bremner was going as he would have been to go   
himself. He couldn't help thinking that he must   
be mighty fond of Joan to have felt like that : for   
there is nothing in the world about which a man   
feels so selfish as about leave from the front.

During those few days which were spent by   
Bremner in England and by the battalion in the   
vicinity of Ypres, nothing happened beyond the   
usual shell-fire and bombing activity resulting in   
a few odd casualties, and Jackson again proved

p149 his skill at dodging the fragments and missiles   
which were steadily depriving them of the old   
hands and changing the faces of those who were   
to be found seated on packing boxes 'round the   
mess dug-out. He heard nothing from Bremner,   
Joan, or Bunny. No news, he thought, is good   
news, and he waited patiently for Bremner's   
return. There was only one unfortunate incident.   
Jackson got a letter from his people saying that   
they understood from his aunt that he was coming   
on leave, and wanted to know why he had not   
told them about it, and when he proposed to turn   
up at home. He had not foreseen this contin-   
gency, and now hastened to assure them that he   
had intended his visit to be a surprise, and that   
he would let them have a wire from London when

he arrived there. His father afterwards told him

that the non-receipt of the wire had caused them

much anxiety and of course attributed the whole

affair to Tony's indifference, and the whole

position had to be explained before he could get

Jackson senior to withdraw the charge that he   
had neglected his filial duty.

At last they went out of the trenches for a few   
days in reserve; and having had little sleep for   
the last ten days they landed at their destination   
at 8 a.m. after marching all night. Jackson threw   
himself on his valise as soon as he had eaten a   
meal, and knew nothing until he was wakened up   
by the impact of the point of a cane between his

p150 shoulder blades. He turned over and cursed his   
disturber to eternity, deciding at the same moment   
that it must be one of those new officers who   
would have to be taught manners. But the   
prodding continued, and he was forced to open his   
eyes and look for the aggressor. It was Bremner,   
clean, beautiful; and smiling.

" Wake up, Jacker ; they say you've been here   
ten hours now, otherwise I would have let it   
wait."

"Let what wait?" grumbled the somnolent

Jackson.

" The news."

" What news? The War isn't over, is it ? "   
" Next best, old man; I'm engaged."

" You're what? "-and then he remembered   
all about it.

" It's the funniest thing you ever heard in your   
life. I've been damned keen on a certain girl a   
long time: but somehow her parents didn't   
cotton on to me much, and I got requested to make   
my presence scarce."

" I don't wonder at that," chirped the recum-   
bent form from the folds of the valise.

" Shut up, Jacker, till I have finished. Well   
I'm damned if I didn't meet her at the Savoy the   
night I went with the Coates' and her people   
weren't there either. Bunny brought her along   
to introduce her. Didn't know we'd met before.   
(" Bunny," thought Jackson, "you're a brick

p151 even if your father does make some beastly   
sauce.") She was bowled over and so was 1.   
Well, you know when a chap's on a few days' leave   
from this he feels ripe for anything, and so did 1.   
I got hold of her programme and booked half the   
dances. Old Mother Coates was damned sick,   
because it threw her party out. By the end of the   
evening we were engaged. What do you think of   
that? Wait a minute, I've not finished yet. I   
felt bold enough to face the old man next day.   
I got about half a bottle of fizz on board, and went   
down home with her; and, my God, I pulled it   
off. They chucked me out before the War, and   
now they're delighted to own me as a prospective   
son-in-law. This War's worked wonders, altered   
folks altogether. It'll be the making of

England. They absolutely wouldn't have me in   
the house before! What do you think of that? "   
" I can't express an opinion until you tell me   
the name of the lady, but I'm delighted to hear   
that you find England so much improved."

" You cold-blooded devil. Is that all you've   
got to say? Don't you think it's great, and   
romantic? "

" Tell me her name, you silly ass."   
" I think you'll have to guess."

" Do I know her? "

" Slightly."

" A friend of Bunny's, is she? "   
" Yes."

p152" That's not altogether a recommendation."   
" Buck up and guess."

" Is she a relation of his? "

" Suppose 1'11 have to teIl you. Your intelli-   
gence appears to descend to zero sometimes.   
It's your own cousin, Joan."

" My God, you don't say so ?" Jackson was   
more awake now, endeavouring to affect surprise.   
" It's a fact, J acker."

"WeIl, all I've got to say is that you are a   
damned sight luckier man than you deserve to   
be after your unfaithfulness to half-a-dozen in   
every town when we were stationed in England.   
You *are* a lucky devil."

" The War's done me some good, anyway. I   
roIled up in myoId breeches which got torn in the   
wire the other night, and a fair amount of dirt   
on the buttons, and even her father couldn't resist   
it. "

" You mustn't take unnecessary risks now, you   
know, with a girl like that waiting for you ; how   
do you feel about it ? "

" Just top hole, 'and my advice to you is to go   
and do likewise."

" Very good of you, old man, but Joan can   
only marry one of us."

" Oh, there are plenty of topping girls : they've   
altered since the War."

" You think everything has been altered by the   
War, Just because you've been set on your feet,

p153 but I'm not so sure. The leopard can't change   
his spots as rapidly as all that. Joan was one of   
the right sort before the War: and I don't think   
you'll find the natures of people at home have been   
changed so very much. Your affair is one of the   
bright spots on the landscape: it's bucked me up   
more than anything I've heard since last August."

A fortnight later Jackson went home himself,   
and Joan did not meet him at the Savoy, nor did   
anyone else. He went straight home, his arrival   
being announced by a wire from London, which   
only preceded him by a few hours. At every   
turn he looked for signs of the change which had   
been incessantly announced by the newspapers   
during the past month or so, and which had been

dilated upon by Bremner on his return. He

found signs of war, it is true, all the way from

Folkestone to the Midlands, maimed figures,   
thousands of people in khaki, a shortage of taxi-   
cabs, a dearth of gardeners and grooms, and   
complaints from his own mother as to the height   
to which wages had risen ; but he never saw or

heard anything to lead him to imagine that the

psychology of the nation had altered. Labour   
still caIled Capital selfish; Capital still called   
Labour unpatriotic. The lower middle class was   
still fighting to gain a footing among the upper   
middle class, the upper middle class was still bent   
on securing itself against outsiders. The aim of the

p154 many was still an individual happiness, which   
proved as illusory as it had done before. The   
same man, who was all for himself in time of   
peace, was sitting tight now, till he was fetched.   
The man who had worked for others and helped   
his friends was now undergoing strenuous military   
training or dying on the plains of Flanders. The   
same three elements were governing the state,   
viz: wealth, birth, and labour, and there was   
still no compromise between them. There was   
still no intermediate caste which could combine   
the best elements of the three. The new class of   
officers were but ill tolerated by other officers and   
men alike; for whereas the public school men   
complained of their lack of gentility, the men in   
the ranks grumbled at their inefficiency. Instead   
of narrowing the breach which existed before   
between the classes, they were well on their way   
to establish a new class in themselves quite as   
irreconcilable as the others. Nothing happened   
as yet to create a radical change in the national   
psychology. The nation was changed on the   
surface, but at heart was the same.

He went over to see Joan, who had gathered   
enough by this time to make her interested in his   
original motive for asking her to the dance, and   
wanted to know why he had not repeated the   
invitation when he really did arrive. He had   
to admit the truth before he left her, and she was   
so overcome with gratitude that she nearly wept.

p155 She was so happy over the engagement that she   
never seemed to realize the danger which beset   
a subaltern of British infantry in the days when   
battalions had to do duty in the firing line for weeks   
on end, as there was no one to replace them. She   
was just as delightful as she was in peace time, just   
as enthusiastic as one would have expected her to   
be over the engagement, and as he had said to   
Bremner, not changed a bit.

Jackson noticed from the papers that there was   
heavy fighting going on in the salient. He could   
picture it all clearly. From being at the front   
one learnt to read into the brief and uninteresting   
communiques the true interpretation of events.   
So, when his father announced at breakfast that   
there was no news, Tony explained to him the   
meaning of the phase " considerable mining and   
artillery activity in the neighbourhood of Ypres,"   
and what that activity meant to anyone within a   
radius of a few miles. Inwardly he felt thankful   
that he had not been called upon to participate in   
that activity.

He went back from leave with much the same   
feelings as when he first went out. He had the   
same blind faith in the law of averages; and, as it   
happened to the average man, so he believed it   
would happen to him-that he would get hit, but   
not killed. He felt certain that the regiment must   
have been engaged in the heavy fighting which had   
taken place in his absence, and would probably

p156 still be in it when he got back. Through his   
leave coming round just when it did, he had   
possibly been spared from inhabiting a nameless   
grave in Flanders.

When Jackson reached the Divisional H.Q. the   
gunfire was still very heavy in the salient. The   
howitzers were barking all round, and the terrify-   
ing roar of the German 17-inch showed that the   
enemy was doing his worst.

" Your battalion came out last night," said the   
staff officer, when Jackson reported, "You'll   
find them in billets at Ouderdom. I'll order you   
a horse and a guide."

" Have they been in action, sir? " he asked.   
"They have; at least some of them have !

One company did especially good work," he said,   
and walked out to give an order ; he then got on   
the telephone and Jackson never got another   
word with him until the horses came round, and   
he had to go.

He tried to obtain some more exact information   
from the guide, but he could tell nothing except   
that he had heard that the battalion had been   
very heavily attacked and had done well; some   
sergeant or other had done very well, he believed.   
Jackson's excitement was intense, - as they rode   
to Ouderdom ; there was, he felt, a peculiar sensa-   
tion in rejoining a regiment which has been in   
action since you've left it. There must be

so much to hear, and he wondered so much what

P157 had happened to many individuals. Shells were   
falling round the rest camp when he arrived near   
Ouderdom and everyone had taken cover in the   
bolt trenches which had been hastily dug among   
the huts. He handed his horse over to the   
guide, and made the rest of the way on foot.   
Ending his journey with a hasty leap into the   
nearest trench, as he heard a shell arriving, which   
he thought would burst close by, he found himself   
next to the colonel. "Hullo, young feller; you   
haven't forgotten how to take cover during   
your stay in England." He felt a little ashamed.   
He wondered that the C.O. had deigned to take   
cover in a trench at all, but it was evidently a   
divisional order which he could not ignore.

It would have been much more appropriate to

find him strolling about picking up the fuse caps

as the shells burst.

" What has happened while I've been away,   
sir ? " he asked.

" You've missed the chance of a lifetime, my

boy."

"Why me specially, sir?" Jackson chipped

in.

" Why, your platoon was in it, and did the   
whole thing. They were on our left flank as   
usual, and the battalion on our left broke under   
the liquid fire attack. Your chaps never budged   
an inch. They stood terrific bombardments and

frontal attacks for three days and at the same

p158 time cut a trench to link up with the division which   
had retreated. It was one of the finest things of   
the War. A Regular colonel of the regiment   
which came up to reinforce sent word to me that   
there was a sergeant there in command of a   
platoon, who ought to have been a general.   
He took command of the whole situation, and   
did more than anyone else to preserve us from a   
great disaster. The Regulars who saw it all   
said that the New Armies seemed to contain better   
men in the ranks than among the officers. I sent   
for him afterwards and showed him the note that   
I had received, and he has at last consented to   
take a commission. We can do with a few in   
the mess like that, eh ? "

" Who was it, sir? "   
" Can't you guess? "

" It was not Sergeant Briscoe, was it, sir? "

" It was, and I only hope his commission   
comes through before we get into this big show."   
" What's that, sir ? "

"Why, the division's going to be reinforced   
up to full strength, to lead the big attack lower   
down the line, as a special reward for doing good   
work up here. Great, isn't it ? "

"Splendid, sir." He answered with all the   
enthusiasm he could muster. "Have we had   
many casualties? " he added, affecting an attitude   
of unconcern.

" Oh, your platoon got knocked about a bit

p159 so did all your company. You'll be second in   
command now. These damned shells seem to   
have moved a bit farther off. We may as well   
blow the 'all clear.' You'd have had a big   
chance if you'd been here to command your   
platoon."

" Glad I wasn't, sir."

" What ! " he gasped, dropping his whistle as   
he was in the process of thrusting it between his   
lips for the " all clear."

" I mean, sir, that I'm glad Sergeant Briscoe   
had the opportunity of proving his worth. He   
would never have accepted a commission without."   
 " He's a wonderful soldier, Jackson."

" He's a wonderful man, sir."

. . .

The next ten days were spent in the Ouderdom

rest camp. The gradual wastage during the

battalion's period of service in the Ypres salient

had been considerable and had been accentuated

by the casualties suffered in repelling the recent

liquid fire attack. New drafts were on their way

sufficient to bring them once more to full strength.

The C.O. was mIghty proud of the show which his

men had put up in a tight corner, and was

determined to mark his appreciation by making

their rest as enjoyable as possible. Discipline

was relaxed, the men were given a good deal of

leisure and minor delinquencies were winked at.

With amusements so limited it was inevitable that

p160 food and drink should form a very important   
part of the pleasures indulged in. But games were   
organized against other units in the neighbour-   
hood, while expeditions to Bailleul and other towns   
provided more frivolous amusement. The C.O.   
used to ask various officers to go with him on   
riding expeditions and treated them to generous   
meals in estaminets, where the cooking was good.   
It was on one of those rides with Bremner as his   
guest that the colonel proposed a visit to the   
front-line trenches they had held in the Messines   
district before going to Ypres. The idea of   
voluntarily risking death in this way while in rest   
camp hardly appealed to Bremner, but the C.O.   
was so keen and regardless of his personal safety   
that he never ventured to protest. They actually   
rode their horses to a point where even people on   
foot were supposed to be visible from the German   
trenches, and where infantry always took to cover;   
and, according to Bremner, they then only dis-   
mounted because an artillery officer returning   
from the firing line stopped and told them they   
were committing suicide and disobeying the   
brigade orders. They were greeted by the   
officers holding the trenches with much surprise   
and cordiality, and quite enjoyed seeing their old

haunts.

" Pretty dull work in a quiet place like this,"

was the C.O.'s comment as they made their way   
back down the communication trenches. It had

p161 certainly been a quiet afternoon compared with   
their recent experiences in the Ypres district,   
but even here casualties were frequent and the   
continual mining operations beneath the front   
trenches made it quite exciting enough for most   
people. Bremner felt pretty thankful when they   
got back safely to their horses and started on their   
way back to camp.

Now that Briscoe's name had been sent in for   
a commission, Jackson and Bremner went out of   
their way to show him that they regarded him as   
one of themselves. Hitherto Army discipline   
had limited their intimacy. Jackson now felt   
that this tradition could be ignored and on most   
of the evenings when they were both free, he   
invited Briscoe to accompany him to an estaminet

where they could enjoy discussions and arguments.

Bremner found their discussions rather dull,   
but he admired Briscoe and sometimes joined   
them.

In these few days a close friendship was formed   
between them. Whatever the topic of their   
conversation, Briscoe usually directed it towards   
conditions which would rule after the War. His   
ideas were always original and showed peculiar   
insight.

" Social civilization," he said, during one of   
these discussions, "is on trial in every country.   
Can it survive as it is to-day? I doubt it. The   
longer the War continues the greater will be the

p162 strain on the social fabric. There will probably   
be some great upheavals. Everything will   
depend on leadership. If social barriers prevent   
men of ability from rising and thereby deprive a   
country of its best leaders, the danger is great.   
Our country suffers only to a minor extent in   
this respect. But what of Russia and Germany?   
Will their narrow ruling castes survive the test?   
I doubt it. If not the crash will come. Where-   
ever it comes it may be devastating in its effects   
and it will take us all our time to dam the flood."

Jackson and Bremner were duly impressed,   
but thought the possibility too remote to worry   
about.

The ten days in the Ouderdom rest camp passed   
pleasantly but quickly. Everyone did their best   
to forget the fact that they were being" fatted up "   
for an important attack. Their destination was   
kept so secret that, even when they lined up at the   
railhead to be entrained, they did not know   
where they were going. The rail journey was   
followed by a route march through the greater   
part of the night, and when billets were reached   
no one knew what sort of a district they had come   
to. The next day showed them that they were   
among mines and slag heaps.

The detailed preparation for the attack now   
began. Plans of the position to be, assaulted   
were drawn out on the ground from aeroplane   
photographs and each company was shown its

p163 special objective. A number of officers and men   
were given intensive instruction in bombing, a   
type of fighting in which they had hitherto had   
no experience. Jackson, Bremner and Briscoe,   
all volunteered for this part of the business and   
went through the instruction. It seemed the   
most useful part they could play and offered   
considerable possibilities for personal skill.

The officers' mess was in high spirits. The   
battalion had been allotted part of the front line   
in the attack, and the colonel was as pleased as   
Punch.

In fact, he could hardly restrain himself from   
crowing over the C.O. of the battalion supporting   
them in rear. The rest of the mess fell into line   
with the colonel. On the last night before going   
into the trenches an excellent dinner was enjoyed,   
washed down by plenty of local champagne, and   
the utmost good feeling prevailed. Much to the   
general regret Briscoe was unable to join them as   
his commission had not yet been gazetted.

It was a very happy family of officers and men   
that went into the front line next day to assault   
what was probably the most cleverly planned   
section of German trenches on the whole British   
front.

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CHAPTER VIII

BROKEN AND MENDED

" Do you feel you can see anyone else this after-   
noon, Mr. Jackson? "

" Who is it, sister? I had about as much as I   
could stand this last time," he replied, without   
raising his head from the pillows.

"Very well. I'll say you can't see them   
to-day," and as she spoke, the sister went towards   
the door. Jackson agreed with her; he had been   
so overcome by the last visitor that he felt he   
wanted to be alone ; but something checked him.   
He thought of some wretched officer's wife   
wanting news of her" missing" husband, and the   
pain she must be suffering ; how could he refuse   
to help her, so long as he had breath? Her   
husband, his friend perhaps, had gone into   
action with the rest of them.

" Wait a minute, sister. Don't say I won't see   
them ; ask them for a card or name."

"No," she replied firmly. "I think you've   
had enough to-day."

" I must see them; I shall not sleep to-night,   
unless I do. Think of it, 'refusing to see people   
one may be able to help! " The sister left the room. In a few minutes she returned.

p165 " It's quite all right, Mr. Jackson, it's not a   
woman and I told the man you could not see him.   
He insisted on sending his card, and said he could

not come again." .

She handed him the card, and he read the name,

" Major A. K. Graham," Jackson gasped. .

"I *must* see Major Graham. Please have him

shown up."

She endeavoured to remonstrate with him, but

it was quite useless, and at last he won.

When the sister left the room, he mentally took   
stock of his surroundings .He had a room to   
himself. This was the privilege of the serious   
cases. The numerous operations which were   
being performed upon his wound, and his sleep-   
lessness at night owing to the friendly attentions

of German H.E. shells, made him eligible for a   
private ward. It was really a small bedroom on   
the upper storey of a country residence, but it   
was one of modern design. A fire burned in the   
bedroom grate, and, in the gathering darkness of   
a winter's afternoon made the room look fairly   
cheerful in spite of the 'bareness of the furniture.   
There was one uncomfortable chair which he used   
to press upon his visitors; though. the latter   
invariably annoyed him either by strolling up and   
down the room, or by standing with ,their backs   
to the fire, or leaning on the mantelpiece. His   
nerves were in a bad state, and little things seemed   
to irritate him. Through the window he looked

p166 upon the sea, which was just reflecting the rays   
of the setting sun. How cold it looked! How   
melancholy it sounded, as it washed upon the   
beach! All this he noticed in the space of a   
few seconds: then the door opened, and an   
orderly announced: "Major Graham, sir."

