

I remember in the early years of this century being in Paris, and there were crowds along the Rue de Rivoli, and a closed automobile went by, and the people cheered, and the cheering preceded and followed the automobile along the immense street. Edward VII was in the automobile. The people cheered him, as only the population of Paris knows how to cheer a monarch, with benevolence and yet with restraint, with respect and yet with self-respect; for the country of revolutions is nevertheless the country where the value of tradition and of form is best appreciated and understood. No city can entertain a King as Paris can. She does it easily, naturally, without fuss, without negligence, and in the grand manner. When the automobile swept by me, it was as though the Symbol of Britain had swept by me. I was glad that Edward VII had been so well received, and that a generous gesture from him had evoked a gesture equally generous. I was glad because I had always been very fond of France; long before I had ever seen her I was deeply attached to her. I definitely took residence in Paris almost at the same time as Edward VII paid his visit. I lived in France through the youthful years of the new era in the relations between France and Britain. Then I left France; but it occurred that by pure hazard I returned there on the very day of the general mobilisation in 1914. The new era was now maturing. Immediately afterwards the seed which Edward VII had had the privilege of sowing flowered on the battlefield. But the fruit can only ripen to perfection when the battle is over. It is bound so to ripen, because of the intense faith of so many individuals, like myself, whose creed is that the destiny of France and of Britain is to complete each other.

Arnold Bennett

runs off with the agility of a girl to survey her household; then returns and cuts into the discussion.

"If you are coming to lunch, Bennett," she says, "come before Monday, because on Monday my cook takes herself away, and as for the new one, I should dare to say nothing.... You don't know, Bennett, you don't know, that at a given moment it was impossible to buy salt. I mean, they sold it to you unwillingly, in little screws of paper. It was impossible to get enough. Figure that to yourself, you from London! As for ducory for the morning café au lait, it existed not. Gold could not buy it."

And again she said, speaking of the fearful days in September:

"What would you? We waited. My little coco is nailed there. He cannot move without a furniture, was filled with things essential to his existence. I did not wish to move. We waited, quite simply. We waited for them to come. They did not come. So much the better. That is all."

I have never encountered anything more radically French than the temperament of this aged woman.

Next: the luxury quarter; the establishment of one of those fashionable dressmakers whom you patronize, and whose bills startle all but the rare the most hardened. She is a very handsome woman. She has a husband and two little boys. They are all there. The husband is a retired professional soldier. He has a small and easy post in

a civil administration, but his real work is to keep his wife's books. The two little boys are combed and dressed as only French and American children are combed and dressed, and with a more economical ingenuity than American children. Each has a beautiful purple <sup>silk</sup> necktie and a beautiful purple <sup>silk</sup> handkerchief to match. You may notice that the purple silk is exactly the same purple silk as the lining of their mother's rich mantle hanging over a chair-back.

In August he was re-engaged, and ready to lead soldiers under fire in the fortified camp which Gallieni has evolved out of the environs of Paris; but the need passed, and the uniform was laid aside.

"I had to dismiss my last <sup>few</sup> work girls on Saturday," said the dressmaker. "It was no longer possible to keep them. I had seventy, you know. Now - not one. For a time we made considerably less than the rest. Now we make nothing." Nevertheless, some American clients have been very kind.

Her glance went round the empty white salons with their mirrors in sculptured frames. ~~Nothing~~ Naught of her stock was left except one or two fragile blouses and a few original drawings.

Said the husband:

"We are eating our resources. I will tell you what this war means to us. It means that we shall have to work seven or eight years longer than we had the intention to work. What ~~if~~ would you?"

He lifted his arms and lowered the corners of his mouth. Then he turned again to the military aspect

of things, elaborating it.

The soldier in him finished:

"It is necessary to all the same to admire these cursed Germans."

"Admire them!" said his wife sharply. "I do not appreciate the necessity. When I think of that day and that night we spent at Loue!" They live in the eastern suburbs of the city. "When I think of that day and that night! The cannon thundering at a distance of ten kilometres!"

"Thirty kilometres, almost thirty, my friend," the husband corrected.

"Ten kilometres. I am sure it was not more than ten kilometres, my friend."

"But see, my little one. It was at Meaux. Forty kilometres to Meaux. We are at thirteen. That makes twenty seven, at least."

"It sounded like ten."

"That is true."

"It sounded like ten, my dear Arnold. All day, and all night. We could not go to bed. Had one any desire to go to bed? It was anguish. The mere souvenir is anguish." She kissed her youngest boy, who had long hair.

"Come, come!" the soldier <sup>calmed</sup> reassured her.

[Lastly: ~~Finally~~ an interior dans le monde; a home

illustrious in Paris for the riches of its collections — bric à brac, fans, porcelain, furniture, modern pictures; the walls frescoed by Pierre Bonnard and his comrades; a black marble balcony with an incomparable view in the very middle of the city. Here several worlds encountered each other: authors, painters, <sup>musicians,</sup> dilettanti, administrators. The hostess had good-naturedly invited a high official of the Foreign Office, <sup>whom I had not seen for many years;</sup> she did not say so, but her aim therein was to expedite the arrangements for my pilgrimages in the war zone. Sundry of my old friends were present. Amid the abounding, dazzling confusion of objects which it was a duty to admire, people

talked cautiously of the war, with tranquillity and exactness and finality <sup>clad in pale alpaca and yellow boots,</sup> the high official explained the secret significance of Yellow Books, White Books, Orange Books, Blue Books. The ultimate issues were never touched. New, yet-unprinted

It was wonderful how many had escaped active service, either because they were necessary to central administration, or because they were neutrals, or because they ~~had~~ were too old, or because they had been declined on account of physical unfitness, — reformers. One or two who might have come failed to do so because they had perished.

music was played; Schumann, though German enough, was played. Then literature came to the top. A novelist wanted to know what I thought of a book called "The way of all flesh," which he had just read. It is singular how that ruthless book makes its way across all frontiers. He also wanted to know about Gissing, a name new to him.

And then a voice from the obscurity of the balcony <sup>startlingly</sup> came to us in the music-room:

"Tell me! Sincerely — do they hate the Germans in England? Do they hate them, veritably? Tell me. I doubt it. I doubt strongly."

I laughed, rather awkwardly, as any Englishman would.

The transient episode was very detrimental to literary talk.

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Negotiations for a private visit to the front languished. So I went to Meaux. Meaux had stuck in my ears. Meaux was in history and in romances; it is in Dumas. It was burnt by the Normans in the tenth century, and terrific massacres occurred outside its walls in the fourteenth century, massacres in which the English aristocracy took their full share of the killing. Also, in the seventeenth century, Bossuet was Bishop of Meaux. Finally, in the twentieth century, the Germans just got to Meaux, and they got no further. It was, so far as I can make out, the nearest point to Paris which they soiled. [I could not go even to Meaux without formalities, but the formalities were simple. The dilatory train took seventy minutes, dawdling along the banks of the notorious Marne. In an automobile one could have done the journey in half the time. An automobile, however, would have seriously complicated the

formalities. Meaux contains about fourteen thousand inhabitants. Yet it seems, when you are in it, to consist chiefly of cathedral. When you are at a little distance away from it, it seems to consist of nothing but cathedral. In this it resembles Chartres, and many another city in France.

We obtained a respectable ~~for~~ carriage, with a melancholy, resigned old driver, who said:

"For fifteen francs, plus always the fourboires, I will take you to Bary, which was bombarded and burnt. I will show you all the battle-field."

With those few words he thrilled us.

The road rose slowly from the canal of the Ourcq; it was lined with the most beautiful sycamore trees. And through the screen of the sycamores one had glimpses of the town, diminishing, and of the cathedral, growing larger and larger. The driver talked to us in faint murmurs over his shoulder, indicating the positions of various villages such as Penchard, Poincy, Gregy, Monthyon, Chambry, Barredes, all of which will be found in the future detailed histories of the great locomotive-advances.

"Did you yourself see any Germans?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Meaux."

"How many?"

He smiled: "About a dozen." They were scouts. They came into the town - and left it. The Germans

He underestimated the number, and the length of the stay, but no matter.