" Well, Jackson," said the major as he closed   
the door, " it's damned good to see one of the   
old crowd alive. Wasn't that an awful day?   
Only one other officer got through besides you   
and I. I'm going back from leave to-morrow   
to take over command of the remnants, and   
thought I would come and look you up first."

" How many were there left next day, major? "   
" The total roll call was myself, one subaltern,   
and one hundred and twenty-seven men."

" Did you see what happened to any of the   
other officers ? "

"From the time when we went over in all   
that cloud of gas and smoke, I never saw an   
officer until I picked up young Wilson with   
about twenty men in a German trench next   
morning; they had consolidated the position   
and managed to hold it."

"I completely lost sight of everyone. Did   
you hear anything of Bremner? I've had that   
wretched girl in here to-day. You know he got   
engaged a few weeks ago and now he's missing.   
Major, it's dreadful. I've never had to face   
anything so hopeless as her pitiful inquiries. I

p167 thought 'you might know something. Certainty   
is better than uncertainty."

. "Don't say that, Jackson; uncertainty' may.

turn out all right. "

"Do' you, think yourself there's any hope: in   
this case ? " "No I don’t"

" Nor.could ,anyone who saw the thing. .The.   
wounded. were shot.to.bits as they lay in the open,   
then they. were shelled so much as to make them   
unrecognizable for the burying parties. It was   
one of the worst shows inthe War. "

"However did you escape yourself? I've been   
thinking that you have some wonderful tales to tell. "   
" I .had the luck, somehow. I escaped from   
the .very .muzzles of .the Boche rifles, where

I lay.wounded all day: but the sights I saw. I

can't go over'them, now, major.,.I don't feel up

to it. .As it.was .getting dusk, a man came to

finish me ; it-was- touch and go then, but I killed

him just in time: His finger .was on. the trigger, and

his rifle pointed at my head, but the Prussian's

luck was out and, mine was in; ,my bullet found

him first. It got.right home ; I saw his face

illuminated' by the flash of my revolver. My

God, it was--" .

" Stop it Jackson ; you'are getting excited.

I shall get into.trouble. Keep. your. story till

you are fit.'

He was right; .Jackson .felt his face flushing,

p168 and found himself sitting up in bed and waving   
his fist about. He forgot all about his present   
position as he told the story, and he lived those   
moments in the German wire over again. Graham   
had cut him short just in time, and he pulled   
himself together.

" Did anyone do anything great? Have any   
decorations been won by our lot ?" asked the   
wounded man as he settled down in bed again.

"There was one very fine piece of work.

Sergeant Briscoe--"

" Is he alive? " chipped in the other.   
"Yes, he's in hospital somewhere."   
" What did he do ? "

" Well, it's hard to say what he actually did,   
but somehow or other he held the communication   
trench, down which the enemy were attacking,   
almost single-handed. A private came down to   
me for reinforcements and I went myself: there   
was no eye witness to tell me what had happened.   
This one private had only seen the end of it, but   
I endeavoured to reconstruct the history of the   
scene from what I saw. Briscoe alone can tell   
us, and he wouldn't say a thing."

" What did you see ?" Jackson asked breath-   
lessly.

"There was a spot where the sides of the   
trench had been all blown in with bombs, and a   
little barricade across it. Here I found the   
bodies of five private soldiers, all dead. The

p169 fallen sides had half buried them in the debris.

Behind them was an empty bomb store in the side   
of the trench. Some thirty yards farther up was   
a similar scene: only the trench was more com-   
pletely destroyed, and there was no barrier. The   
corpses were piled higher, and numbered fifteen   
or twenty. They were the corpses of Prussian   
Guardsmen. The Prussians were forcing their   
way over these as I and my men rushed up the   
trench to meet them. In the middle, between   
two lots of corpses, was another scene. There   
were three dead Prussians and Briscoe : I thought   
he was dead too. His arm was blown to pulp,   
and his face was covered with blood. After a   
slight struggle we drove the Prussians back, and   
I felt Briscoe's heart, and found him to be alive."

"What had happened, major?"

" I think the history must have been as follows.

Briscoe and his men installed themselves beside a   
German bomb store, built a small barricade and   
successfully held up all attacks until the five men   
were killed and all the bombs exhausted. Then   
he must have advanced alone and met the others   
in the trench. My God, how he must have   
fought. The first two he had evidently met   
separately and killed*-with his bare hands.* Their   
faces showed a desperate struggle, and their eyes   
were starting out of their heads. Then he had   
tackled a third, and someone from behind had   
thrown a bomb; the Prussians don't mind sacri-

P170 ficing their own friends to gain an object. A   
bomb had been thrown at the two struggling in   
the trench. It had done its work indiscriminately   
and blown the German to eternity. Briscoe was   
frightfully mangled, but not dead. That was   
how I read it."

" Will he live, major? " Jackson asked, though   
instinct told him that Briscoe couldn't die yet.   
" That I couldn't say : he might not be as bad   
as he appeared."

" What decoration will he get? "

"Well, I told the G.H.Q. what I had seen,   
and said that though I had not witnessed the   
action, I felt he ought to be given the V.C.   
Whether they'll give it I can't say, because all   
V.C. actions have to be testified by an eye-witness,   
but this all seemed so clear and certain. If he   
was an officer he would be eligible for the M.C.,   
but his commission hadn't come through, although   
he had been put in for it a fortnight before the   
battle. However, I explained that to the G.H.Q.   
and asked them to hold it over till he became an   
officer. He already has the D.C.M., and as a   
sergeant they could only give him a bar to that.   
It's a very fine thing to find an officer with the   
D.C.M., don't you think? At any rate, it's next   
best to the V.C."

" So do I, major; it's not given for office   
work at the base or the War Office, like the   
D.S.O. and M.C., what?"

p171" Well, I hope they'll see their way to give the   
V.C. There's many a cheaper one been earned   
than that."

" If he lives to enjoy it, it will be great. Good   
to hear of someone getting some real reward for   
his services in this bloody show. You don't   
know what good you've done me, major; you've   
made me look on the brighter side of things. I   
feel as though I might like to get back again,   
when I hear such tales as that."

" I must be off now, Jackson. I'm crossing   
to-night. I wonder when you'll be with us   
again. It'll never be the same though, the old   
crowd has gone. It must be very nice to be in   
that bed and think you've done your bit."

" Only for a time, major. One's got to go

back and back again until either the War or   
oneself is finished. England is no place for   
fit men in these days."

" Good-bye; I hope you'll soon be quite fit."   
" Thanks very much for coming; and good   
luck. I suppose you'll be a colonel, soon."

" Perhaps," he said, as he closed the door.

Jackson sank back on to his pillows, quite   
exhausted.

The days passed in hospital, and the events of   
a few weeks back seemed a long way off, save   
when Joan came in to see him and pour out some   
story which she had picked up from some private

p172 or other on leave, who assured her that he had   
seen Bremner taken prisoner. She used to ask   
her cousin's opinion and then, when he had given   
it, she demolished it in the true feminine way.   
She was so beautiful and so pathetic that she   
nearly drove him mad. At last Jackson was   
moved out of his private room into a ward with   
four others, and as she would not face the publicity   
of visiting him there, they took to corresponding   
by letter. The last operation had gone a long   
way to restore the efficiency .of his stricken limb,   
but on the whole the medical experts were disap-   
pointed. There was considerable debate as to   
whether he should be subjected to further surgical   
experiments. The work done by surgeons in the   
course-of the War was nothing short of marvellous   
and no praise can be too great for the manner in   
which the medical profession performed their   
task. All the same, war wounds offered unique   
opportunities for practising experiments, and. no   
one likes to be a victim of such. Jackson felt   
that something of the sort might happen in his   
case. Probably he owed his immunity to the   
fact that his nervous condition was still serious,   
and did not show signs of mending. It was   
obvious that his limb would be sufficiently restored   
not to handicap him seriously. A further surgical   
operation might cure or cripple him. Eventually   
it was decided to let things be.

The days went .steadily by and the routine life

p173 of hospital began to get boring as all routine will.   
No-man can be happy when he has so much spare   
time for thinking. It was one of these afternoons   
about tea-time when the sister announced that   
some fresh cases were expected to arrive that   
night. There were two beds vacant in Jackson's   
ward at the time. She showed him the list of   
five men and asked whom they should like to   
come to the ward. Last on the list he read the   
name Sec.-Lieut. J. Briscoe ... Regt. He   
controlled his impulse to jump out of bed and said:

" Sister, there's one here I know; we must get him   
in this ward. He's a man from my own Regiment,   
and we are expecting him to get the V.C."

" Oh, well, he rnaf be a very bad case, Mr.

Jackson, and require a private room; but if not,   
we'll get him in here,"

He .felt more excited over the prospect of   
seeing Briscoe as an officer than he could possibly   
express. It would be impossible to feel dull or   
bored with him in the ward. He was always   
thinking of the future, never of the past or present,   
and a man who is always full of expectancy and   
hope cannot fail to be good company.

. It was late at night when the wounded arrived;   
Jackson had been do:ting, but instantly awoke on   
hearing the sound of stretcher-bearers carrying   
their human burden up the bare oak stairs. The   
knob of the door turned, a shaded electric light   
was switched on, and a form reclining on a

p174 stretcher was borne to the empty bed in the far   
corner of the ward. Not a word was spoken, as   
the perfectly trained stretcher-bearers deposited   
the patient and withdrew. Jackson had not seen   
the face of the newcomer; but he knew at once   
that he was none other than Second-Lieutenant   
James Briscoe. You couldn't be in the presence   
of Briscoe without knowing it, there are certain   
people in the world whose presence one instinc-   
tively feels. He was of those people. Anyone   
else might have uttered a sound or exclamation of   
pain, as he was handled by the stretcher-bearers,   
or might even have issued some instructions as to   
the nature of his injury. The superior silence   
maintained by the wounded man, and by the   
bearers in his presence told Jackson who he was.   
He heard the sister ask him if he was comfortable,   
as she put him to bed, and he answered in mono-   
syllables, though with perfect courtesy; then   
she left him and came over to Jackson's bed.

" How is he ? " he asked in a whisper.

" He's been very badly wounded, though he'll   
be all right now ; of course, he's lost his arm, and   
it must have given him considerable pain moving   
him here. His face has been scarred, but his   
features are not spoilt."

" Which arm has he lost, sister? "

"His right arm; it's been taken off at the

shoulder."

"Poor fellow; it's damned sad this war, isn't it?"

p175" It is, Mr. Jackson; and for the past year we   
nurses have never seen anything but the worst   
side of it.; we see nothing but the pathetic   
horrible sight of splendid men maimed for life.   
We never see its glories or heroic deeds. Have   
you got everything you want? "

" Yes, thanks, sister."

"Good night, then; your friend seems a   
very quiet sort of man; I expect he's a little   
overcome with his dreadful injury."

"No, it's not that with him, sister' he's   
thinking of such big things that he altogether   
ignores it. You can't overcome him with a mere   
bodily infirmity; at least I don't think so."

"He looks rather like that. Good night."

She tiptoed out of the room.

Briscoe's case was supposed to be sufficiently   
serious to justify him being screened from the   
rest of them, and when Jackson was awakened in   
the morning by the attentions of a V.A.D. and a   
basin, he did not utter a sound so as to betray his   
presence, but just scribbled a note and sent it across   
to Briscoe, congratulating-him on his commission   
and his wonderful performances in the recent battle.

He gasped when he read it and asked where   
it had come from. On being told that the author   
was an inmate of another bed in the same ward   
he immediately asked for the screens to be taken   
away, so that he might have a look at him.   
Jackson thought it quite an inspiring sight,

p176 Briscoe's face appearing from the mass of pillows   
at his back, bandaged up as it was, and yet so   
absolutely the same as when he last saw it. One   
might have thought he was only acting the part   
of a wounded man.

" Jackson," he said, " how splendid to see one of   
the old lot alive. You and I are representatives of   
two different periods and here we are together! "   
" Don't be absurd; there are no distinctions   
between us now, except those honours of yours."   
" Not between you and me, Jackson; we're   
in sympathy, I know. But what about our class   
distinction ? "

" That's all washed out. Where were you in

hospital before you came here? "

" Southampton War Hospital."

" How did they look after you there? "

" They did everything that they possibly could   
for us. The British Government seems to have   
realized that it must treat its soldiers as men.   
The new era is beginning."

" I suppose there were all sorts of men among   
the wounded there, navvies and broken down   
gentlemen, successful business men and lawyers,   
a regular New Army crowd."

" Yes, plenty of variety among the patients,   
and among women who were there to nurse them.   
You know, smart folk doing the most menial   
work, and so on."

" They were really working, were they? "

p177" Yes, they were; there were a few, of course,   
who were out for a flare in the limelight, certain   
condescending ladies, wearing the most becoming   
quasi-uniform to distribute books or cigarettes,   
doing it because it was the thing to do, you know."

" They'll always exist though."

"They'll have to become a great deal fewer   
than they are now ; they'll have to come off their   
platform of condescension towards us. We don't   
look upon their recognition as a favour; we look   
upon it as a right."

" Are you going to make them any different .   
do you believe that the whole psychology of a nation   
which has been built up and inherited through   
thousands of years can be changed in a day? "

" It can be changed when necessity demands it ;   
and necessity demands it now. It must not be   
considered to be *condescension* to associate with   
servants who have given their best."

" The King's commission doesn't seem to have   
knocked these silly illusions out of your head,"   
said Jackson, "who's going to bring all this about? "   
"That's for England to decide; it's either   
going to be accomplished by hosts of Englishmen   
who feel as I do, or by the Germans."

" Sister," said Jackson, turning to the young   
nurse who stood helplessly smiling at the two   
wranglers, " I thought you said the new officer   
was very quiet."

" You shouldn't have started him going, Mr.

p178 Jackson; you really ought to be keeping quiet   
yourself. We don't want to have you raving

again to-night."

" You'd better take our temperatures and keep

us quiet that way. Mr. Briscoe will break the   
thermometer if he goes on any longer. Will *you*condescend to wash him? "

" Well, after what you have said about some

of the ladies, I don't know if I will, but after all,   
you are soldiers, so I suppose we must forgive a   
lot. Put this in your mouth, please, Mr. Jackson,   
and keep quiet."

He did as he was told.

The arrival of Briscoe in the ward altered the   
whole outlook of life for Jackson. He forgot all   
about his disability which, after all, even if it   
became permanent, would be nothing in com-   
parison with the loss of an arm, taken off at the   
shoulder-and the right arm too. Briscoe never   
mentioned it, it was quite beneath him to give a   
moment's thought to it. His mind was all right,   
and that was all he cared. The scar which   
remained upon his face gave the firm features a   
slight appearance of ferocity, but .otherwise made   
him more distinguished-looking. Everyone   
liked him. The characteristic which appealed to   
all was the complete absence of any grumbling   
whatever, so far as his personal comfort was   
concerned. He never received a letter from   
anyone, and no one came to see him. Jackson

p179 thought, while he was writing a letter himself on   
one occasion, what a job it would be for Briscoe   
to have to learn to write with the left hand. One   
day a document came from the War Office for   
him to fill in, and, when he asked for a pen,   
Jackson stupidly offered to write the necessary   
information for him.

" Thank you," he replied, "but I can write   
perfectly well with my left hand; I have not   
neglected that part of my education."

" I might have known it," said Jackson, with a   
touch of admiration.

Meanwhile there was no news of the missing   
officers and men of the battalion and he purposely   
avoided asking Briscoe any direct questions on the   
subject. Joan was still corresponding with him   
about the stories which she kept picking up from   
various soldiers on leave or in hospital; but she   
refused to come and see him since he was no   
longer in a private ward. One day Briscoe and   
he were talking about the old battalion and what   
the new one would be like. The latter was   
pessimistic and the former was the opposite;   
Jackson asked him casually what it was that   
made him see so much red in the last battle.   
" I always felt far too cold-blooded to fight as you   
did," he said.

" You didn't see what I saw, Jacker."   
" What did you see? "

" I was going along a trench, one of the German

p180 trenches captured by the right of our company,   
and I ran upon two Prussians in the act of killing,   
no not killing, murdering a British officer. He   
had been wounded and had dropped into the   
bottom of the trench, and was lying there unable   
to rise. The first Prussian drove his bayonet at   
the officer's stomach, but the point struck his   
equipment and glanced off. Then the other,   
swinging his rifle above his head, brought his   
butt down with all its force on the upturned face   
of the wounded man, battering his head into the   
mud of the trench. At that moment a shell from   
one of our guns dropped short, and the two   
Prussians literally disappeared. My God! It   
was too good a death for them. I was robbed of   
the chance of making them pay for what I had   
seen. I longed to kill them in the way they   
deserved over the body of their victim. The shell   
did its work efficiently, but much too quickly."

"Who was the officer?" asked the other,   
hardly able to contain himself any longer '.

" I didn't mean to tell you; he was a friend of   
yours. But you might like to know, in case you   
get to grips with the Prussians again."

" Tell me," he gasped.

" It was Bremner."

Jackson knew it before he told him; instinct   
brought home to him the truth. The more .he   
thought of it, the more the fact seemed to horrify   
him. There was something so incongruous

p181 about it all. One could picture Bremner dying   
in the middle of an infantry assault from a   
machine-gun bullet ; one could still more picture   
him dying in some mad, chivalrous, boyish   
escapade, which had no military value whatever.   
But to think of him murdered like a dog, with his   
face battered into the mud of a German trench   
was almost beyond one's imagination. It was   
well for Joan that she could not picture it, and he   
hoped she never would.

"Look here, Briscoe," he said; after a long   
silence, " Bremner was engaged to my cousin and   
she's been nearly mad since he was posted missing.   
I can tell her now that you saw him killed; but   
she must not know anything of the circumstances.   
What shall I say? "

" Tell her that he was blown to pieces by a   
shell after reaching our objective. The shell which   
killed the Prussians placed him far beyond the   
reach of any burying party, so it will be true."

" I've wanted to ask you about Bremner all this   
time, and never brought myself to do it. We must   
break the news carefully'and I'm not a good liar."   
" May I make a suggestion?" said Briscoe,   
after reflecting a moment.

" Of course you may."

" Well, I suggest that I send a statement to   
the War Office, that I understand the officer in   
question is missing, and that I saw him killed by   
a shell in the German trench. They will then

p182 send an official telegram to the relations, and   
you need say nothing at all."

" As usual you have come up to scratch. It's   
an excellent idea."

"When the sister comes in we'll get some   
paper and I'll concoct a letter."

Two days after forwarding his letter, Briscoe   
received a form to fill in, making a statement on   
oath in the presence of witnesses that he had seen   
this officer killed in action, and three days later   
still Jackson received a letter from Joan, edged in   
black, stating that Bremner's people had now   
received an official telegram from the War Office   
to the effect that he had been killed in action.   
From the letter he concluded that the news had   
come as a shock to her, in spite of all his assurances   
that it must be expected. But he supposed all   
young people were always full of hope, and never   
liked to come to the conclusion that their aims and   
ideals can't be realized. She added that she must   
see him, and felt that he was the only one to whom   
she cared to talk on the subject; since, however,   
he had learnt the true circumstances of Bremner's   
death, he had not cherished any desire to discuss   
the subject with her.

Jackson had been in hospital nearly three   
months before it was decided that he might have   
a medical board and be given leave to go home.   
He was still suffering from the effects of being   
too intimate with German high explosive; but the

p183 surroundings of the hospital were not helping   
to improve his condition, and the medical authori-   
ties came to the conclusion that the efficiency of his   
wounded limb could best be got back by using it.   
Briscoe, too, was considered fit to go. His   
wounds had healed, and the stump of' his arm   
appeared to have settled down satisfactorily.

"The sister says we shall both get three   
months," Jackson said to him one afternoon,   
 " where do you propose to go for yours? "

" I shall go and pick up a little knowledge of a

class I know nothing about."

" I thought you numbered friends among every

trade and profession."

"No, I can't say that, Jackson: I've learnt   
nothing of the community which, after all,   
employs more labour than any single industry in   
the British Isles."

" What's that? "

"Agriculture. I propose to undertake some

labour on a farm."

" What use can a man with one arm be at that

job ? " he asked. . •

" Of course, he can't do as well as a man with   
two ; but I don't want any wages, and I can lead   
a horse or drive animals to market, can't I?   
I can certainly help, and I can pick up the   
scientific side of it, and study the people."

" Now you are getting on my ground, Jimmy.

You can't pick up the scientific side, because

p184 there is none. There never has been a vestige   
of science employed in our agriculture; it's the   
most conservative industry there is."

" I can learn all that from experience."

" You wouldn't be able to learn much, if you   
went in the uniform of an officer ; farmers would   
look on you with suspicion."

"I never thought of doing any such thing;   
I should go as a farm labourer, and dressed like

one"

" Now I'll tell you what you are going to do,   
and I mean it: you are coming home with me.   
You are going to learn two things you don't   
know: first, what an English country home can   
be like, which you've never had a chance to study,   
and second, what the agricultural community is   
like from an unbiased point of view. You can   
dress up and go among them, discover what they   
think and how they live. But you must also do   
your part and prove what you say, that there must   
be no distinctions between us, by living with me."

" But--"

" There is no ' but' about it this time. It's   
up to you to prove what you say, and if you don't,   
I shall say that the barrier between us is of your   
own making."

" Jacker, since you put it that way, I'll come.

But, please understand that I've never lived in a gentleman's house before."

There were not many men in England who

p185 would put the cold truth as straight as that, and   
it seemed almost impossible to believe. Here   
was a man whose speech and appearance were   
those of a gentleman, and yet he admitted that   
he had never lived as such. Jackson thought of   
his previous fastidiousness and the manner with   
which he selected his friends at Oxford, and now   
he was asking a man to come to his home who had   
never been in a gentleman's house before. Yet   
he knew instinctively that he would not regret it.

" You mustn't expect me to dress for dinner

and that sort of thing," resumed Briscoe, after a   
pause, "I shall only have a uniform to wear."   
 " You can dine with the King in uniform these   
days; what more does anyone want? What   
about your farm labourer's suit? "

"I only require a pair of corduroy trousers and

an old shirt; I have a pair of private soldiers

boots, which are just the thing. Hullo! here's the

sister. When is the board going to be, sister? "

" Yes, when is it, sister? " chimed in the other.

" I don't know, Mr. Jackson, but I've brought   
you the paper and a letter to keep you quiet."

He seized the paper and opened it, to look at   
the casualty list. Under the heading "Pre-   
viously reported missing, now reported killed," he   
saw Second-Lieutenant Bremner of the **--**Regt. On the other page facing it was the

heading; "More awards for gallantry." He

glanced among the sixteen names, There, among

p186 the recipients of the Military Cross, he read   
the name, Second-Lieutenant J. Briscoe of the --   
Regt. "For most conspicuous determination in   
holding a communication trench against enemy   
counter attacks; when all his men had been   
killed, and all his bombs had become exhausted,   
he went alone and met the enemy, killing two   
with his own hand, and being wounded as he   
killed a third. His determination undoubtedly   
saved a serious situation." What a contrast in   
two pages of war news! Death and oblivion on   
one, honours and glory on the other ! Just two   
pages of *The Times.* A year ago they were full   
of biased Conservative politics; now they   
brought home the full meaning of the words   
" Fortune of War." One column of the news-   
paper separated the announcement of casualties   
and honours, just as one fraction of an inch in a   
bullet's flight made the difference between life   
and death. Two of the best men in the regiment,   
and both their stories told on the same page !   
He said nothing and opened the letter; it was   
from Major Graham, now acting in command of   
the regiment. It was just to tell him of Briscoe's   
award. "The G.H.Q. regret," it ran, "that   
they cannot recommend the award of the V.C.   
as the action was not actually seen ; though they   
do not question my version of the events. It's   
damned bad luck, isn't it? It would have been   
a big thing for the battalion to have had a V.C.,

p187 and I know very well that Briscoe earned it.   
I'm afraid he'll never have another chance. He'll   
get the M.C., but what's that? They've just   
given it to a· fellow on the Divisional Staff, a   
young devil who never comes near the trenches.   
The award may be out by the time you get this.   
Let me know how you are getting on. We are   
out of the line now, trying to build up the division

He put the letter on his bed, and threw the   
paper across to Briscoe.

" You might like to see it," he said, "your   
own name is in it. Weare very sorry that they   
have only given you the M.C. I've got a letter   
from the major, and he says it is damned bad luck.   
Anyhow, there'll be another ribbon to put beside

your D.C.M."

" I wish you wouldn't refer to the subject at

all; bad luck, you say? Why, it's very much

more than I deserve. When you think of the

number of wonderful things done every day out

there, without even being recorded, one doesn't

feel one ought to be distiriguished from others by

wearing a ribbon on one's breast."

" Very well, we will say no more about it.

Bremner's name is in the list to-day."

" When I think of him, I feel I deserve shooting

for not having killed a few more of the devils."

The door opened and the M. O. came in. "Y ou   
can both have your board, to-morrow," he said.

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CHAPTER IX

THE TRANSITION

IT was an evening in January 1916, and there   
were four people sitting over the fireside. It   
was one of those firesides which are only to be   
found in old country houses, and which more   
than compensate for the lack of heat given forth   
by the comfort of their appearance. It was a   
quaint old room, with walls several feet thick,   
and recesses on either side of the fireplace con-   
taining secret cupboards large enough to hide a   
man. The wood fire dispersed an air of philo-   
sophy. You can just look at such a fire and   
think. Briscoe sat there as silent as the others,   
with his right sleeve dangling empty, and his   
two ribbons on his left breast. There was no   
other light but the firelight; and Mrs. Jackson   
looked with admiration at his wonderfully strong,   
clean features, which were lit up by the sudden   
blaze of a pine log newly put on.

Jackson's father was one of those contented   
souls who always took the world as he found it,   
and made the best of it. He had plenty of   
ability, but no ambition. He was well read, and   
exhibited remarkable versatility in conversation.   
He was always interesting and his opinions were

p189 generally sound. Although he was always short   
of lno.ney and lived a narrow country life, he   
kept himself pretty well up-to-date, and, compared   
with others of his type, he was wonderfully   
unbiased against novelties. His family had   
long been known in the neighbourhood and his   
lack of money never worried him. Tony knew   
instinctively that his father would put Briscoe   
entirely at his ease from the time of the first   
meeting, and he was not mistaken.

He had explained to his father what Briscoe's   
ideas were, so as to prepare him for many new   
conceptions, which might, at first, seem to shock   
his own accepted theories, and the two had   
enjoyed discussions together without giving rise   
to any misunderstanding. Briscoe's visit was a   
great success.

. "How did you find Joan to-day?" said   
Jackson senior, breaking the silence which had   
hung over them for nearly half an hour.

" She was very sad," replied Tony, "but I   
think she was glad to see two of us who had been   
in the action in which he fell. And she was glad   
to hear of his death first-hand from Jimmy, who   
could dispel the idea that he lay out and suffered."

" What did you think of Joan, Mr. Briscoe? "   
asked Mrs. Jackson. She, too, had done her   
part in making him feel quite at home with   
them. " She's very beautiful and very tragic," said

p190 Jimmy, " and very interesting to me, as she is a   
type of the new sympathetic women, who will be   
able to understand the suffering of others through   
what they have felt themselves."

"But, Mr. Briscoe, she was always the same,   
she was always one of the sweet-natured ones, and   
I don't think it is fair to say that she has been   
reformed by the War. She's just what she   
always was, isn't she?" Mrs. Jackson said,   
looking at her son for confirmation.

"Yes, Mother, that's what I'm always telling   
him. He believes that the War is changing all   
these people. But none of us are materially   
changed; the good woman is still good, and the   
bad one is still bad."

" What do you say to that? " said his father,

looking across at Briscoe.

Tony continued, " I can produce you examples   
of women who have lost just as much as Joan and   
who are still just as catty and unpleasant as they   
were before. So, too, with men ; I can show you   
fellows who live just as thoughtlessly and selfishly   
as they did before."

" Jacker," said Briscoe, " there may be some-   
thing in what you say, but you can't be altogether   
right. Examples do still exist, of course, but   
they are fewer. We can't expect everyone to be   
perfect ; it is just a question of proportion. Has   
the aim of the majority become less selfish and   
more patriotic or not? That is the question.

p191 the mind of the nation must be altering in one   
direction or the other. Upon the direction which   
it chooses depends our success or failure in the   
War. You can find examples to support your   
theory, true: but we are only in the transition   
period at present and those examples will become   
fewer; that's what I maintain. We've had a   
little over a year of war now. In two or three   
years more the real pinch will come. By that   
time the transformation will have to be almost   
complete. We shall have to have learnt to admire   
unselfishness and public service, or else--"

p194 fellows like him. Look at the upstart manufac-   
turers and financiers who have bought our best   
country houses. We receive them, and some of   
them have made most of it in the last eighteen   
months by a pure fluke."

"Success is achieved in various ways; but   
Jimmy's compels admiration as well as recogni-   
tion."

" I wonder what he'll do when it's all over."

Mr. Jackson looked at Tony rather quizzically.   
" What'll you do ? "

"Can't imagine. Depends on opportunity   
and how long it goes on. Better leave the   
morrow to take care of itself. We're all doing   
that."

The two young officers' health soon benefited   
by their stay in the country. Plenty of fresh air   
and sleep were just what was wanted after their   
recent experiences. The food rationing had not   
begun, and Tony's mother stuffed them with   
wholesome country fare. Two years later it   
would have been a very different story. There   
was no doubt Jimmy enjoyed his stay with them.   
Standing on the lawn one day, watching the dis-   
tant hills, he broke into one of his impassioned   
outbursts.

" No .wonder you fellows turn outto fight   
without being conscripted. Something to fight

for. Look what you've got to lose." He waved   
his arm round the expanse of country in front of

p195 them, then turned and gazed at the old house

with the sun shining on the Queen Anne brick-

work.

" It’s all very well," he went on, "talking of   
patriotism amongst the labouring classes. But   
would a man be as keen to fight for a hovel in the   
slums of one of our great towns, as he would to   
fight for a country mansion? Enthusiasm *must*vary with. the position at stake. I've enjoyed   
staying with you, Jacker, it's been a refreshing   
revelation to me, staymg with well-bred people   
who are not snobs. It's a pity there are not more   
like your father. We should have nothing to   
worry about, If all your class were like that."

" There is nothing strange about him Jimmy .   
he is just typical of the type he represents.   
Those you refer to are not the real thing."

" Well, then, I've learnt all about a class which   
I never knew before; now I want to learn the   
life and habits of the agricultural labourer. Our   
leave will be up in another six weeks. To-   
morrow, if you don't mind, I propose to dis-   
appear as a farm labourer." I've had an advertise-   
ment in the local paper, and offered my services   
for a month. They've been accepted."

"Where are you going to do this mad busi-   
ness? " asked his friend incredulously.

" More than twenty and less than fifty miles   
from here."

More than that he would not say

p196 " Got the clothes? " asked Tony.   
"Everything ready, and, if you don't mind,   
I'll catch the two-thirty-five train to-morrow."

" You really mean this ? "

"Most certainly"

" Of course we don't mind," Tony knew well   
that argument would be useless. "When will.   
you rejoin to go up for the next board? You   
must come with me to London for it, otherwise   
you'll have to walk to the station to-morrow."

Jimmy laughed and patted him on the back.   
"I shall be on the station a fortnight on   
Friday, at 3 p.m. precisely, dressed as a British   
officer."

"Good, I'll meet you and we'll go by the   
4 p.m. to London. I might introduce you to   
some other folk up there, and you'll be further   
on your way to completing your knowledge of the   
various strata in the English nation."

. ‘. .

After Briscoe had gone, Tony Jackson went   
over to stay with Joan and her people for a few   
days.

" How did you like Jimmy? " he said to her

when they were alone the first evening.

"He's charming: he understands everyone.

But isn't it tragic to see a man with such vitality   
and energy mutilated as he is ? "

"No I don't think so. You can't mutilate

,

a chap like Jimmy unless you deprive him of his

p197 mind. He's above the mere animal humanity   
which can be crippled by the loss of a limb.   
He'll easily overcome it."

" Such people are beyond my comprehension.

What it must be to have a mind like that! "

"I can't tell you what it's like, because I   
haven't got one. But you can ask Jimmy next   
time you see him."

" When am I likely to see him again ? "

" That depends upon when and where he puts   
in an appearance; Jimmy has a habit of disappear-   
ing sometimes."

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean that his present idea in life is self-   
education. He wants to be ready for the days   
which are coming after the War."

"But surely, he's well enough educated!"   
" In the ordinary way which we understand,   
yes. But he wants to know something of every   
class in the community. He means to under-   
stand them all. He's undergoing a course of   
instruction at the present moment."

" But how does he do it ? "

" He just goes and lives among the people,   
whose life he wants to learn, as one of themselves.   
He's lived in some funny places, too."

" Don't they know who he is ? "

"He can assimilate himself to anyone, the   
highest or the lowest. All take him as one of   
themselves. He's not stamped as I and others

p198 are with the hall-mark of the public school.   
We can't pass for anything but what we are.   
There are public school men toiling on the trams   
and taxi-cabs of Canada, but they never lose the   
stamp; those who work with them always know   
them for what they are, however squalid their   
conditions. Perhaps that's the wonder of the   
public school-the permanence of its effects.   
On the other hand, it always prevents one from   
being accepted by others and assimilated to them   
as one of themselves. I couldn't do what Jimmy

does"

"Douglas and he were great friends weren t

they? Can you imagine any two more extreme

opposites than Douglas and Mr. Briscoe

"I can't" he said, "but they were two   
damned fine types, each of them essential in his   
way. Bremner's light-heartedness makes the   
world go round, and Jimmy's wonderful phllo-   
sophic brain will make it fit to live in. He’ll do   
good before he's finished, to many millions of   
Englishmen.' ,

" Was he very brave? Mr. Briscoe, I mean? "   
She asked after a moment's pause to reflect upon   
his meaning.

" He was as brave as a man can possibly be.

With all his great intellect and. imagination,   
which .must have brought home to him the conse-   
quences of every action, he never hesitated in the

face of danger"

p199 " Douglas admired him too*,* you know."

" Well, Douglas knew the real thing when he   
saw it."

" I like Mr. Briscoe, and he was with Douglas   
when he was killed; I'm glad you brought him   
along. When shall we see him again? There   
are a lot of things I want to ask him which I   
couldn't ask the first time I saw him."

" You' can see him next month, if you like.

He and I are going to London for our medical   
boards. Why not go and stay with your aunt.   
It'll do you good and get you away from your   
thoughts for a bit."

. . . .

At the appointed hour Jackson met Briscoe on

the station. The idea that Briscoe might fail to

keep the appointment never occurred. One just   
took things for granted with him. He was   
dressed as an officer, and his uniform was spotless.   
 " How did you get on ? " asked Jackson, as the   
other rose to greet him from a chair in front of the   
fire in the station master's office.

" Very well indeed, in fact, better than I   
expected. I found that one arm can be very   
much more useful than you gave it credit for."

" What did you use it for? "

"Well, it did all right for topping turnips,   
and rolling milk churns."

" And what did you think of the life? " asked

Tony after they had taken their seats in an

p200 empty "first" at the Government's expense.

" It's a good life, one which might be made much   
of: and one which is not understood by ministers   
and legislators, nor yet appreciated by those whose   
fortune it is to get their bread by it, instead of by   
drudgery in manufacturing towns. Jacker, we   
shall have to do a lot for the farm labourer : he's   
been a neglected class. He's an awkward   
customer on the surface, but he wants under-   
standing."

" Well, we are going to see something different

now; London's rather nice for a change."

He felt at the time that he would have liked   
poor old Bremner to be going with them: he was   
so splendid on these occasions : so full of vivacity   
and enjoyment: he wondered whether Jimmy   
might not be a bit of a wet blanket. Although   
Tony was fairly serious for one of his years he had   
a lurking love of the gay life, and experienced a   
desire to let himself go at certain intervals, a   
trait, no doubt, handed on to him from ancestors   
more noted for their faculty for amusement, than   
for work. In all the varied moments of life there   
are certain friends most people would especially   
wish to have beside them. Jimmy was suited   
to a hot corner in the firing line. Douglas   
Bremner made an evening in "Town" well spent   
if he graced any party.

Tony took Jimmy with him to the Hotel   
Majestic, which he considered to be well suited to

p201 the poverty-stricken officer from the country, and   
sufficiently proper not to offend the taste of certain   
critical maiden aunts belonging to his own family.   
Jimmy just didn't care where he went. He had   
no family to offend, and no precedent to cause   
him to despise any dwelling which provided the   
necessities of life at a reasonable price. During   
the day they went about together, but Tony had   
to comply with an invitation to dine with some of   
his relations. He began to get together a   
congenial party for an enjoyable week. London   
in 1916 was still enjoyable to visitors, and none   
of its pleasures were seriously curtailed. To   
anyone who could walk sufficiently lame, or could   
show an empty coat sleeve these pleasures   
appeared to be legitimate, and, as human nature   
does not usually permit people to enjoy things   
by themselves, it was equally justifiable for others   
to share the enjoyment. At least that was   
Tony's point of view at the time. What Jimmy   
really thought about it, it was impossible to say ;   
but he treated the whole affair as an education,   
and went into it thoroughly. The word   
" education" to him justified anything.

The party gradually gathered. Bunny Fen-

ton, who was in a staff captain's billet at Aldershot,   
managed to wangle a week's leave. Joan Elliot   
came up to stay with her old aunt. Bunny   
brought a sister and another girl to act as   
chaperons to each other; he blandly stated that he

p202 trotted out this girl for Tony, though, of course,   
that meant that he wanted Tony to look after his   
sister. It was just his way of putting it. Poor   
Joan came up with a fearful air of depression.   
Six months had elapsed since Bremner's death   
and she quite naturally refused to go outanywhere:

" I've just come up because I want to see some   
more of Mr. Briscoe; you see he was with   
Douglas when he was killed, and it is nice to   
talk to him. It is the nearest I can get to seeing   
Douglas himself."