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were deceived. They might have got to Paris if they had liked.  
But they were deceived.

"How were they deceived?"

"They thought there were more English in front  
of them than actually there were. The headquarters of  
the English were over there, at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre.  
The English blew up our bridge, as a measure of precaution."  
We drove on.

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"The first tomb," said the driver, nonchalantly,  
lifting <sup>an</sup> his elbow.

There it was, close by the roadside, and a little higher  
than ourselves. The grave was marked by four short rough  
posts on which was strung barbed wire; <sup>a white flag</sup> a white cross of  
painted wood, very simply but neatly made; a faded  
wreath. We could distinguish a few words of an inscription.  
".... Comrades... 66<sup>th</sup> Territorials...." Soldiers were buried  
where they fell, and this ~~one~~ was the tomb of him who fell  
nearest to Paris. It marked the last homicidal effort of  
the Germans before their advance in this region curved eastwards  
into a retreat. This tomb was a very impressive thing. The  
driver had thrust me again.

We drove on. We were now in a large rolling  
plain that sloped gradually behind us southwards towards the  
Marne. I had many little woods and spinneys, and no  
water courses. To the civilian it appeared an ideal theatre



for a glorious sanguinary battle in which thousands of fathers, sons and brothers should die violently because some hierarchy in a distant capital ~~had determined to~~ was suffering from an acute attack of swilled head. A few trenches here and there could still be described, but the whole plain was in an advanced state of cultivation. Wheat and oats and flaming poppies had now conquered the land, had overrun and possessed it as no Germans could ever do. The raw earth of the trenches struggled vainly against the tide of germination. The harvest was going to be good. The plain with its little woods and little villages glittered <sup>with a</sup> ~~richly~~ <sup>careless and</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>satisfaction</sup> in the sheets of sunshine that fell out of a blue too intense for the gaze.

We saw a few more tombs, and a great general monument or cenotaph <sup>to the dead</sup> constructed by military engineers at cross roads by the village of Penchard, which had been pillaged and burnt by the enemy. It was <sup>only</sup> about a mile off, but in the strong vibrating dazzling light we could distinguish not the least sign of damage. Then we came to a farm house by the roadside. It was empty; it was a shell, and its roof was damaged. The Germans had gutted it. They had taken away its furniture as booty. (What they intended to do with furniture out of a perfectly mediocre small farm house, hundreds of miles from home, it is difficult to imagine.) ~~What they could do~~ articles which it did not suit them to carry off they destroyed. Some castles of which they

could not drink the wine they stole in. And there they retreated. [This former house was somebody's home, just as your home is yours and mine mine. To some woman or other every object in it was familiar; she glanced at the canister on the mantelpiece and said to herself: "I really must clean that canister tomorrow." There the house stood, with holes in its roof, empty. And if there are half a million ~~the~~ similarly tragic houses in Europe today, as probably there are, such frequency does not in the slightest degree diminish the poignant tragedy of that particular house, which I have beheld ~~and under~~.

At last Darcy came into view, — the pierced remains of its chancel tower over the brow of a rise in the plain. Darcy is our driver's shadow-place. Darcy was in the middle of things. The fighting round Darcy lasted a night and a day, and Darcy was taken and re-taken twice.

"You see the new red roofs," said the driver, as we approached. "By those new red roofs you are in a state to judge <sup>a little</sup> what the damage was."

Some of the newly made roofs, however, were made of tarred paper.

The street by which we entered had a small-fox of ~~the~~ shrapnel and bullet marks. The post-office had particularly suffered; its bones were laid bare; it had not been restored, but it was <sup>ready to do</sup> ~~doing~~ any business that fell to be done, though closed on that afternoon. ~~So~~ we turned a corner and came upon the church. The work on the church was well up to the Teutonic average.