All the illogical sentimentality of her sex was   
intensified in the girl, and, such is the way of   
woman, it appealed to Jimmy's brilliantly sound   
intellect, while he would have squashed some of   
the most logical assertions of professors as beneath   
contempt. Clever and unsentimental where men   
were concerned, he yet listened to this girl   
taking in all that she said, while Tony continually   
expected him to rush into one of his brilliant and   
concise refutations with which he had heard him   
disperse the arguments of others. Jimmy and   
Tony used to take Joan out to a quiet lunch some-   
where, and then take part in a more boisterous   
evening with Bunny and the other girls.

Miss Booth Gravely, who had been brought,   
as Bunny said, expressly for Jacker's amusement,   
formed an interesting subject for study, and   
Briscoe didn't fail to avail himself of the opportu-   
nity. Her father had been comparatively poor

p203 in 1914 but was now making a fortune out of a

once moribund business converted to munition

making, and it was quite obvious that his daughter

was making up for the lost time, and was out to

live as gay a life as possible. Bunny'S people had   
also increased their already large income. Meet-   
ing him in a ballroom where she would never   
have been found but for her father's sudden rise   
to affiuence, this young lady had used her good   
looks and smart appearance to make herself   
master of the services of one who, because he had   
been wounded, could take what amusement he   
liked, and hardly be critised as an unpatriotic   
spendthrift. She had chosen her quarry well.   
She entirely overshadowed Bunny's rather plain   
sister. Miss Fenton, for all her expensive   
dresses and careful toilet, could not aspire to open   
for herself a road into the drawing-rooms of   
London, and was not unwilling to make the most   
of the opportunity afforded by her brother's   
commission in a crack cavalry regiment. The   
affair suited each of the three parties, and afforded   
Briscoe and Jackson much room for amusement,   
and speculation.

"A ranker is he?" Bunny whispered to

Tony after the latter had introduced them; he   
had seen the D.C.M. ribbon on his breast, other-   
wise Tony felt sure he could not have told that   
Jimmy had ever been in the ranks; he was sure   
no one could.

p204"Yes " he answered "he's one of the best ,

though, and wonderfully clever."

"I'm surprised at you going about London   
with him, though; you used to be so exclusive in   
your friends."

" I am still, and I've never been so particular   
as now; Jimmy is my most exclusive choice of all,   
the best I've ever had."

" Well, he looks a good chap, and he must be a   
bit of a fighter; the M.C. and D.C.M. is pretty   
good."

" He ought to have had the V.C," whispered   
Tony.

Neither of the girls knew the D.C.M. ribbon;   
and it was plain that on the occasion of their   
first meeting they were both attracted by Briscoe's   
handsome face, and liked to be seen with one who   
had evidently played such an active part in the   
War; they looked upon his ribbons, on his   
scars, and his empty sleeve as a very suitable   
setting for their own extravagant clothes. They   
kept on trying to draw him out with the childish   
and frivolous conversation employed successfully   
with other men, and his polite indifference kept   
whetting their appetite more and more. It was   
humorous to see these brainless blase girls   
assaulting the impregnable fortress.

"Do you never dance, Mr. Briscoe?" said   
Miss Booth Gravely, at length.

"Never , " said Jimmy

p205 " Why? Don't you know how?"   
retorted, exasperated at his monosyllables.   
" I've never thought it worth learning."

"Oh, but you simply must learn," she said   
arching her eyebrows in a fascinating manner   
which had won her many an evening's enjoyment   
in the last six months. "You don't know what   
you've missed. We could soon get you heaps of   
dances."

" I'm afraid there are toomany things to learn   
in these days to allow time for it."

"But it's part of everyone's education; at   
least, part of every woman's."

" That's why women are so helpless at joining   
in intelligent conversation; of course, I mean   
English women. French women are different·   
they can talk on any subject." ,

This went on at intervals through the course of   
the dinner. Each time they renewed the assault   
in a different way; and each time he flattened   
them out. He said things which others could   
not have said without causing permanent offence.   
The more he repulsed them, the better they   
seemed to like it. No doubt his face and his   
empty sleeve were too much of an attraction to   
them, and he spoke in such a quiet and decisive   
way that he was like a very dignified senior   
talking to refractory juniors. Bunny and Tony   
just looked on at the drama, and had a little   
banter on their own, but Bunny was evidently

p206 annoyed at the manner in which he had been   
supplanted for the moment in the estimation of   
Miss Booth Gravely.

Returning to the hotel after one of these   
evenings Tony went with Jimrny to his room   
before turning in. He closed the door very   
deliberately, sat on the bed, and motioned his

friend to the only chair.

" To what section of the community have you

introduced me this time?" he said.

" I don't know what you mean," replied the

other alarmed at his attitude.

" We have been at War eighteen months, and   
you and I dine with two women who never   
mention anything but dances, theatres and   
clothes. Do they or do they not represent any

serious part of the British public?

" Why do you ask? "

"Because a great deal depends upon the answer.

If they do, then all I can say is the game's up.   
It's the writing on the wall, the sign of decay,   
the sign that our time has come to make way for

another power. "

anot er power.

" And if not? "

" Then they ought to be stopped contaminating   
the minds of those who are weak-willed, but better

inclined."

" How shall they be stopped ? "

" By the degrading but necessary process of   
 sumptuary legislation, curtailing thelr pleasures,

p207 curtailing their extravagance in dress, food   
and drink, and prohibiting them from lolling in   
luxurious motor cars before the gaze of a suffering   
public, and-by making them work, infinitesimal   
though their work might be, in the sum total   
of the vast effort which we shall be called upon to   
make, it is the example which counts. The days   
are past when you can make one law for the rich   
and another for the poor. The sight of the rich   
gliding along the park in their Rolls-Royces   
must undermine the stamina of the nation. It   
must therefore be stopped."

" Let us presume that the ladies in question   
do not represent a serious part of the British   
public," said Tony, affecting as much seriousness   
as he could.

" What then *do* they represent? "

- "They represent the comparative few who   
have made, and are making profits out of the   
War. They are the real war profiteers, not the   
class whose wages have gone up to correspond   
with the rise in prices, but the makers of vast   
fortunes, which have opened for them the road   
into a new society; and they are taking advantage   
of it to the full."

" They must be stopped. Can it strengthen   
the resolution of those who have lost so much to   
see others piling up fortunes out of their suffer-   
ings? Is that a good thought for a man to fight

on? Have you read the *Green Curve?* Do you

p208 remember the man who failed when he was in a

tight corner because he thought of those at home.

" I remember the story; but I don't think the   
situation is quite as serious as you imagine. We   
are in a state of upset in England at the moment,   
but we shall settle down to the business in a few

months, and everything will adjust itself:" .

" Adjust itself! " he retorted, that’s just like   
you lethargic public school men. I thought you   
were above making such a remark as that. Can't   
you see the enemy won't allow .thmgs to adjust   
themselves, he's orgamzmg, plotting and planning   
against us. It's up to us to put our house in  
order and quick. Inactivity, my God, it's   
awful' !" He paused and then resumed, " Why   
we haven't even passed conscription yet! They   
are still haggling about it in the House, because   
the magic personality of a great lawyer is opposed   
to it. They haven't even mobilized our man-   
power yet; and we shall need to mobilize our   
woman-power too before we are through. It’s   
a mistake to regard the House of Commons as   
just a collection of individuals who have no   
connection whatever with the feelings of the   
nation. We get into the habit of using the word   
'Government' in a vague sense, as though express-

ing some external being in which we have no   
share. We forget that the nation has produced   
the Government, and not the Government the   
nation. Each generation reflects itself in its

p209 Government, and when we say wildly that   
Government should do this or that, we forget   
that a country gets the Government it deserves.   
That's the worst of it, Jacker; the quality of the   
nation at the moment is reflected in its Govern-   
ment. We allow ourselves to be governed by the   
platitudes of the Cabinet. We must exchange   
that for sumptuary legislation, and Spartan living.   
Then we may pull through."

He was becoming more and more eloquent as   
he went on, and Tony's disordered brain was   
beginning to reel with the rapidity from which   
he rushed from point to point; so he took advant-   
age of the lull between the storms and got to bed.

The following morning Bunny rang up and   
asked Jimmy and Tony to dine with him and go

to the Alhambra.

" Let's make a cheery evening. We mayn't   
have many more chances," he added.

Tony accepted gladly for himself, but with   
some diffidence for Jimmy. However, he   
thought somehow Jimmy would be sure to come   
up to scratch. Bunny- was living up to his   
motto. He and his sister and the Booth Gravely   
girl were staying at the Savoy as though expense   
was no object, and instructed the others to meet   
them there for dinner. All sorts of young   
people in those days believed in having a few   
days' luxury and spending their last penny on   
enjoyment while the chance lasted. When Tony

p210 told Jimmy what he was in for, he seemed quite   
pleased, and thanked him as though it had been   
specially arranged for him.

" It's wonderful the way you keep on showing   
me new life," he said.

In the morning they called for Joan and the   
three of them spent a day sight-seeing. Joan   
was very keen on pictures and architecture, and   
was comparatively knowledgeable about them.   
In the morning they visited the National Gallery   
and enjoyed themselves examining and criticizing   
the work of foreign masters. Tony soon found   
that he was the ignoramus of the party. In his   
study of languages, Jimmy had picked up quite   
a lot of information about European artists and   
their work. He was familiar with names and   
dates which Tony had never learnt, and his   
criticism of pictures was sound and in good taste.   
Tony learnt a lot from listening to the arguments   
of the other two, and felt himself developing a   
keenness he had never before possessed. It was   
interesting to notice quite a number of uniformed   
men in the gallery obviously eager students of   
art. What walk of life was not to be found in the   
Army by 1916 ?

After lunching at a small restaurant, they made   
their way to the British Museum. There the   
objects of inspection were the remains of ancient   
architecture, culminating in the Elgin marbles.   
Here Tony's education was of more use and he

p211 was able to hold his own with the other two, at   
any rate, in the historical discussions. Neverthe-   
less, it was amazing to find that anyone with   
Jimmy's limited opportunities could possess as   
much knowledge as he had.

Sight-seeing is, perhaps, the most tiring of   
amusements, and they were all thoroughly worn   
out by the time they got Joan safely back to her   
aunt's house in Kensington. The prospect of a   
cheery evening was the reverse of enticing.   
However, an hour's rest at the hotel put them both   
in a better humour, and at seven o'clock they turned   
up at the Savoy feeling quite adventurous again.

Tony felt that something had happened since   
the night before. There was a different atmo-   
sphere and he could only imagine that Bunny,   
feeling jealous at the interest displayed towards   
Briscoe by the ladies, must have done something   
to " choke them off," and incidentally mentioned   
that Briscoe was a promoted ranker. The girls   
assumed an attitude of cold superiority towards   
him, and addressed more of their conversation to   
Tony. All the same, he could not help noticing   
an expression of delight upon the features of Miss   
Booth Gravely when Jimmy started a conversation   
with her, on some apparently frivolous subject.   
For the moment she seemed to think that she   
had conquered him by her indifference. He was   
really just coaxing her to give herself away. If   
it was the upholstering of their Rolls-Royce or

p212 the colour of the walls in the drawing-room of   
their new house, the result was the same-a   
brusque disapproval of the manner in which   
certain War profiteers were causing labour to be   
employed on the production of luxuries for   
themselves. Every subject which he touched led   
to the same result, until the girl, blushing with   
indignation, turned to Miss Fenton and began to   
discuss the merits of the officers of the New Army   
in a loud voice. Jimmy sat quiet through this,   
and when Tony asked him afterwards why he did   
not let himself go on his favourite subject, he said   
it would have been a waste of breath to expound   
ideas to such intellects.

Nevertheless, Jimmy obviously enjoyed himself   
and the dinner was a great success. Their host   
did not spare the champagne, and Jimmy, though   
discreet in his drinking, was by no means a tee-   
totaller. In all probability he had a strong   
enough head to have drunk the lot of them under   
the table, if put to the test.

Bunny was out to do the party in princely style   
and after a magnificent dinner conducted them to   
a box at the Alhambra. To young officers   
frequenting that music hall the show was usually   
of secondary importance, eclipsed by the attrac-   
tions of the promenade. Having ladies with   
them, their activities in this direction were   
somewhat circumscribed. It occurred to Tony   
that Bunny had figured it out that they two would

p213 be able to indulge in a little promenading while   
Jimmy looked after the girls. He probably   
thought Jimmy a little too prudish to be at home   
in the company of *femmes de joie.* If he did, he   
must have suffered rather a rude shock. For,   
as soon as the first interval arrived, Jimmy   
announced that if the others didn't mind he would   
like to have a walk round as he expected to see   
some pals. Sensing Bunny's desire to have a look   
round himself, Tony announced his intention of   
staying in the box. Hence he had only Bunny's   
account of Jimmy's demeanour. No sooner had   
they arrived in the promenade than a couple of   
women greeted Jimmy by name. He introduced   
Bunny and ordered drinks for the four of them.

" These ladies and I are old friends; we used   
to meet frequently when I was acting waiter in   
Soho. My friend here," he said, indicating   
Bunny, " has been wounded and is here to enjoy   
himself. P'raps you can be of service to him."   
Jimmy gave a hearty laugh.

The ladies smiled at Bunny and sat down.

Both were exceptionally beautiful. Bunny   
noticed with surprise that they spoke with refined   
voices. Bunny, the "lad about Town" was   
being shown the ropes by the uninitiated ranker.

" Well, Martha," said Jimmy raising his glass   
when the drinks arrived, " here's luck. How's   
this War going? What does our friend the   
Boche think of things ? "

p214" Thinks he's winning, Mr. Briscoe. Got us   
held on all fronts and is going to starve us out."   
" How's he propose doing that? "   
"Submarines. Building submarines by the

score, big enough to stay at sea for months."   
" Our Admiralty know, I suppose."

" They've been told."

" What about our blockade? "

"Better, but not effective. A lot of stuff

going through neutral countries."   
" Many spies here? "

" Very few, been rounded up well."

" That's good. Much trading with enemy? "   
" Two cases last month, but nothing of conse-

quence, it's getting too difficult."

" Good news; the old country's waking up."

Turning to the other woman, he added, " And   
how's trade in your profession? "

. " Poor. Plenty of trade of a sort, but no money."   
 " Afraid you've got to do your bit, and accom-   
modate the impecunious officers." They both   
laughed heartily.

" P'raps your friend here would like a card,"   
Martha dived into her handbag as Briscoe rose to go.   
" You bet he would."

" A couple of good lookers," said Bunny as   
soon as they were out of earshot. " You seem   
to know 'em well."

"Known ‘em a long time , Martha’s employed in

a semi-official capacity , Intelligence work ,

p215 enemy trading branch. Her husband was an   
officer in the Indian Army. Drank himself to   
death. She became the mistress of a politician,   
the swine married and left her on the rocks.   
Gotin with a bad crowd and sank to this. She's   
straight enough, though, and brave as they make   
'em. Many of these women have a history   
attached to 'em. Mary's her assistant in the   
intelligence business, she toohas a history. A   
clever woman, but not quite Martha's guts.   
Both are well known in Soho."

Bunny was full of the secret service when he   
returned to the box and was evidently most   
impressed with Jimmy; all his previous opinions   
had undergone a drastic alteration. His sister   
inquired, with a wink, what they had been up to,

and he informed them with an air of mystery

that they had been hobnobbing with the secret

service; more than that he would not reveal.

Bunny was all out to make a night of it and   
proposed that after the show they should go on to   
some dancing haunt, but Jimmy and Tony, after   
their day's sight-seeing, had had enough, and so it   
was decided to give it a miss. They invited the   
Fenton party to be their guests for the next   
evening. Unfortunately, the ladies had already   
booked an engagement, so Bunny suggested   
they should have a bachelor dinner and show   
Jimmy the N.R. Club. It was to be a further   
course of education.

p216 Seven-thirty the night following found them   
in the hall of the N.R. building waiting for   
Bunny's arrival.

" So this is where the robbers of British labour,   
and the agents of German commerce congregate,   
is it?" remarked Briscoe in an undertone.

" What makes you sum the place up so rapidly   
and so caustically? " asked Tony.

" I've seen enough to tell me already," he replied.   
At that moment Bunny entered, and, nodding to   
one or two acquaintances as he passed,joined them.

"Hope you'll be satisfied with the dinner   
here; it's not quite up to the Berkeley, you   
know," he said, looking at each in turn.

" We shall be able to put up with it, I expect ;   
we've all three dined on bully-beef many times in   
the last year or so, and plenty of folk are doing so   
to-night," returned Briscoe smiling.

"No use doing that unless one's obliged,"

said Bunny.

" No, but the thought may help us to be con-   
tent with what we've got, don't you agree?"   
said Briscoe.

"Don't start an argument in the hall here,   
in front of everyone, please," said Tony. "Let's   
go in, Bunny; I can see you are both dying to   
discuss the affairs of the nation, and you'll do it   
more quietly between mouthfuls of food."

Bunny had reserved a round table in a corner of the long dining-room. Briscoe sat in the

p217 corner facing the whole room, Tony sat at the   
side, so that he could see everything with a slight   
turn of the head, while Bunny had his back to the   
room. Tony noticed that Jimmy was particu-   
larly interested in the occupants of another table   
somewhere behind Bunny. Though he tried   
to follow his gaze he was unable for a long time,   
to discover what it was that was interesting him.   
At last he caught the eye of another man looking   
furtively in their direction while Jimmy was   
looking down. It was the little man with the   
beady eyes, whose appearance had arrested   
Tony's attention when he dined there before,   
and whose story he now remembered.

" Fenton," said Briscoe at last, " do you know

the partners in the firm of Weston & Jones ? "   
"Yes, I know something of them."

" How's the firm been doing since the War? "   
" Oh, they've done awfully well, made packets.

It was rather sad about Weston."   
" Why, what happened? "

"Well, both his sons were killed in France,   
and it broke the old man altogether. He died   
of heart failure a few months ago."

" Is there a new partner? "

" Yes, but I don't know him to speak to."   
"Can you tell me whether he's the man

dining with Jones over there ? "

Bunny turned round for a second, as though   
to give an order to the waiter.

p218 " Yes," he replied, "that's the man."

" Just one more proof that England is not   
yet in a position to win the War," said Jimmy.   
" What do you mean? " asked Tony.

" We don't know how to deal with the enemy   
within the gates. That man was a German   
waiter in 1914; he's a partner in an English   
firm in 1916. The conclusion is that neither he   
nor the firm are doing the country very much   
good. What's his name now, Fenton?"

"Donald, I believe," said Bunny.

" Well, it used to be Dernberg and I feel   
certain he's an equally zealous servant of the   
Fatherland under either title. I wonder whether   
we have many of our own agents trotting about   
loose in Germany. If we don't box theirs up   
they'll beat us, sure enough."

Tony did not know at the time how Jimmy   
had come into contact with Dernberg ; it was not   
till he learnt the story of his service in a Soho   
restaurant that he understood. But apparently   
they had served together and Jimmy had learnt   
much of his German from the man who was now   
called Donald. The firm of Weston & Jones   
had been making fortunes out of the War, and it   
was not until a year later that the truth was   
discovered by the unsuspecting public.