Of its roof only the rafters were left. The altar and windows were all smashed and their ~~backwork~~ lead fantastically twisted. The west door was entirely gone; a rough grille of ~~the~~ strips of wood served in its stead. Through this grille one could see the nave and altar, in a miraculous and horrible confusion. It was as if house breakers had spent days in doing their best to produce a professional effect. The oak pews were almost unharmed. Immediately behind the grille lay a great bronze bell, about three feet high, covered with beautifully incised inscriptions; it was unharmed. Apparently nothing had been accomplished, in ten months, towards the restoration of the church. But something was contemplated, perhaps already started. A polished steel saw lay on one of the pews; but there was no workman attached to it.

While I was writing some notes in the porch three raggy little boys came up and diligently stared at me.

"What ~~do you~~ doest thou want?" I said sharply to the tallest.

"Nothing," he replied.

Then three widows came upon, one young, one young and beautiful, one middle-aged.

We got back into the carriage.

"The village seems very deserted," I said to the driver.

"What would you?" he answered. "Many went. They had no home. Few have returned."

First article

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The Zone of Paris

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All around were houses of which nothing remained but the stone walls. The Germans had shown great prowess here, and the French still greater. It was a village upon which rival commanders could gaze with pride. It will remember the fourth and the fifth of September.

We made towards Chaubry. Chaubry is a village which, like Meaux, lies below the plain. Rich Chaubry escaped glory; but between it and Darcy, on the intervening ~~to~~ slope through which a good road runs, a battle was fought. You know what kind of a battle it was by the tombs. These tombs were very like the others: an oblong of barbed wire, a white flag, a white cross, sometimes a name, more often only a number, rarely a wreath. You see first one, then another, then two, then a sprinkling; and gradually you perceive that the whole plain is dotted with gleams of white flags and white crosses, so that graves seem to extend right away to the horizon where marked by lines of trees. Then you see a huge general grave... much glory about that spot! [And then a tomb with a black cross. Very disconcerting, that black cross! It is different not only in colour but in shape from the other crosses. Sinister! You need not be told that the body of a German lies beneath it. The whole devilishness of the Prussian ideal is ~~is that~~ expressed in that black cross. Then, as the road curves, you see more black crosses, many black crosses, very many.

No flags, no names, no wreaths on these tombs. Just a white stencilled number on in the centre of each cross. Women in Germany are <sup>still</sup> lying awake at night and wondering what those tombs look like. [Looking over all the tombs, white and black without distinction, are notices: "Respect the Tombs." But the wheat and the oats are not respecting the tombs. Everywhere the crops have encroached on them, half-hedging them, smothering them, climbing right over them. In one place wheat is ripening out of the very body of a German soldier's tomb. [Such is the nearest battle-field to Paris. Corporate excursions to it are forbidden, and wisely. For the attraction of ~~it~~ the place, were it given play, would completely demoralize Meaux and the entire district.

In half an hour we were back at an utterly matter-of-fact railway station, in whose café an utterly matter-of-fact ~~French~~ and capable Frenchwoman gave us tea. And when we reached Paris we had the news that a Captain of the French army had been detailed to escort us to the Front and to show us all that could safely be seen. Nevertheless, whatever I may ~~or~~ experience. I shall not experience again the thrill which I had when the weak and melancholy old driver pointed out the first tomb. That which we had just seen was



From the balcony you look down upon massed and variegated tree-tops as though you were looking down upon a ~~for~~ valley forest from a mountain height. Those trees, whose hidden trunks make alleys and squares, are rooted in the history of France. On the dusty gravel of the promenade which runs between the garden and the street a very young man and a girl, lily figured, are playing with rackets at one of those second-rate ball games beloved by the French ~~the~~ petite bourgeoisie. Their jackets and hats are hung on the corner of the fancy wooden case in which an orange tree is planted. They are certainly perspiring in the heavy heat of the early morning. They are also certainly in love. This lively dalliance is the preliminary to a day's desk-work. It seems ill-chosen, silly, futile. The couple have forgotten, if they ever knew, that they are playing at a terrific and long drawn moment <sup>of crisis</sup> in a spot sacred to the finest civilisation. ~~Close~~ [From the balcony you can see, close by, the Louvre, with its sculptures extending from Jean Goujon to Carpeaux; the Church of St. Clotilde, where César Franck for forty years hid his genius away from popularity; the railway station of the Quai d'Orsay, which first proved

that a terminus might <sup>may</sup> excite emotions as fine as those excited  
by a palace or a temple; the dome of the Invalides; the unique  
facades, equal to any architecture of modern times, ~~etc~~  
to the north of the Place de la Concorde, where the Ministry  
of Marine has its home. Nobody who knows Paris and  
understands what Paris has meant and still means to  
humanity, ~~civilization~~ can regard the scene without the most exquisite  
<sup>seelyngs</sup> feelings of humility, affection, and gratitude. It is  
impossible to look at the plinths, the mouldings, the  
carving of the Ministry of Marine and not be thrilled  
by that supreme expression of national art..... [and  
all this escaped! That is the feeling which one had. All  
this <sup>beauty</sup> was menaced with disaster at the hands of beings  
who comprehended it even less than the simple couple  
playing ball, beings who have <sup>scarcely</sup> reached the beginning  
of comprehension, and who joined a barbaric ungenious-  
ness to a savage cruelty. It was menaced, but it  
escaped. Perhaps no city was ever in acuter peril; it  
escaped by a miracle; but it did escape. It escaped  
because tens of thousands of soldiers in thousands of  
taxi-cabs advanced ~~had~~ more ~~or~~ rapidly than any  
soldiers could be expected to advance. [The population  
of Paris has revolted and is hurrying to ask ~~for~~  
mercy from us!" thought the <sup>reconnoitring</sup> ~~simpletons~~ in Jaubert,  
when they noted beneath them the incredible processions



of taxi-cabs going north. But what they saw was the Sixth Army, whose movement changed the campaign, and perhaps the whole course of history. ["A great misfortune has overtaken us"; said a German officer <sup>the</sup> next day. It was true. Greater than he suspected, <sup>the</sup> [The horror of what might have happened, the splendour of what did happen, mingle in the awed mind as you look over the city from the balcony. The city escaped. And the event seems vaster and more sublime than the mind can bear.

The streets of Paris have <sup>now</sup> a perpetual aspect of Sunday morning; ~~but~~ <sup>only</sup> the sound of church-bells is lacking. A few of the taxi-cabs have come back; but all the autobuses without exception are away behind the front. So that the traffic is forced underground, where the railways are manned by women. A horse-bus, dug up out of the past, jogs along the most famous boulevard in the world like a country diligence, with a fat, laughing peasant-woman clinging to its back-step and collecting fare-moneys into the immense pocket of her ~~red~~ <sup>black</sup> immense apron. Many of the most expensive and unnecessary shops are shut; the others wait with strange meekness for custom. But the provision-shops and all the sturdy cheap shops of the poor go on naturally, without any self-consciousness, just as usual. The pavements are for show chiefly soldiers in a wild, new variety of uniforms from pale blue to black, imitated and adapted from all sources and especially from England, — and widows and

orphans. The number of young girls and women in mourning, in the heavy mourning affected by the Latin race, is enormous. This corpse is the sole casualty list permitted by the French War Office. It suffices. Supreme grief is omnipresent; but it is calm, cheerful, smiling. Widows glance at each other ~~etc~~ with understanding, like <sup>initiated</sup> members of a secret and powerful society. ~~The~~ ..... [Never was Paris so disconcertingly odd. And yet never was it more profoundly itself. Between the slow realisation of a <sup>monstrous</sup> fearful peril escaped, and the equally slow realisation of its power to conquer and punish, the French spirit, angered and cold, knows at last what the French spirit is. You are to watch and share its mood in positively enabling to the stranger. Paris is revealed under an enchantment. On the surface of the enchantment the pettinesses of daily existence persist queerly.

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### Some Parisian interiors.