Through those days, while Jimmy and Tony   
were on leave after coming out of hospital, they   
had many opportunities to see the England as it

p219 then was. It was a country of contrasts. There   
were the sincere broken-hearted women like   
Joan, deprived of all they held dearest, secluding   
themselves from the public gaze until such time   
as they could feel strong enough to apply them-   
selves to useful work. There were the stay-at-   
home country gentlemen who had given their sons   
to officer the British Army in the earliest days,   
and were now, for the most part, in mourning for   
those sons whom they would see no more; they   
were spending their time shut up in their own   
houses, too proud to be seen abroad without   
having public service to perform, attending   
recruiting meetings in their local districts, and   
releasing the bitterness in their souls by appealing   
for conscription. But their influence on affairs

in general was already on the wane.

Then there were the profiteers who were   
spending money which they had never enjoyed   
before, and whose wives and daughters were to   
be found making themselves a nuisance to the   
shop assistants in Oxford Street and Bond Street;   
they sheltered themselves for the most part behind   
the excuse of amusing wounded soldiers and   
acting for charity. They were responsible for   
the unprecedented number of motor cars seen   
joy-riding on the London to Brighton road.

There were War-brides, who had married men   
for whom they were entirely unsuited, in the   
excitement of the War, and were even now

p220 unfaithful to their husbands who had been   
absent on service but a few short months. There were   
enemy agents working steadily and unhampered   
to undermine the spirit of the people. There   
were snobs of money and snobs of birth, who made   
unpleasant references to officers whom they had   
never seen. There were young men, who had   
married since the War began, whining about the   
unmarried slacker who had not joined up,   
refusing to go themselves till he was fetched.

Finally, there was the great mass of people   
solid and true, but pricked by all these little   
thorns in its side, a mass slow to move, lulled   
into lethargy by many years of peace and national   
success. This mass was even now beginning to   
shake itself, and, by its acceptance of the Con-   
scription Bill, to show that it was willing to   
impose upon itself the discipline necessary to   
enable it to win through in the traditional manner.   
It was steeling itself to the trial of endurance   
before it, the working of its mind was hidden   
away under the covering of social customs, party   
politics, and luxury, and was harder to discern   
than the outward sores which were troubling the   
body politic; but it was evidently sounder than   
it seemed. To have continued in the path which   
was being followed in 1916 would have brought   
disaster within two years, but at the very moment   
when all seemed hopeless to thinking men, the   
weight of the mass began to make itself felt, and

p221 continued to exert its pressure until it effected   
a change, and finally produced the sumptuary   
legislation necessary to clip the wings of those   
who were unwilling to identify their interests   
with those of the community. Upon this mass   
of opinion everything depended. As it was the   
most difficult to move, so it was the most stable   
when it came to anything like a decision. Minis-   
ters, and journalists, generals and admirals, were   
alike powerless beside it. The English people   
seemed to need the stimulus of being almost over   
the abyss, and then performed wonders. It   
needed an emergency to call forth their latent   
powers of improvisation. There were to be   
many instances of this before the War was over.

The decision of the medical board was to give   
Tony two months more leave, to recover from   
his concussion and, if possible, for his leg to get   
more serviceable; while Briscoe was ordered to   
return to the depot, partly because he wanted to   
himself, and partly because there was no chance   
of his condition becoming any different. As they   
parted on Euston Station, Tony could not help   
feeling how his mind had been broadened by the   
experience of the last few months. He stayed   
two more days in Town and took Joan home with   
him, and felt singularly lonely after being con-   
stantly in contact with a friend who was never   
anything but interesting.

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CHAPTER X

KILLING TIME

SOCIOLOGISTS have written many interesting trea-   
tises upon the part played by the emotions of the   
individual in framing the opinion of the mass.   
They have studied, scientifically, what are the   
results to be expected from a community composed   
of such or such members, and have given us   
many accepted rules for forecasting the probable   
effects of different emotions upon society. The   
general trend of their reasoning has been that   
society is a collection of the individuals who   
compose it, save that it is something greater   
than a mere collection of those individuals just   
as a man is something greater than the mere   
addition of the cells which compose him. Little   
mention has been made, however, of the manner   
in which a popular emotion affects the individuals.   
There can be little doubt that the emotion of   
patriotism in England, which arose out of the   
War, was more popular than individual in its   
origin. There were many who acted under   
patriotic impulses, not because they felt it in   
themselves but because they saw other people   
feeling it. Out of the two and a half millions   
who voluntarily enlisted, there were many who

p223 went not because they felt any wild enthusiasm   
for the country and its cause, but because they   
saw others going to the recruiting station.

So, too*,* in each individual case, the desire to   
serve the state took a widely different form. The   
popular idea was the same, but it varied as it   
was put into action by different minds and bodies,   
tempered by a greater or lesser degree of personal   
interests and sense of duty. If the state had   
taken charge and put each man down at his   
appointed task, people would probably have   
acquiesced in the role assigned to them without   
complaint.

As it was, most people decided what they   
thought to be patriotic themselves and then   
criticized others. Among the physically fit,

there were some who believed their place was in

the Army, there were others who thought their

brains were indispensable in some special direction,

and took every precaution to get into a soft job

at home. Acting under these impulses brilliant

scholars were to be found among the lists of

killed, and brainless idtots were to be seen

polishing office stools or signing their names

to documents which they made no pretence to

understand. Society made no effort to guide the

impulses of its individuals into the right channels.

Experts at essential industries felt it to be. their

duty to offer themselves for military service and

were accepted ; while others, who were engaged

p224 upon producing luxuries only obtainable by the   
rich, considered that they were bound by the   
phrase-" business as usual," and continued to   
produce their wares. Some believed in economy,   
and saved up to subscribe to the War Loan, others   
practised extravagance because they said it was   
good to have the money circulating in the country.   
In such diverse manners did the popular feeling of   
patriotism show itself in the actions of individuals.

After Jackson had returned from his medical   
board, he sat down quietly at home, and began   
to think what was in store for him, and what it   
was his duty to do. Had the State any special   
call for him? He was unfit for general military   
service, and, as the medical authorities said,   
likely to remain so. Being, as Briscoe said, an   
unskilled man, possessed of no useful education,   
there was but one service for which he was   
suited-the Army; from this service he was   
now debarred. It was, however, taken for   
granted that he would eventually proceed to the   
depot and be utilized for training troops at home.   
Tony was not quite satisfied with this himself.   
It was sufficiently evident that, as the War   
went on, many thousands of officers would become   
available for training work at home, and that   
ultimately the supply must exceed the demand.   
In spite of Briscoe's denouncement of his educa-   
tion, he felt that he could do something better   
than to follow the general crowd; but the main

p225 idea which obsessed him was that it was better   
to do work out of England than in it. Any   
service abroad seemed more useful to the cause.   
Possibly the chance of seeing the world was   
alluring too. Such was the impulse in his case.

Briscoe had quite another idea. He believed   
in his destiny, and considered that it was his duty,   
first and foremost to prepare himself for the   
period after the War. The usefulness of his   
body had gone, he thought, and it was now up to   
him to prepare his mind so as to be ready for   
the task which might be' held in store for it. It   
is not certain whether he had any definite scheme   
in his mind for accomplishing his purpose when   
the War was over, or whether he just had but a   
vague conception of what his aims would be.

Every thought of his was for the future. The

past and the present he could dismiss in a single

sentence. But the future! He would just

rave about it in magnificent language. He be-

lieved that it was his duty to dedicate himself to

that and nothing else. *His* patriotism took that

line. In each of the" two men the common

impulse was modified by individual temperament,

and gave expression to itself accordingly.

"We have made many howling mistakes,"   
wrote Jimmy in a letter to his friend, "in the   
past ten years. They have all done a little towards   
prejudicing our chances of success in this War

and the total of them has placed us in a very

p226 critical position. Yes, I repeat it, very critical,   
more so than appears at present. If we manage   
to come through somehow, it will only be with a   
tremendous effort. Granted that we make that   
effort and that we do come through, what then?   
Why, it will all have been in vain unless we are   
ready to see that the old mistakes are not repeated.   
Everything we do now, we do for the future, and   
if those of us who are permitted to share in the   
future do not make the best of it we shall have   
upon our heads the crime of having wasted the   
opportunity given to us by the self-sacrifice of the   
present generation. There will inevitably be a   
slackening off after the War, a reaction after the   
period of energy and activity. Some of us must   
be ready to carry on and to see that our destruction   
has not merely been temporarily forestalled, but   
permanently avoided. Look into the require-   
ments of the Empire and pick up inspiration for   
the future. That's our job, Jacker."

Jackson kept that letter and often read it   
afterwards feeling that in it there lay the secret   
of success. The more he watched events, the   
more he came to consider that the most important   
quality in individuals or in societies is the power   
to look into the future.

" What are you going to do now?" said his   
father, when the time came round for Tony's   
next medical board. His son had spent the   
interval in lazing along the banks of an English

p227 trout stream, and lying in bed getting more and   
more dissatisfied with his prospects in life.   
There he was,. with his career not yet begun, and   
nothing definite before him. He could go on   
soldiering for the period of the War. Then   
what? He would be unfit for the Army, and   
have to leave it whether he wanted to or not.   
But he had no taste for peace-time soldiering.   
The thought of-twiddling his thumbs on a small   
stipend in a garrison town did not appeal to him   
in the least. Yet It was equally certain that if he   
did not get into the way of doing some regular   
work pretty soon, he would never be able to   
apply his mind to it when the necessity did arise.   
But he could not do any of these things at home.   
He felt very decisive on that point. It was his   
duty to get out of England. It would be more   
patriotic to clean boots out of England than to   
train soldiers in it. So he was obsessed with the   
idea of getting away from home.

"I.'m going to try to get a departmental job,"   
he said, probably in Egypt or India."

His father looked at him with astonishment,   
and said he would not pass the medical board.   
He dismissed the matter at that, for the time being·

p228 service who could shower such appointments   
upon him. Tony replied that as his parents had   
seen fit to send him to a public school and univer-   
sity, he was determined to see if he could not find   
some use for this obsolete and now despised   
education which had cost so many pounds. His   
father seemed surprised, and assured him that   
he had never had any idea at the back of his mind   
beyond making his son a decent member of society.

Tony went to London a second time for his   
medical board, and immediately proceeded to   
buttonhole some of his friends in the club, to   
whom he told the extent of his qualifications and   
asked if there was a branch of the service in which   
he could be made use of. He nearly always   
received disappointing replies. "'Varsity educa-   
tion," said a dear old man, educated at Cambridge   
himself, " what use is that in these days, a classical   
one, too. What the deuce is the good of being able to   
spout Cicero when we want to beat the Germans?"

" I'm afraid it is rather out of place," Tony   
retorted sadly. But all the same he kept it up.   
At last he was rewarded.

"Old Peacock," as he was called among   
regular diners at the club, was sitting in front of   
the fire in the lounge after dinner ; he had a face   
like a seared tobacco leaf, and a liver like nothing   
on earth, and a clump of white bristles stood up   
island-like in the middle of his shiny bald head.   
No one spoke to Peacock if they could possibly

p229 avoid it; he was the embodiment of everything   
that is unpleasant and cynical. Seeing that young   
Jackson was the only other occupant of the room,   
he addressed him and asked him to have a liqueur   
with him. Tony concurred in the proposal,   
and they got into conversation. When the spirit   
had warmed his throat, Peacock became amiable   
and asked the other what he was proposing to do.   
Tony poured forth the plaintive tale of his educa-   
tion and requirements, expecting to receive the   
same cold douche that he had experienced at the   
hands of others. Imagine his surprise when this   
sour old man hailed him as a kindred soul and   
assured him that he was one of the sort the   
Empire wanted. "Oxford, Honours in Classics,   
eh ? " he grunted, " that ought to be good enough   
to carry a fellow anywhere. It always used to   
be; and it is now, if you know where to go."

" Where's that?" said Tony, nervously sipping   
at his empty glass.

" India," he replied.

" Are they specially keen on university men   
there? "

" Of course they are; they can't do without   
them. India is the country of public school   
men ; we can't govern it without. The prestige   
of the British in India would be doomed at once,   
if one were to run short of sahibs."

" You think I'm specially qualified for service   
in India, then ? "

p230 "Assuredly I do."

" Do you know anyone at the India Office ? "   
"I’m there myself. I can put you on to

anything you want."

" Well, I should like to get into a military   
department. "

" Come round and see me to-morrow my bov "   
(the old seared countenance was getting amiable   
now).

" I've got my board to-morrow. I'll come next

day, if I may, sir." '

Tony went to bed that night thanking the   
luck which had put him in the way of Sir James   
Peacock, K.C.I.E., and he decided that the old   
man's heart was far more genial than his liver.

The board gave him two months extension of   
leave, which would be ample time to look around   
the India Office.

As he was walking along Pall Mall, on his   
way to keep the appointment with Peacock   
Tony ran into an old 'Varsity friend of his, limping   
in the other direction.

. "Hullo," he said cheerily, "you've taken one   
in the leg too, have you; it's not a bad one I hope? "

Might be worse, old man; but I guess it'll   
last me the rest .of the War," and he hit his leg   
with his cane; it gave an unpleasant click.

" My God; have you lost it ? "

" Yes, taken clean off by a whizz-bang at the   
thigh."

p231" Damned bad luck, what are you doing now? "   
" Oh nothing, just leave, and when this is up,   
more leave. I can't get a job anywhere. What a   
useless crowd we 'Varsity chaps are when it   
comes to a show like this; we're not wanted   
anywhere."

" I've just heard that they may find us something   
to do in India, and am going off to see about it   
now."

" Don't go there, it's a damned awful place."

"How do you know? "

"Well, I've been to Mespot. stopped this   
one there. The climate and the flies ! Well,   
I hope I never see the ast again; and their   
hospital arrangements! All the wounds were   
getting gangrene, and medical officers in Bombay   
are. hopelessly incompetent. Better starve in   
England than be an officer out there ! "

" But where else is there to go? University   
men can't be choosers." He shook his head in a   
hopeless manner, like many another Oxonian who   
was broken in the War before starting his career.

His words were not very cheering; but it   
would have taken a great deal more than that to   
deter Tony Jackson when his mind was made up,   
as it was at the moment. "There are two   
things you must do," he said to himself. " You   
must get a job in which your education can be of   
use, and you must get it out of England." With   
this resolution he went to the India Office.

p232 Tony was very much impressed with the   
courteous manner of officials whom he met at the   
India Office. He was afterwards told by other   
members of the Army and Civil Service who had   
worked there, or had business to transact there,   
that the India Office maintained a tradition of   
politeness unrivalled amongst the Government   
offices of London. Also he found that Sir James   
was right, and that his educational qualifications   
were welcomed with open arms. They assured   
him that they were ready to take disabled officers   
of the British service for appointment to their   
military departments, provided their educational   
qualifications were satisfactory.

Before he left his name was registered, and he   
was told that he would receive further notification   
in due course. With that he went to the club   
and ate about the best lunch that he had enjoyed   
since the War began. It was so pleasing to feel that   
his services were wanted somewhere, that he   
forgot his inherent contempt for afternoon theatre-   
goers, and went to a matinee by himself.

His father's face was a picture when Tony   
told him that he had practically got an appoint-   
ment in India.

" Can't you stay at home? Isn't there plenty   
of work to be done in England? "

" There is," said his son, " but I'm no use for   
it. They want skilled men, experts at something   
or another. All I could do, if I stayed at home would

p233 be to train soldiers, and there are thousands   
to do that now, soon there will be thousands   
more. The Government is not out to find us   
suitable billets, so it's up to each of us to seek   
them out for ourselves."

"And do you think you are suited to go to   
India? Will you put up with the drudgery and   
the climate, when you've been used to an English   
country life? "

"I’ll have a good try "

And how long do you mean to stay there? "   
" Till the end of the War: and perhaps after,

if I like it."

" Well, you won't like it: by this time next   
year, you'll be ready to get back, if you can.   
You seem as though you can't listen to reason   
just now, and you would never believe me, though   
I rose from the dead to tell you. I suppose you'll   
just have to find out for yourself "

Such was Tony’s enthusiasm at the moment

that he rejected his father's advice as futile and   
out of date. It was the first time he had ever   
done so, for he always considered his father's   
opinion as well worth listening to, and they were   
always the best of friends. Tony had owed   
much to his father's discrimination and good   
advice, and knew it; nothing, therefore, could   
testify better to the depth of his determination to   
go to India than the fact that he was willing to   
ignore him at this moment.

p234 Before he received any further news from the   
India Office Tony wrote to' Jimmy Briscoe, and   
told him that he expected to get the appointment.   
On the very next morning he heard from Jimmy ;   
their letters had crossed.

"Jimmy stated that he had decided to learn   
something of our Eastern empire. If one is   
going to be useful after the War, one can't afford   
to miss a single opportunity of picking up in-   
formation which one has not already got," the   
letter ran. He said that a garrison battalion was   
being formed of crocks who were not fit far   
general service. As he could ride and march,   
he believed he might be able to get included,   
and they were geing, he said, to' India. This was   
not less unexpected than it was welcome. But if   
any doubts existed before as to Tony’s desire to   
go East, the thought of going there along with   
Jimmy Briscoe soon dispelled them all.

In due course the India Office offered Tony the   
refusal of a billet in a military department. Dis-   
regarding the final advice of. his father, he   
accepted it. He failed to realize that Briscoe   
and he might never meet, even If they did go to'   
India. Jimmy was going with a garrison batta-   
lion whereas he was gaing as an official of the   
Indian Government. They might be stationed   
a thousand miles apart, for, of course, he had   
only a vague idea of the size and distances of   
India. Just as two. people in England can always

p235 arrange to meet now and again at week-ends even   
if they are situated at extremities of the country,   
so he pictured it to be in India. But Jimmy had   
exerted a hidden influence over him, and the fact   
that they were both acting under the same idea,   
and were both going East, seemed to be a guaran-

tee that he was doing right.

Upon Tony's acceptance of their offer, the   
India Office had sent word that he must hold   
himself in readiness to proceed to India at a date   
to be notified later; so he promptly wrote to   
Jimmy and told him to get leave at the earliest   
opportunity, and come to stay with them.

" If you will meet the train arriving 5.30 on   
such and such a day, you will find me there," he   
replied in a characteristic note, and named a day   
three weeks ahead.

If it had been anyone else Tony felt he would   
have demanded later confirmation before he used   
his father's meagre supply of petrol to meet any   
train. On this occasion he just turned up to time,   
and found Jimmy already on the station. Tony   
looked at his watch and the station clock, and

apologized fer being two minutes late. .

" You are not late," Jimmy said. " The train   
has not arrived yet."

" How did you come then? Why didn't you   
wire if you were coming earlier? "

" Oh, I came down by the 1.30, but I wanted

time to change. "

p236 " But surely, you know you need not put on   
glad rags for us."

" Yes, but, you see, I was covered in oil, and   
your mother would hardly like it on her chairs."

" What have you been doing? " asked Tony   
with surprise, though if he had had time to think   
he might have guessed what his friend had been   
up to.

"I've had a week's leave which I've spent   
greasing engines on the railway; they arranged   
to drop me here at one-thirty to-day, and seemed   
quite sorry to be losing my gratuitous services,   
in fact, nearly as loth to part with me as they were   
to accept me a week ago."

" What do you mean by spending a week like   
that, when you ought to have been staying with

us. "

" Well, I shall want every bit of knowledge I   
can get after the War, and delightful as it is   
staying with you, I felt that I had more to learn   
elsewhere. I sucked you all dry last time I was   
here."

" Get in the car, and chuck your overalls, or   
whatever they are, behind; you are mad, Jimmy,"   
said Tony as he started up the engine.

" So you're another of these madmen who   
want to go to India," said Mr. Jackson as he and   
Jimmy shook hands in the smoking-room.

" Yes, I'm one of them; but I don't feel any   
symptoms of insanity, Mr. Jackson:"

p237 " Well, then, why does a boy like you, who has   
done well in the War, got maimed, and won two   
decorations, not rest content and enjoy what he's   
got ? You are one of the few who can conscien-   
tiously be seen about England, and can take what   
enjoyment is going."

"But the future, Mr. Jackson," returned   
Jimmy, smiling (he loved an argument with   
Tony's father), "what of the future? An   
individual, from his own point of view, may live   
for the day; he just grows, reaches his prime,   
then decays and dies and he can do nothing to   
prevent it. Therefore you may argue that the   
individual should live for the day. But each   
individual is also a member of society and society   
never dies, rather its prospects depend upon the   
foresight of individuals. As a member of society   
then one should always live for the future, what-   
ever one's end may be. That's what I'm doing   
now, finding and storng knowledge which may be   
useful later on. Foresight is the power to draw   
inferences from facts. Those facts I am studying   
now, and I don't want to confine my study to   
England."

"Stop it, Jimmy, it's time to dress for   
dinner," Tony interjected, "you forget that my   
father has not the boon of being in khaki, and   
has therefore to array himself in black and   
white, and that my mother will have a few   
words to say to him, if he's late." He felt that

p238 once they let Jimmy get into his stride there   
would be no stopping him.

Tony had arranged for Joan to come and stay   
with them while Jimmy was there, and he   
motored over and fetched her next day.

She was very upset about them going to India,   
as she said they were the only people she cared   
about seeing at the present time. All the 'same,   
she brightened up, and the party was a very   
successful one. The weather was perfect and   
they took full advantage of it.

"I shall always remember that week," said   
Jimmy later, " as typical of perfect life in some of   
England's best country." He told Tony at the   
time that he thought the latter ought not to leave   
England but rather to stay behind and be a   
'comfort to Joan.

" But she likes being with you far more than   
with me," said Tony, "because of the fact that   
you saw poor Bremner last."

" That's too illogical for words," he replied.   
" It may be, but it's true; there's no logic   
where women are concerned."

The day before Briscoe was due to leave, he   
was, recalled by a telegram saying that he must   
join the 1st Gn. Battalion of the -- Regiment,   
which would be leaving for India at an early date.   
The telegram arrived on a perfect afternoon, and   
found all three of them sitting on a shady bank   
beside the river. .Tony had taken his fishing rod

p239 down, while Jimmy and Joan followed him   
ready to assist in landing anything, if fortune were to   
favour them. Tony had taught Jimmy to throw   
a fly by this time, and after a few lessons he   
promised soon to eclipse his teacher at theart.   
They took it in turns to use the one rod, and after   
an hour or so's fishing had captured three brace   
of beautiful trout. Jimmy raved about the   
fishing with just the same enthusiasm as every-   
thing else he took up, and that afternoon he had   
succeeded in collecting a large fish from a most   
difficult position under bushes which overhung a   
stretch of very fast water, The difficulty had   
been increased by Tony’s game leg, which   
prevented him from being able to get a foothold   
in the easiest position to land the trout, and   
nearly precipitated him headlong into the river.   
In the end, their joint efforts had been successful,   
and they were reposing under the shade of a tall   
hedge watching another big fish lower downstream   
swallowing floating flies with a regularity which   
made them hopeful of another success. A row   
of alders cast a welcome shadow over the stream   
where it gurgled over some stones, and then   
subsided into deeper water as it rounded a bend   
overhung with bushes; from beneath these came   
the monotonous flop of thebig fish rising, and each   
flop was succeeded by a ring of ripples which   
followed each other to the bank. Higher up,   
some cows were standing in the water, cooling

p240 themselves in a delightfully idle way, and the   
green all round was perfect. It was England at its   
very best.

All three would probably have gone to sleep   
and left the big trout undisturbed, had not a boy   
with a telegram trespassed upon their solitude.   
It was Briscoe's recall.

"I don't know whether I like this sort of   
afternoon," said Jimmy when he had read it.   
" It is too perfect, one has to come back to the   
realities of life in the end."

"What is it ? " said Tony.

" I have to go, " he replied, "the crocks'

battalion is leaving at an early date. Anyhow,   
I've had and enjoyed my leave. It's demoralizing,   
this is: we've been living for the present .   
to-day. Let's get that big fish. It's your turn.';

" Have you really got to go, Mr. Briscoe ? "   
said Joan in an appealing voice.

" I have, Miss Elliot. Why?"

"Because the whole world seems slipping   
away, first Douglas, then you, and then this one"   
she said putting her hand on Tony's shoulder.   
" You two are the last links with all I've loved   
and with my past happiness. I wish I could go   
too. The whole world seems changing, and I   
seem left."

" Live for the future, Miss Elliot. You are   
still young. It May be as sweet or sweeter than

p241 the past," said Jimmy, in a manner which Tony   
had never heard from him before. He was   
always courteous and pleasant; but this time   
there was a note of sentiment in his voice.

" Leave me alone, while you two go and catch   
your fish," she said.

The fish proved to be too much for their   
combined efforts and after a short struggle, went   
upstream, taking with it about three feet of cast.   
All were rather silent as they went home, in spite   
of their good afternoon's sport. There is some-   
thing in the atmosphere of perfect English country   
which makes people sentimental and unfit to face   
the stern realities of the world. Once they are   
away from the scenes of human strife, where all   
the prizes of life are fought for and won, they   
seem to forget the hard and cold facts which are   
going on around them in the world. A small   
thing brings them to their senses, and they feel   
depressed. This telegram recalling Jimmy, the   
most ordinary and natural thing in the world to   
happen, brought these three suddenly back to the   
cold-blooded fact of war; and their spirits seemed   
to have disappeared. On reaching home Tony   
found a telegram for himself. " You will be   
attached to the 1st Garrison Battalion of --   
Regiment, for duty *en route* to India. Report to   
the O.C. at -- immediately." It was the most   
startling piece of news imaginable, and neutralized   
the depressing effects of Briscoe's order.

p242 " Jimmy," he said. "I'm coming with you;   
read this," and handed him the telegram.

" What, are you off too? " said Joan, rousing   
herself from her silent meditation.

" Yes, and going along with Jimmy, too,that's the best of it."

" You are the last link with the past; and now   
you're off," she said and hurried away to her   
room.

" She's very cut up about it," said Jimmy, " but   
she'll be all right. She's got a future like all of   
us ; and she'll learn to live for it in time."

The evening was spent in preparations for an   
early departure. Packing in Tony's case was a   
pretty considerable business, and his mother   
helped him with it.

Joan offered her services to Jimmy, and they   
were gratefully accepted. He had a very un-   
extensive kit, but even this was difficult for a one-   
armed man to manipulate. Tony had noted with   
great satisfaction the touch of tenderness that   
came into Jimmy's voice when speaking to Joan   
on one or two occasions lately. It was, of course,   
no use looking for anything more than friendship   
between them. Joan would quite probably never   
love anyone again. But it was, at least, good to   
feel that his two friends were friends of each other.

The packing being over, all reposed themselves   
on deck-chairs in the garden for a last chat   
before turning in

p243" How long do you boys think it will be before   
you're home again? " asked Mr. Jackson.

"Jimmy says the War will probably last   
another two or three years," interjected Joan.   
Tony noticed with satisfaction that she had taken   
to caIling Jimmy by his Christian name. So the   
packing had broken down this formality between   
them.

"I should think that's about right," said Tony  
 " We've got to win and we can't do it in less."   
 " Well, when the time comes, we must all   
meet again here," replied his father. " We'll   
keep a bottle or two of the vintage we had to*-*night for it. You'll get no port like that in   
India."

" WeIl, Jimmy, that'll be something to come   
home for," laughed Tony.

" We'll do our damnedest to earn it and   
appreciate it the more. About three .years   
should see it through, Mr. Jackson, Jimmy   
answered.

Mrs. Jackson kept silent with her thoughts.

p244

CHAPTER XI

EAST OF SUEZ

A NUMBER of British troops were disgorged from   
a very dirty train upon the docks of Brindisi, and   
a very old colonel was endeavouring to discover   
what he was to do with them, without result. The   
1st Garrison Battalion of the -- regiment was on   
its way to India, and Tony Jackson was attached   
to it for duty *en route.* "Can anyone speak   
Italian?" shouted the colonel to the sergeant-   
major, who passed it on.

" I 'eard Lieutenant Briscoe talking to one of   
the Italians just now, sir," replied the old   
soldier.

" Tell him I want to speak to him."

" Do you speak Italian, Briscoe?" said the   
colonel as Jimmy walked towards him.

" A very little, sir."

"Then come with me to these embarkation   
people, please. We are not getting on very   
fast. "

Briscoe went off to perform the duty which can   
only be performed by a good linguist- the duty   
of acting as a connecting-link between different-   
speaking members of the human race. Jimmy   
spoke to the Italian officers as though he had been

p245 one of themselves, but there was not another   
British officer with the battalion who could so   
much as explain what he wanted to eat or drink.   
As Tony looked over the dark Adriatic, he men-   
tally decided that the public school man was the   
worst educated soul alive. Ever since 1914 his   
pride in his own education had continually been   
suffering these reverses. He had made Jimmy   
promise to have dinner with him before they went   
on board, because he knew that he would fare   
better if he was accompanied by someone who   
could speak the language. Tony almost felt a   
peevish jealousy of this man who could speak   
Italian fluently, while he, with a university educa-   
tion, could only look on. However, when the   
time came he was glad to have Jimmy's assistance;   
and together they ate the best dinner that could   
be procured in Brindisi.

"This war's a big thing, isn't it, Jacker ? "   
said Briscoe, after having been silent for nearly   
a quarter of an hour.

" I've always thought so; have you only just

discovered it ? "

" Well, we've just had it brought home to us   
a bit more. "We've been travelling now for nearly   
four days, and have seen all sorts of people. We   
started from the Midlands of England, crossed   
the sea, passed through France, along the Riviera,   
and now down Italy. Everywhere men and   
women are under the same cloud- War. All

p246 these millions are struggling and fighting to do   
one another down. The individual disappears   
altogether in this vast ocean of humanity."

"Yes, it is remarkable," replied Tony re-   
flectively, "and the quietest spot of all was the   
one we left first; they know less of the War in the   
jolly old English countryside than any place I've   
been."

As they walked towards the docks to join their   
transport, the harbour was lit up with flashes; all   
lights had been covered according to instructions,   
and the darkness was only stabbed by the beams   
of searchlights from the Italian warships, which   
scoured the sky. A shower of shells burst some-   
where high above them, and people went hurriedly   
into the houses to take cover from falling frag-   
ments. An air raid was in progress. .After   
three and a half days of travelling from the heart   
of England, they were still in the war-infected   
area. All mankind were sharing in this great   
madness.

A week later they were in the Red Sea. The   
sight of British and French cruisers at Port Said   
carried on the continuous path of war, which   
seemed as though it would never cease, and must   
continue round the entire world. Along the   
banks of the canal were troops from the yeomanry   
manning trenches against a possible raid, and so   
the trail continued all the way to Suez. Then   
something changed. Whether it was the climatic

p247 effect upon their imagination, which dulled them   
all\and made them sink into the lassitude of their   
surroundings, or whether the momentary absence   
of warships and trenches from their sight had a   
reactionary effect upon overstrained minds, neither   
of them could say, but they seemed to forget the   
cause which had brought them where they were   
and to imbibe a new atmosphere.

It had been, as they thought then, a tremen-   
dously hot day, and they were looking over the   
ship's side towards the west, where the sun was   
just beginning to set. Discipline seemed auto-   
matically to have relaxed since passing Suez,   
though there were no orders to that effect. Tony   
felt that a delightful sloppiness had come over   
him, and he just gave himself over to the air of   
*laissez faire* which seemed to hang about. As he   
looked over the side at the most perfect evening   
he had ever seen, he felt that he had come into his   
own. The air and surroundings seemed suited   
to the classical education. He could picture   
Greek dramatists producing their beautiful but   
useless art, useless at any rate when it came to a   
nation fighting for existence. Fighting seemed   
far away from his present surroundings; one   
could not fight for existence in such air as this ;   
one just existed somehow, and could not trouble   
to look into the causes.

He remembered the old man in the London   
club. "They like 'Varsity fellows in India," he

p248 had said; and certainly it seemed to Tony as   
though he was getting into an atmosphere suitab1e   
for the casual manner and the ignorance about   
the world at large, which was imbued in the   
alumni of Oxford.

The classics were in their element at last; their   
antiquated useless culture fitted in with surround-   
ings which seemed to obscure the hard, cold facts   
of life, and lead one on to doubt their very   
existence.

Just as he was drinking in his surroundings,   
and losing himself in them, a hand was placed   
upon his shoulder. He looked round in a lazy   
manner, and saw Jimmy standing there, bolt   
upright, with his eyes as keen as ever. There   
was nothing of the *neglige* attitude about   
him.

" Well," Tony said, " come to have a look at   
the sunset? "

"Didn't come for that, though it's worth   
looking at; but, I say, I hate this attitude of   
slackness that's come over everyone since we left   
Suez. The fellows were quite efficient and smart   
before we left Italy. I'm orderly officer to-day:   
just been down to inspect the quarters ; you never   
saw such a mess in all your life. Neither the   
C.O. nor anyone else cares a damn. If the   
fellows are drunk, it doesn't matter. If the   
fellows are sick, it doesn't matter.: The medical   
officer's too slack to turn out unless you make

p249 him. Everyone seems to have gone to pieces   
all at once."

"My dear Jimmy, the effect of the East,   
haven't you felt it? The hard, pushing life of   
Europe has been left behind us; I think it   
delightful to have this feeling of peace for a   
change."

" You don't mean to say you've succumbed to   
your surroundings already? That's what all   
these others have done. Remember you are a   
European; for God's sake don't become an   
Easterner the moment you get outEast. We are   
representatives of England, and we shan't govern   
India much longer unless we keep ourselves as   
Englishmen, even amidst our new surroundings.   
We must maintain ourselves superior to the   
enervating effects of the East, or someone will   
come along who can, and outwe shall go, that's   
all. "

All Tony's dreams of the classics and Greek   
theatres seemed to fade away before this vigorous   
attack, and he looked at Briscoe. The latter   
stood in the fading light, typical of the successful   
man, the man that wins all along in the struggle   
for life, the man who always comes through in   
the competition with others. There were no   
other signs of war about them, yet he stood there   
and reminded Tony of the scene which had taken   
place in a trench at Loos nearly a year before.   
They were representatives of Britain in the East

p250 and must keep above their surroundings, or other

Europeans would come along who could. That

was his idea. The soft culture of Oxford had   
once more to bow to cold-blooded efficiency.

Then Tony looked back at the sea. The light   
was fading fast. The orb of the sun had dis-   
appeared, and the rosy tints of the sky were fast   
changing to delicate saffron. There was not a   
single cloud in sight. The surface of the sea   
was growing darker. It was turning from blue   
to black, and its colour was blended with the   
changing shades of the sunset; it assumed the   
richest colour imaginable, quite indescribable by   
any epithet in the English language. As he cast   
about for one in his mind, Tony recalled Homer's   
adjective. It was the only one which could   
possibly describe it ; of course, it was the" wine-   
dark" sea.

This brought him back to the classics again.

Then he looked at Jimmy beside him. " Would   
the classics ever be preserved at all, without such   
men as you? " he thought.

To keep superior to one's surroundings, is a   
hard thing for most people; but to a man who   
had fought his way up from a miner's cottage to   
a British officer, Tony supposed it was nothing out   
of the way.

. . . . . .

Bombay knew nothing of the War In 1916

p251 except that it was enjoying a period of unprece-   
dented prosperity. Whisky had gone up in   
price, but then there was much more money to   
pay for it, so what did it matter? A hospital was   
being erected to the memory of the Governor's   
son who had been killed in action, and this   
brought it home to those who took the trouble   
to think about what they saw. More British   
officers required accommodation in Bombay, and   
there was more opportunity for Parsee landlords   
to rob them and grow fat; no action was taken   
to protect the rights of men who were serving the   
state. The government was made up of men,   
like-Tony Jackson, educated in the classics, who   
had found it impossible to keep themselves   
superior to their surroundings. They were   
scarcely alive to what was going on in Europe;   
they were sloppiness itself.

Jimmy Briscoe took all this in at a glance, and   
could have told as much after one day in Bombay   
as most people could observe after a yeal." travelling   
throughout India. Neither of them spoke on the   
subject. After Jimmy’s little outburst in the   
Red Sea, Tony had taken every precaution to jerk   
his mind into activity and keenness. He found   
it singularly hard to do. At home one had never   
had to worry about this. Everyone was trying to   
do their utmost, and one did the same as everyone   
else. He now found himself placed among   
people who had never been to Europe since 1914,

p252 and who were, in many respects, half a century   
out of date. Living a comparatively easy life,   
with ample salaries assured for the time being,   
they seemed to lack incentive. They had been   
men of far greater ability than Tony when they   
came out, and they came from the same old   
public school class. They had drifted into this   
way of living, why should not he? He nearly   
did but then he always saw the picture of Jimmy   
on 'that ship, with his empty sleeve, and his   
ribbons up. He was so terribly efficient, and   
Tony feebly tried to be the same. But the   
classical education was not suited to it.

After a day in Bombay, Briscoe had gone with   
part of his garrison battalion to Agra. Before   
he went, Tony made him promise that he would   
write in six months' time and give his views on   
India.

While these six months were passing, Tony   
had the opportunity of learning many things   
about himself, and of shattering many illusions.   
He had regarded himself as naturally energetic   
and thorough, more so perhaps than a good many   
others, with whom he came in contact. These   
natural qualities would, he hoped, carry him   
along successfully. He now received a rude   
awakening. His nature was just the same as,   
and not superior to, that of others, and if he   
allowed himself to drift, he should follow the   
same road. He discovered that nature will

p253 always sink to the level of its surroundings ; it   
is therefore a useless guide for a European in the   
East. What would keep a man above Eastern   
influences? He could find nothing for a time,   
then he remembered Jimmy's remark on board   
ship about them being the representatives of   
England. Reason, he thought; scrap Nature   
and take to Reason; nothing else can help a man   
to keep efficient and active among demoralizing   
surroundings.

Six months after his arrival he was lounging in   
one of the long cane chairs peculiar to India, and   
his boots were being removed by a dusky servant.   
He was in the throes of demoralization. He had   
already come to look upon this servile ministra-   
tion to his smallest needs as due to him by right.   
Just picture it in England, he thought; imagine   
a body servant seated on the floor, detaching your   
boot and holding your foot at a comfortable angle   
until he has placed an oriental slipper beneath it   
to prevent the sacred member from coming into   
contact with the ground. That was the occupa-   
tion in which his servant was frequently engaged;   
and he enjoyed it; or rather he had ceased to   
enjoy it, and had now come to regard it as a   
matter of course. A figure moved silently in the   
veranda outside, and he would have been un-   
aware of the presence of anyone, but for the   
shadow which was cast across the doorway.   
" Kuch admi bahar hai " (there is a man outside),

p254 he said to the servant. The latter went out and   
returned with a letter. As he knew few people   
in India, and only expected letters when the home   
mail came in, this was a surprise. Then he knew   
the writing. It was Jimmy's promised letter.