Two small rooms and a kitchen on a sixth floor. You could put the kitchen, of which the cooking apparatus consists of two gas-rings, easily into the box that holds the roots of the ~~orange~~ orange-tree in the Tuileries gardens. Everything is plain, and stringently tidy; everything is a special item, separately acquired, treasured. I see again a water-colour that I did years ago and had forgotten; it lives, so protected by a glazed frame and by the pride of

possession. The solitary mistress of this immaculate home is a spinster sempstress in the thirties. She earns three francs a day, and is rich because she does not spend it all, and never has ~~yet~~ spent it all. Inexpressibly neat, smiling, philosophic, helpful, she has within her a contentious and formidable tiger which two contingencies, and two only, will ~~arouse~~ <sup>arouse</sup>. The first contingency springs from any threat of marriage. You must not seek a husband for her: she is alone in the world, and she wants to be. The second springs from any attempt to alter her habits, which in her sight are as sacredly immutable as the ritual of an ~~Indian~~ <sup>Asiatic</sup> pagoda.

Last summer she went to a small military town, to which is attached a very large military camp, to keep her sister-in-law in the running of a café. The excursion was to be partly in the nature of a holiday; but, indefatigable on a chair with a needle, she could not stand for hours on her feet, mistaking to a sex of which she knew almost nothing. She had the nostalgia of the Parisian garrul. She must go home to her neglected habits. The war was waging. She delayed, from a sense of duty. But at last her habits were irresistible. Officers had said lightly that there was no danger, that the Germans could not possibly reach that small town. Nevertheless, the train that the spinster-sempstress took was the last train <sup>to leave</sup> that left. And as the spinster-sempstress departed by the train, so the sister-in-law departed in a pony-cart, with a son and a mother grandmother in the pony-cart, together with such goods as the cart would hold; and through staggering adventures reached safely at Troyes.

"And how did you yourself get on?" I asked the spinster-sempstress.

She answered:

"It was terrible. Ordinarily it is a journey of three

or four hours. But that time it lasted for three days and two nights. The train was crammed with refugees and with wounded, <sup>one was</sup> ~~was~~ obliged to stand up. <sup>one</sup> ~~he~~ could not move."

"But where did you sleep?"

"I did not sleep. So I do not tell you one was obliged to stand up? I stood up all the first night. The floor was thirty centimetres deep in filth. The second night one had settled down somewhat. I could sit."

"But about eating?"

"I had a little food that I brought with me."

"And drinking?"

"Nothing till the second day. One could not move. But in the end we arrived. I was broken with fatigue. I was very ill. But I was at home. The Docters drank everything in the café, everything; but the ~~the~~ building was spared; it stood away from the firing.... How long do you think the war will last?"

"I'm beginning to think it will last a long time."

"So they say," she muttured, glancing through the window at the prospect of roofs and chimney-crofts.

".... Provided that it finishes well...."

Except by the look in her eyes, and by the destruction of her once good complexion, it was impossible to divine that this woman's habits had ever been disturbed in the slightest detail. But the ~~eyes~~ gaze and the complexion told the tale.

Next: the Boulevard St. Germain. A majestic flat, heavily and sombrely furnished. The great drawing-room

is shut and sheeted with holland. It has been shut for twenty years. The mistress of this home is an aged widow of inflexible will and astounding activity. She gets up at five a.m., and no cook has ever yet satisfied her. The master is her son, a bachelor of fifty. He is paralyzed and, always perfectly dressed in the English taste, he passes his life in a wheeled chair. The home is centred in his study, full of books, engravings, a large safe, telephone, theatrophone, newspapers, cigarettes, easy-chairs. When I go in an old friend, a stock broker, is there, and 'threes' and 'thous' abound in the conversation, which runs on ~~shares~~ investments, the new English loan, banking accounts in London, the rent moratorium in Paris, and the war. It is said that every German is a critic of war. But so is every Frenchman a critic of war. The criticism I now hear is the best spoken criticism, utterly impartial, that I have ~~ever~~ heard.

"In sum," says the <sup>grey-headed</sup> stock broker, "these disengaged itself from the totality of the facts, an impression, tolerably clear, that all goes very well on the west front," which is reassuring. But the old lady, invincible in after seven and a half decades spent in the hard acquirement of wisdom, will not be reassured. She is not alarmed, but she will not be reassured. She treats the two men with affectionate malice as children. She knows that 'those birds' (that is to say, the Germans) will never be beaten, because they are for ever capable of inventing some new trick. She will not sit still. A bit of talk, and she