From its bulk he guessed that it contained the   
accumulated sentiments of the last half year upon   
things in general. He was not disappointed. It   
went straight to the point. "The British policy   
of *laissez-faire,"* it began, "has reached its   
climax in India. We house our soldiers in badly   
lit and badly ventilated barracks. We take no   
adequate steps to see that suitable accommodation   
is provided for our officers at a suitable price.   
We send Territorials on tropical service, clothed   
in European uniform. We cling to everything   
old and reject everything new, and instead of   
compelling the men at the head of departments to   
retire and make way for new blood, we extend   
their tenure, and allow the affairs of the country   
to be directed by men just a few years older than   
usual.

" There are three points taken into considera-   
tion when promoting men in the service of the   
Government of India, (1) Seniority, (2) the man's   
wife, (3) whether the man is what is known as a   
'sahib.' On the whole, appointments are solely   
governed with reference to seniority, but some-   
times the winning graces of a young wife may be   
able to alter this.

p255 Anyhow, one thing is certain. Few appoint-   
ments are ever made with due consideration as to   
a man's fitness for the work he has to do. Success   
depends upon a passive attitude towards things in   
general, and particularly upon never disturbing   
the next above one in order of seniority. You   
cannot be censured for what you do not do, but   
you may be dismissed for what you do do. Many   
a man does as little as he possibly can for fear of   
worrying someone above him. He gives the   
state a poor return for his salary and dreams of

nothing but his pension.

" The power rests in the hands of a bureau-   
cratic civil service which frames the. laws to suit   
itself, and looks upon the Army as an unavoidable   
nuisance. We could admire the members of this   
service if only they were imperialists, for many of   
them have given the best years of their lives to   
improve the condition of refractory and lethargic   
natives, who would readily stick them in the back.

*"But,* they are not imperialists, and that is   
where the weakness of our position lies. They   
forget the ideals and aims of the Empire, which   
called their service into being, the best paid and   
most influential civil service in the world. They   
see nothing incongruous in asking British soldiers   
to hold the frontier against invaders, and yet   
starving British expeditions in Mesopotamia.   
They live under the protection of the combined   
resources of the Empire, and do not compel India

p256 to furnish her contribution to the common   
cause. In fact they forget they are Europeans,   
and begin to think and act as Indians, and instead   
of bringing European efficiency into the things   
they touch, they sink themselves into Asiatic   
sloth. The effect of India upon our own people   
is indeed a bad one; its surroundings are too   
strong for us, and drag us down to their level. "

" So much for the political aspect of our life in   
India. Now for the social aspect. India is   
essentially the country of whisky, cigars and clubs;   
I have no doubt that you agree about that. The   
life might be a pleasant one, but for the intense   
officiousness of everyone, and the extraordmary   
manner in which people inquire into whether one   
is or is not, a 'sahib.' We seem to be subject to   
a very inefficient form of German militarism ; the   
junior man must not address the senior man in  
a familiar way in the club, whether they belong   
to the Army, Civil Service, or anything else.   
The opinions of the junior man are dismissed by   
the senior as beneath contempt, and the latter   
will not condescend to improve the mind of the   
former by discussing his views in front of him.   
We live in an age where criticism is free and open,   
at least in Europe. Criticism is not allowed in   
India, except by Indians.

" I was invited to a dinner party at the com-

missioner's the other day, and I foolishly went;   
I got into serious trouble for monopolizing the

p257 conversation with a lady who was intended for   
the amusement of our senior major. As you know,   
I am always on the look out for information, and   
she seemed well able to tell me a few things, so I   
butted in.

" I suppose you are getting on all right out   
here ; you are a public school man and all that.   
As far as I can make out a ' sahib' and a public   
school man are about the same thing, and I am   
always getting asked by fellows what my school   
was. Your old friend was right when he told   
you India was the place for the public school   
man.

" I find this soldiering a dreadful job; there   
is absolutely nothing to do, and the difficulty is   
to pass the day. I'm studying various languages;   
it is the most interesting and useful way of   
spending one's time. It will be a strange thing   
in England after the War, when a considerable   
number of men with votes come home, who know   
something about India. We were all ignorant   
about it, weren't we ? We don't show much   
signs of being that great imperial people which   
we are supposed to be, at least, not so far as our   
rule in India is concerned. These things worry   
one now; but the knowledge will be useful after   
the War. After the War: that is the whole   
thing as far as I am concerned. I'm not much   
use to the Empire now, but I'm determined to be   
when it's over, and I don't regret having come to

p258'the East; I have learnt such a lot that I didn't   
know before.

" Do you remember what you said about Miss   
Booth Gravely and others not representing any   
important part of the people in England? Well,   
you were right, eh! The British public are   
playing up splendidly, aren't they? They seem   
ready to submit to anything which will help us   
to win this struggle. If we had a little of that   
spirit out here, we should soon make things go.   
Keep in touch with all things English. England   
is going to be an interesting place after the War,   
if the right men come forward to build it up.   
Nations and constitutions have to be scrapped at   
intervals in the world's history to give humanity   
something to do.in building them up again.   
Forget all about the present, and live for the day   
when the constructional work will begin. A man   
will be lucky to be alive then. It is no use you   
and I having escaped from thousands of flying   
bullets, unless we are going to make the most of   
the opportunity of reconstruction."

The letter contained some more allusions to   
casualties among members of the old regiment   
and other such things of personal interest, but it   
was quite sufficient to show that Jimmy was un-   
altered by his new surroundings. He was keep-   
ing himself fixed upon the same object- the   
future. His hopefulness was unwavering: he   
was just as immune from the effect of circum-

P259 stances as he had been before. He was a type in   
himself, and true to that type whether fortune   
placed him in riches or poverty, in Europe or   
Asia. Where all of us went under and became   
immersed in the lethargy of the East, he kept his   
head up. He never forgot that he was an   
Englishman. As Tony finished reading the   
letter, his servant was laying out his dress clothes   
for dinner, placing the cuff links in a clean shirt,   
and arranging everything just so that he could   
slip into it with the least possible amount of   
trouble. He could not help wondering whether   
Jimmy refused to have a servant doing these   
things for him or whether he allowed him to do   
just the same, and still kept himself undemoralized   
by such servile attention to his smallest wants.   
Was he one of those who could live among such   
circumstances, and yet never let himself expect   
them as the ordinary course of events? Was he   
one of the few who could live in the East through   
his whole career without degenerating and remain   
a true European in mind and soul? If so, then   
they could do with more of his type in India.

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CHAPTER XII

*ARMA VIRUMQUE*

TONY replied to Jimmy's letter, and did his best   
to refute the theories expressed therein about the   
East, and about things in general ; but he felt he   
did not succeed too well. He pointed out that   
the record of the sahibs in India had been a proud   
one. The public school men had proved to be   
the men for the job, and had accomplished far the   
greatest achievement in governing Asiatics which   
stood to the credit of a European nation. He   
told Jimmy that he hoped to meet him in the   
course of the next few months, and that he   
thought they might both take a little leave at the   
"Same time, and go away together. Tony received   
no answer to this, and some months later he wrote   
again, when the heat was beginning to try his   
liver and temper, suggesting that the time had   
arrived for a fortnight's casual leave. He still   
got no reply, and as he knew that Jimmy's regi-   
ment was still stationed at Agra, he did not know   
what to make of it. He felt perhaps that Jimmy   
was annoyed with him for suggesting such a thing   
as taking leave in war time; but if that were the   
case, he felt sure that he would not hesitate to   
write and say so, A few weeks later Tony ran

p261 across a man in the club, who had just come from

Agra, and took the opportunity of asking him

whether he had met a certain Second-Lieutenant Briscoe up there. He said he had, but that   
Briscoe was no longer in Agra, and he did not   
know where he had gone to. So Tony did the   
only thing there was to be done when Jimmy

disappeared, he just waited. .

The hot weather was negotiated without any   
leave, and Tony did not really feel any the worse   
for it; the thought of going on leave by himself   
did not appeal to him, and he gave up the idea   
without thinking any more about it, with the   
additional satisfaction of having strengthened his   
claim to it for the subsequent year. As time went   
by he got more and more out of touch with the   
War in Europe. The most he could do was to   
study the English papers carefully, which arrived   
by each mail, and to seize upon all fresh arrivals   
and cross-examine them as to the condition of   
affairs at home. The whole world seemed to be   
slipping away from him, and as the mails became   
more irregular and their arrival was delayed for .   
longer intervals, there was a tendency to feel that   
he was forgotten, and left unheeded. The battles   
in which he had taken part seemed like history,   
and his association with Jimmy Briscoe also   
seemed to be a thing of the past; for he heard   
nothing of him, and but for Joan's inquiry after   
his welfare in letters which he received from her,

p262 Jimmy might almost have been forgotten. But   
the world is too small to hide such men for long.

Tony. thought of the days before August 1914,   
of the dinners and dances to which he used to go   
in London, of the games of cricket which he used   
to play at Oxford, and when he thought of them   
it seemed to him that it was well to be away from   
an England which knew them no more. It was   
the consolation of knowing that England was not   
what it had been that made him less homesick and   
more satisfied with his lot. But as with others so   
with him there lurked some trace of the homing   
instinct, somethmg which, quite unreasonably,   
attracted him to the home in which he had been   
bred and reared, though he knew it to be different   
from what it was and less comfortable than the   
surroundings in which he was placed. He heard   
men lie to themselves and force themselves to   
believe the contrary. "I don't care for England.   
It has no attraction for me," he had heard them   
say, and all the while he felt they were only saying   
it to console themselves. The very things he   
despised himself for having done there, he in-   
wardly longed to do again. The old " Freshers'   
blind" at Oxford, or a dinner with Bunny Fenton   
at the N.R. Club, all seemed so absurdly trivial   
now; but, given a chance, Tony would have   
gone miles to partake of either again. Thus it is   
that the real psychology of a nation cannot be   
changed in a day. It has been bred through

p263 generation after generation, it has been moulded

by circumstances and tradition, and if it be faced   
with the hardships of a great war, well, the most   
it can do is to adapt itself to the circumstances,   
but it cannot be wholly changed till a new   
generation arises. Just as Tony was unable to   
shake off his craving for the fields and streams of   
the English countryside, so others found it to be   
with reference to their comfortable town houses,   
their wine, and their women. The signature of   
the German Emperor to a document declaring   
war on France could not alter their desires and   
habits one jot or tittle; these could only become   
altered in the generation which was in its infancy   
and about to be educated under the cloud of war.

All this time in India, Tony had much oppor-   
tunity for thought. He sat down and looked on   
Europe, as though from a mountain-top, through   
the English papers and periodicals. Previously   
he was in the middle of this surging torrent, now   
he seemed to look on from outside, and his object   
was to prevent it spreading to the uninfected area   
under his control. Rumour was persistent in its   
stories of European defeats and successes which   
were often entirely imaginative, and exaggerated   
beyond all recognition. The home press did   
nothing much to enlighten people as to the real   
truth, and one began to see that natives of the   
Orient were becoming incredulous about the   
numbers of the enemy which the Allies had

p264 killed, and the defeats which they had never   
suffered. An Indian clerk said to Tony one day,   
" Where do all the Germans come from? You   
claim to have killed more than sixty lakhs   
(6,000,000) already, but still it makes no differ-   
ence." He had evidently been studying the   
calculations of a certain English journalist in a   
weekly paper, who claimed that the Allies had   
killed off the whole German Army early in 1915   
Tony had to apologize for the inaccuracy of his   
fellow countryman's figures, and to assure the   
questioner that they were doing well, although   
the numbers were incorrect. His apology was   
accepted, but his assurance was taken with a grain   
of salt. Tony's feelings towards his surround-   
ings were alternatively those of indifference and   
contempt. One day he thought" What have I   
to do with the native of India? What does it   
matter to me what he thinks or does?" Another   
day he was full of scorn for this vast population,   
almost equal to that of Europe, and yet so   
impotent that it could do nothing to influence the   
result of the world struggle; there were 315   
millions of people without a word to say against   
the Germans if they crossed the frontier except   
that which would be said by armies trained by   
British brains, and financed with British money.   
Fancy asking the Englishman to interest himself   
in India, when his interest was centred in a   
struggle endangering his very home and life !

p265 But India is a large place, and though one has   
been in the United Provinces or Bengal, one has   
not seen much of it, and Tony learnt this one   
evening dining with an old school fellow at the   
club. His friend had passed into Sandhurst from   
school, and had obtained his commission the year   
before the War. Ever since August 1914 he had   
been detained in India. He was one of the few   
who were still interested to hear Tony's stories   
of fighting in France, for though men who had   
been confined to India picked up plenty of news   
first hand about Mesopotamia, they did not get   
many opportunities of hearing the tales of Ypres,   
Neuve Chapelle, and Loos from one who had   
been there. They recalled reminiscences of the   
old school, and went through all the names of   
fellows they could both remember, and discussed   
what had become of them all. After they had   
finished, and after Tony had told all his adven-   
tures in France, he asked his friend how it was   
that Regular regiments like his own had been kept   
back from going to the front at a moment when   
they were so urgently needed.

" Well," he said, " we have been doing a little,   
though we don't get heard much of; we are kept   
to hold the frontier. They can't train a regiment   
to become efficient in frontier fighting in a week,   
and our battalion had been up there five years   
when the War broke out; so most of them knew   
something about it. They kept them there, as

p266 they have done two or three other regiments."   
" Have you had any fighting? "

"Not much; we've been having a bit of a   
show the last six months, but it's over now."

" Have you? " said Tony. "We don't hear

anything about it." .

" No, it's an isolated spot up there; snipers

bullets from behind rocks, and all that. A   
company marches into a gully, and is suddenly   
fired on by some folks they can't see; men are   
killed without ever having a chance to kill their   
assailant. It's a life of uncertainty, but you get   
used to it the same as everything else, a bit trying   
to the nerves at first, though. So long as they   
don't introduce high explosive or gas, it'll con-   
tinue to be a fine life for a man, a gentleman's job,   
in fact."

" This wild frontier life really exists then, does

it? Plenty about it in Kipling's books, but I   
thought it was something of an imagination, after   
being in India a year or so and not seeing any-   
thing remotely similar to his descriptions."

" Oh, the frontier is no myth; it's a real out-   
post of the empire."

" Do you folks live up there away in the hills   
for years on end without ever seeing civilized

life? "

" Oh, it's not like that. You may be stationed

in a garrison city. Probably in Peshawar, for   
instance. You don't know it? Well, there you

p267 have a large European community, dancing and   
dinners at the club, tennis and cricket. Suddenly   
one's called out to chase elusive tribesmen over   
their native hills. A rifle clicks from behind a   
stone somewhere above or behind you, and it's   
all over. Perhaps you chase 'em into their   
country and burn their villages. Then you come   
back to garrison life and live on until you are   
called out again."

"Do you never get raids into the garrison   
town ; are you safe while you are in there ? "

" As safe as anywhere else in India. You may   
die of plague or fever; possibly some overbold   
fellow may creep in and shoot an officer in his   
bungalow. But it's so rare you don't think of it.   
To all intents and purposes you are in a well-   
policed community."

" It seems wonderful," Tony said reflectively.

"There you live in the very heart of these   
savages sheltered behind the bayonets of British   
Tommies; and you can live with your wives in   
comparative peace and comfort. Venture out-   
side and you must do s~ with an armed force."

"Aye, and if you are collared alive-well,   
always have a spare bullet ready for yourself."

" Torture ? "

" Yes ; they carve a white man into little bits   
if they get him. Their women are the chief   
exponents of the art."

"Tell me about this little show you've been

p268 taking part in up there lately. How is it we   
hear nothing of these things?" Tony chipped in,   
afraid that he would go on to describe some   
ghastly details of torture.

" Well, the numbers engaged are infinitesimal   
in these days; operations are carried out by a   
single battalion or even a company, and often the   
chief exploits to chronicle are those of individuals.   
Men are sometimes put to very great tests up   
there."

" How many engaged in the operations this   
time? "

"Rather more than usual; most of the r st   
Division were in it at some time or other. They   
started to blockade the tribes-people in the hot   
weather. It reaches 120 degrees in the shade up   
there, and sentry duty in blockhouses is far from   
pleasant under such conditions. We had live   
wires running between the blockhouses. Thought   
this would keep 'em from the plains and starve   
'em to surrender. But you never saw such chaps.   
They sent and told us that they did not think   
much of our live wire, and proposed to test it,   
asking us not to fire. At dawn one morning the   
men in the blockhouses saw a party of 'em   
advancing towards the line. A few hundred   
yards away they halted and prayed to their god,   
evidently asking him whether the wire was any   
good. After a few minutes they broke into wild   
shouts of triumph, having presumably been

p269 assured by him that it was not dangerous. Then  
they formed into line and approached; we did   
not fire. They halted about a yard from the wire and, at a signal from one who was t he   
leader, they all grasped the top strand. That   
second everyone of them was dead. It was   
scientific killing and no mistake. In an hour the   
bodies were unrecognizable hanging on the   
strands, and in a day they were charred to bits."

Tony ejaculated "Good heavens!" and the   
other continued:

"You might have thought that they would   
have been so impressed with the fate of these   
men, that they would have given the wire a wide   
berth. Not a bit of it! A few nights later, a   
crowd of fellows came down in the dark, armed   
with long poles. How they knew that wood is   
a non-conductor, I can't say. Anyhow, they   
levered up the wire, posts and all, propped   
it up at a spot equidistant between two block-   
houses, and got through without being spotted.   
They rounded up a number of cattle and killed   
thirty policemen 'on the outskirts of Peshawar,   
and returned driving the cattle under the wire.   
Then they let the wire back again. The only   
trace they left where they got through was the   
carcases of some cattle which had touched the   
wire while they were being driven underneath.   
The sentries in the blockhouses knew nothing   
about it. That gives you some idea of

p270 fellows we have to deal with. Death is nothing   
to them: they don't care a damn for it."

"Very interesting to hear all this," said Tony.

"What about the active operations in that country? "

" Well, we had the usual game. We chased   
the fellows over the hills, but never caught 'em   
properly. We burned every village we came to,   
and all their crops. We had aeroplanes trying to   
drop bombs on 'em too: as Kipling'd say, 'It   
wasn't 'ardly fair.' I don't think they worried   
much about the bombs, but they didn't like   
wasting rifle ammunition on the aeroplanes; it's   
too valuable up there. We only got into touch   
with 'em once, and then we nearly got a nasty   
licking, if it hadn't been for that interpreter   
fellow, but I suppose you know all about that."

" No, what is it ? "

" Well, let's get into some comfortable chairs,   
and I'll teIl you," said his friend, getting up from   
the table. They sat down in long cane chairs   
and ordered two whiskies and soda. His friend   
lit a cheroot and began.

" I thought everyone knew about this show.

Anyway, you must have seen the V.C. announced   
in the gazette." Tony felt rather ashamed of   
himself for not having seen it and aIlowed him   
to proceed.

" We'd driven the enemy out of a series of   
viIlages, and, as we thought, rounded him up into

p271 a corner. A battalion of Gurkhas had been co-   
operating with us in a sweep across country.   
The object was to pin the enemy up against the   
high mountains and hold him there tiIl he gave   
in for want of food. Owing to the uneven state   
of the country, the hostile force had become   
broken up into two parties, and the Gurkhas were   
confining their attention to one lot, while we   
rounded up the other. When we thought we   
had got them all in front of us, we advanced on to   
the plateau at the foot of the mountains, and   
surrounded their position with a cordon of out-   
posts. But it turned out that when we had got   
separated from the Gurkhas, a strong party of   
the enemy had broken out between us; these   
now cut our communication with the rear and   
closed the pass by which we had entered the   
plateau. Things looked pretty unpleasant, and   
the prospect of attacking these feIlows on the hiIls   
on either side of the pass was not inviting. There   
was also the additional possibility that they might   
decide to attack us, and with their advantage of   
numbers and position they could have made it   
pretty hot. It was one of those moments in   
frontier warfare, when you've got to act or go   
under, and it's long odds you go under either   
way.

"We were deliberating on the plan of campaign,   
when the interpreter, who, by the way, had no   
business to have been up with us at all, but had

p272 obtained leave from the general to go and have   
a look at the operations, asked the C.O. for a word   
outside, and apparently said that he would   
guarantee to dislodge the devils that night, if the   
C.O. would let him select fifty men, and, if he   
failed, then we could assault the position or wait   
for help as we might decide. He was a most   
extraordinary fellow, this interpreter, he had the   
most remarkable influence over the C.O., and   
more still over the men. He was apparently a   
promoted ranker with the D.C.M. and M.C. up.   
Only been out in India about a year, but somehow   
picked up a frontier language. Apparently when   
he passed the language examinations the exami-   
ners had recommended that he should be em-   
ployed, if possible, in some capacity where he   
could use his knowledge. He was an officer of   
a garrison battalion, but they took him away   
from that and offered him this job as soon as we   
started operations in the Mohmand country ..   
He'd been fighting in France and lost an arm,   
and so we all looked on him as the deuce of a man. "

" Wait a minute, did you say he had lost an

arm and had got the M.C. and D.C.M. ? "   
" Yes."

" God, I know the man."

" Well, I was telling you all this to explain   
how it was he came to prevail upon the C.O. to   
let him attempt the job. We asked him what he

p273 proposed to do, and he wouldn't say a thing.   
He said it depended on circumstances. There was   
nothing of the orthodox soldier about the chap,   
but he had a way with him and the C.O. agreed."

" Carry on: I want to hear about this," Tony  
was getting more and more excited.

" How that chap picked up his knowledge of   
frontier warfare is a mystery, " he continued,   
" he'd never been up there before. Anyhow he   
knew that though the natives up there arc   
damned good fighters if they get a chance, they   
 are not likely to keep sentry very carefully at   
night. Half their sentries may be expected to   
go to sleep, and if they are noiselessly put out of   
the way, there is a fair hope of success. So he   
determined to tackle these sentries and took fifty   
picked men for the purpose.. He had previously   
been teaching these men a little grip which he   
said he used in France; though he had only one   
hand, he took delight in explaining it.

" , You may want it,' he used to say, 'if you   
come up against a Boche; it's a fair death for a   
Boche,' and the men had practised it amongst   
themselves. He went and asked if any of them   
would volunteer to use it. As you can imagine,   
about half the regiment volunteered. Then he   
made them give exhibitions and selected the fifty   
most efficient at it. 'You'll have to do it well   
and neatly to-night,' he said, 'and then you'll   
have a chance to use your rifles afterwards.'

p274 The men practised it for all they were worth, and   
he watched, giving' em little hints. It was very   
simple once you got into it, but he wanted it   
perfect, and I think the mere sight of a neck   
would have made the men do it mechanically by   
the time he'd done. I've never seen such a chap   
for getting the men to do a thing, he drew the   
most vivid pictures of what would happen if we   
fell into the hands of those tribesmen. 'You   
know what it means, if we get caught by these   
brutes, eh? Mutilation, that's what it means, a   
slow, lingering death, not the sort of death a man   
likes to die; it's torture, with a crowd of savages   
jeering at you. Now then, let's see you do that   
twist again,' and they did it agam and again,. and   
when he thought they knew it, he dismissed   
them. 'There are a good many kids who'll be   
without their fathers if you don't do that well   
to-night,' he said, when he had finished."

" My God, that's just like him, too," inter-

rupted Tony.

" Well he went and examined the hills at the

top of the pass during the day-time ; how he did   
it without being sniped, I can't say, but he did,   
and he noted the line upon which they were going   
to place their sentries, and marked a .spot on the   
side of the cliff which he could find in the dark.   
He got his men into position at the bottom of the   
hill at 10 p.m. We had a company ready behind   
him who were to work their way up some distance

p275 behind his men, and to do nothing till they heard   
from his party. He sent his men in twos,   
twenty yards apart; every man had his rifle on   
his back and nothing in his hand, and no round   
in the breach of his rifle, so that there should be   
no fear of one of them losing his head and giving   
the show away by letting it off. He went up   
alone in the middle of his party armed with a   
naked bayonet, as he'd only got one hand. He   
sent the men in twos to give them confidence,   
and ordered them to move steadily up, keeping in   
touch with the pair on either side, until they   
should see any enemy sentries who would become   
visible silhouetted against the skyline. Then   
they were to distribute themselves so as to deal   
effectively with the number of sentries which they   
found opposed to them. These were to be   
noiselessly despatched, and then the party was to   
advance silently on to the crest. Having got   
themselves into position, one of them was to be   
sent down to guide us through the gap in the   
sentry line. The whole thing depended upon the   
silent despatch of those sentries. If they gave   
the alarm, well, it would have been impossible to   
advance up that slope under fire, one could only   
go on hands and knees most of the way. His   
scheme was favoured by the fact that the sentry   
posts were quite forty yards apart, so his party   
was able to allow four men for each. The work   
was neatly and efficiently done, except in one case

p276 where the unfortunate sentry began to give   
tongue, but as his colleagues on either side were   
being satisfactorily dealt with, he did not manage   
to raise the alarm before our friend's bayonet   
disappeared into his neck and shut him up. They   
reached the top successfully and sent a guide to   
fetch the rest of us. Just then, one of the men,   
who was advancing to get in touch with the others   
who had lain down in line about thirty yards   
farther on, stumbled over a couple of the enemy   
lying asleep on the ground; these chaps got up   
and yelled like hell before anyone could stop   
them, and that gave the show away. The whole   
damned camp were out in a minute. Briscoe--"

" I knew who it was," broke in Tony, " without   
you mentioning his name; never mind, carry   
on."

"Well, Briscoe gave his chaps orders to get   
their rifles ready and see that the enemy did not   
reach the spot where we were going to come up.   
He knew that it would be all right if only we   
could once get the crest. We were about half an   
hour behind him, and it must have been an awful   
fight while they were waiting for us. I should   
say the enemy were not much less than a thousand   
strong. A few of his chaps were caught before   
they got their rifles going, and several were   
overwhelmed by numbers, but the enemy had a job   
to spot them lying down, and though thousands   
of rounds were fired at them, most went wide of

p277 the mark. Anyhow, it was a mighty sharp   
fight, and by the time we got there, Bristoe had   
only twenty men left, and his last round left in  
his revolver. It was easy enough when we   
arrived, but it must have been hell. By Jove   
the chap deserved his decoration, but he had

rotten luck."

" Why? "

" Just after we had got the upper hand of the

devils a bullet caught him on the left-hand side of

the face just level with the eye, and it has done his   
eye in, I'm afraid. He doesn't seem to worry   
about it though."

" You don't mean to say he's lost his eye. "   
"No, he's not lost it, but he's blind in it. "

" Eye and arm both gone now; what rotten

luck some men have! He's got the V .C., you   
say. Well, he earned it once before, but only got the M.C."

Before Tony went to bed that night he had to

tell Hobson, for that was his school friend's name ,   
the story of Jimmy's other escapades against

the Germans.

"What's happened to him now?" said Tony,

when he had finished.

" Why, he's coming out of hospital in a week

and then he's coming down here on leave ;   
said there was some pal of his whom he particu-   
larly wanted to see, down here."

p278 " I'm the pal; that's the best bit of news I've   
heard for long enough."

" He's one of the finest men I've ever seen;   
and not been to a public school either."

" There are plenty of fine men besides public   
school men, and they make us feel very uneducated   
sometimes, too."

" I don't think it matters where you educate a   
man like Briscoe; he's just one in a thousand.   
He'd be the same under any circumstances."

" He doesn't think that himself; he says that   
he owes everything to the fact that he had to   
educate himself, and specially to the fact that he   
never got chalked down as belonging to anyone   
particular class. Always says that if he had been   
to a public school he would have been the same   
as any of us."

For a long time the two old public school boys   
sat silently thinking, until, at last, Tony broke the   
spell, and suggested that it was time to go to bed.   
They were patriotic to their old school, and   
weren't going to admit that its education was a   
failure, at least not to each other, but who can   
tell what they thought in their hearts?

. . . . .

A week later Jimmy came down. It was   
getting dark, and Tony was reclining on the veranda   
outside his room, watching the sunset and think-   
ing of England, as he often did when he looked

p279 towards the west. He heard a firm footstep on   
the flagstones at the other end of the veranda, and   
its very firmness made him look round; some   
men get into the habit of recognizing people's   
footsteps and Tony knew that this did not belong   
to either of the occupants of the rooms next to his.   
He experienced the same sensation which he had   
felt on board ship in the Red Sea nearly two years   
before. The figure of a man with an empty sleeve   
was walking towards him in the same brisk and   
efficient manner which he had grown to associate   
with Briscoe in the days when they had been   
soldiering together. Somehow he looked the   
same; he always looked the same; that   
feIIow: nothing seemed to alter him. One   
would mutilate his body and yet the uncon-   
querable nature of his spirit just patched up   
the wounds and made it appear unaltered.   
Briscoe's personality was so much his soul, and   
so little his body that one had unconsciously been   
looking upon his soul all the time. Tony hardly   
noticed the new wound which disfigured his face.   
There was an ugly scar extending from the   
corner of his eye till it nearly reached his ear,   
but Tony hardly noticed it at the time, and   
only realized exactly what had happened to him   
after carefuIIy studying his face at dinner. All   
he saw, as he lay under the veranda, was just   
Briscoe, and he was the same as ever.

"Is it really you ? "

p280 "You'd better touch me and see, if you are   
short of faith," he replied.

" Do you know you've not written to me for   
well over six months? "

" I've had nothing worth writing about, that's   
why. I thought that budget I sent you had   
exhausted all there was to be said in general."

" What! Nothing to write about, when   
you've been doing things, and getting the V.C. ? "

" That's too small to be worth mentioning in   
these days; you must look at things in their   
true perspective. We do things out here which   
really have no effect whatever on the issue of that   
huge struggle which is being fought out in the   
West. Things out here are not really worth   
discussing save when they affect the Empire, and,   
as for our own little individual affairs, they are   
not one-millionth part of the human energy which   
is daily being concentrated on attaining one   
object along the battle-line in France."

" You estimate yourself and your exploits a   
trifle too cheaply, Jimmy. From what I   
understand, you saved hundreds of men's lives   
by capturing that ridge in the way you did."

" My dear fellow, what if I had even saved the   
frontier? What of it then? What effect can   
any of our actions here have on the main issue?   
There is something bigger than the whole of   
India at stake. The British Empire, and our   
ideas of civilization are at stake. If we lose in

p281 Europe, what does it matter whether we stopped  
the Afghans coming over the frontier into India  
or not? Keep your eyes on Europe, man; don't   
forget that that is where your fate and my fate is   
being decided."

" There's something in what you say," Tony   
admitted. "Now tell me what you are going to   
do. How are you feeling after this wound of   
yours? "

" I'm right enough, but the I.M.S. don't think

so. The boat leaves a week to-day." .

" Are you for England? "

" The board say I must be invalided out, if I   
stay here; but they recommend me to go home   
first. "

" And what then? "

" If they like to keep me on for some job or   
other, they can do so."

" If not? "

"Then I must start to prepare for after the   
War."

" And what do you propose to take up ? "

" Been considering very carefully what particular   
profession will be able to exercise the most control   
over public opinion in the reconstruction period."

"What's your conclusion? Personally, I   
think the journalists seem to be getting all the   
power," said Tony after a moment's deliberation.

"I think a nation composed of men, who   
have been drilled into armies, and have been

p282 subjected to tests of endurance under trying   
circumstances, will be particularly susceptible to   
personal leadership. I propose therefore to study

leadership! "

" And to do that you will have to become a

politician. "

" Not necessarily a politician. I want to see

that the masses are not beguiled by the sweet-

sounding words of bogus leaders whose only idea

is to provide soft jobs for themselves. I want

them to understand foreign politics and imperial-

ism, and all those things upon which their

security depends. My enemies will be those who

conceal the hard facts and necessities of self-

preservation beneath the promises of internal

social reforms. It'll be my business to see that

each case isput fair and square and fought on its

merits."

" What right have you to believe you can do

such a thing? "

" None; but I can try, and I have the advan-

tage of knowing the sort of leadership that men   
will follow."

Jimmy had remained standing all this time

looking out of the veranda towards the west.   
At Tony's suggestion he now assumed the vacant   
chair and the two sat some minutes in silence,

until Tony broke it.

"Jimmy," he said, looking at his watch,

there's just .time before dinner to hear what

p283 you've been doing and learning of late, and what  
you think of things."

" My doings are of no importanc and not   
worth recording. In fact, since being laid out   
three months ago, I've been a semi-invalid and no  
use to anyone. As regards learning, well, when   
we got settled at Agra, I thought I'd have a cut   
at some language or other, and chose Pushtu   
because there were good facilities of learning it   
from a native battalion. It came fairly easily and   
enabled me to qualify for an interpreter's job   
with one of the English regiments engaged on   
this frontier show. It was well worth it too

, ,

enabled me to see into the mentality of the frontier.   
people a bit. Of course, I've had a fair amount of   
time for reading, especially of late."

" How do you manage with your reading now? "   
interposed Tony.

" What do you mean exactly? "

" Well, I mean one eye *must* take a bit of getting

used to."

" Quite enough, old man, for bookwork, but   
not officially recognized. in the Army."

Tony realized that, of course, it was absurd   
to think such a handicap would mean anything   
to Jimmy.

" Sorry I interrupted; carry on, Jimmy. What   
about the reading? "

" Well, I've been digging into finance and   
economics. You know; 'Lombard Street,' and

p284 that kind of thing. Seems a very important   
aspect of the present situation and will be even   
more so after the War."

" Don't know much about it, they didn't teach   
it us at Oxford, but fire away." Tony felt he'd   
better honestly confess his ignorance, in case   
Jimmy began to ask him questions beyond his   
depth.

" No one knows much about it. That's the   
whole trouble, and it's going to get worse, as far   
as one can see. As far as I can understand it   
there are great difficulties ahead, and the financing   
of this old War may easily turn the world topsy-   
turvy for years. Take our own country. How   
are we finding the money? Borrowing more   
and more. Who is to repay the loans? Future   
generations ? How will they like the mill-   
stone we're hanging about them? At first   
the object for which the debt was incurred will   
seem to justify patriotic sacrifice. This will fade   
with time, and the burden of repayment will   
become intolerable. To start life with nothing is   
a fine incentive for anyone, but to start loaded   
with ancestral debts may drive a man to seek   
relief in bankruptcy. Surely the capital levy is   
the only sound method of financing war. Con-   
script one's wealth as one does one's men. If   
any country can devise a means of doing it, it   
will start at an overwhelming advantage in the   
after-war competition. The generation that has

p285 caused the war should pay for it, and not lend it's   
money to posterity at an exorbitant rate of   
interest. Let posterity recreate the wealth that   
has been squandered, but don't load it with a   
hopeless debt. Don't you think so ? "

" I've not thought of it before, but there seems   
a lot in what you say, Jimmy. I think your   
throat will be wanting a little lubrication ; what'll   
it be?" Tony shouted" Boy," and an Indian   
bearer appeared out of the darkness. "A large   
lime squash and a touch of gin," was Jimmy's   
selection, and Tony ordered the same.

Jimmy, however, was now warmed up to his   
subject and in no mood to delay until the drinks   
arrived.

" Of course," he began, "there is one way of   
getting over the difficulty of these loans to some   
extent, and it may be adopted by some countries,   
but I fancy it will hardly commend itself to   
London. That is the inflation of the currency   
thus reducing the amount to be paid to the loan   
holders. Of course, if such a policy were expected,   
there would be no voluntary lenders, but it   
might come later on for all that. Foreign ex-   
changes are bound to be irregular in any case,   
and the country that maintains its currency at par   
will have the biggest debt to pay, and will be   
hopelessly handicapped in export trade."

At this point the bearer returned with the   
drinks, and Jimmy took a breather and demolished

p286 half his pint of lime squash at one draught.

" Surely, Jimmy, it all depends on who wins   
the War," put in Tony, lighting a cigarette and   
then sucking his iced drink through two straws.   
" I mean, if we win the old Boche will have to   
payoff some of these loans; and if we don't, the   
blighters'll be sure to skin us to payoff their   
debts."

"I suppose that's the sort of popular idea.

But let's think how it's going to work out. If   
the sums involved amounted to a mere hundred   
millions or so, it would not be too difficult.   
Payment between the nations could then be made   
by a few shipments of gold. But by the time this   
war is over, the sums expended will reach astrono-   
mical figures. If the others were to demand   
payment of their expenses by Germany, or   
vice versa, how could such payment be made?   
Certainly not by gold. Germany has no supply   
of gold adequate for the task; in fact all the gold   
in the world would be hopelessly inadequate.   
Payments could only be made by exported goods.   
The creditor nations could not accept these   
without injuring their own industries and throwing   
their people out of employment; they would have   
to choose between admitting foreign imports   
*ad lib.,* or going without payment. So it would   
probably pay them best to cancel all the debts.   
Possibly there will be gold movements to begin   
with, but as soon as the gold supplies have mostly

p287 found their way to the creditor nations all sorts of   
artificial methods of payment will probably be   
tried before everyone realizes the futility of it all.   
If all the gold gets into the hands of one or two   
nations who can say what difficulties will arise?   
Other nations will be short of backing for their   
paper currency and will have to curtail their   
credit. Prices in such countries will probably   
collapse, and the international trade will be   
interrupted, resulting in a world-wide economic

crisis.

Jimmy paused at this point, and Tony felt his   
head was in a bit of a whirl, so he decided to   
change the subject.

" Well, Jimmy, you've certainly not wasted   
your time out here, and I should think you've   
done enough studying and are quite well enough   
equipped for after the War. What about earning   
some bread and butter? "

" I shall have a pension if they invalid me   
which will be sufficient to keep me from   
starvation. "

" But that won't suffice, all your life."

" I've had a little left me since I saw you   
Jacker, I'm independent now; I've got the   
greatest chance in the world. An independent   
fellow at my age, if he can't do anything, well, no   
one can."

Tony looked at him in silence. He wanted to   
ask Jimmy the history of his parents, but he

p288 hesitated and thought better of it. Another

idea occurred to him.  
 " Heard anything of Joan lately? " he asked.   
 " Just a card at Christmas," Jimmy hesitated a

little. "By the way do you think she'd like me   
to look her up when I get home? "

" Of course; you know she would." Tony looked across at his friend, but it was too dark to   
see his expression, and at that moment the   
bearer announced that dinner was ready.

THE END

THE BAR SINISTER