

THE MENACE OF THE WORLD

BY SISLEY HUDDLESTON

I

STANDING, as I stand, in the capital of Europe, — Paris, — I sweep my eyes round from this centre and I see about me a world which dances and makes merry in the midst of death and destruction and the menace of to-morrow. America is beyond my vision; and it may be held that in some respects the materiality which has gripped America is different — America, at any rate, is not a great graveyard. But although the immediate consequences of the war are not so terrible as in Europe, and although on your side of the Atlantic it can be urged that there is no special reason for sitting tight on the chest of Pleasure, still, all the reports that reach me make it clear that the symptoms are the same. There is a new world-disease; an epidemic that spreads from red Moscow to gaunt Vienna, to hectic Paris, to morbid Berlin, to London lively as a galvanized corpse, out to the Balkans (even Constantinople is aflush), and right to the States.

The diagnosis of the malady is not difficult. There is, first, this crazy seeking after artificial amusements, generally of an unpleasant kind; there is a love of display that runs to the utmost eccentricity; there is a wave of criminality; there is an unscrupulous profiteering, a cynical disregard of suffering, a mad desire to get rich quickly, no matter by what means; and there is a reluctance to do any genuine work. You can visit any capital, and you will find these characteristic stigmata. This

pathological condition is certainly the legacy of war. Men's mental outlook has changed. Those who were sober, industrious citizens, content to rear up their families and to walk usefully and humbly in the world, are now stricken by the wild notion of having a 'good time'; a good time that means the easy earning of questionable money, its prodigal dispersal, forgetfulness of the family, non-production of necessities, hopeless confusion and incompetence, which affects private as well as governmental persons, and a lowering of moral values, a debasing of intellect.

It is a gloomy picture which I paint; and at once I wish to make the proviso that it must not be taken to represent the whole truth. There is much that is sound in present-day society; and if, as in the Bible story, the whole city might be saved for a handful of righteous men, then there are certainly still enough healthy elements to save civilization. Let not this study of the post-war Europe prevent anyone from lending a helping hand: on the contrary, this sickness is such that we should tackle it in ourselves and in our neighbors, lest it complete its deadly work, and our world as we knew it collapse in rotteness. At any rate, I am not writing with the desire of condemning, but only of describing and analyzing a specific trouble which is more contagious than influenza and worse in its consequences than the plague that our marvelous hygienic methods suppressed on the battlefield.

It is a year and a half since the war ended, and we have not yet settled down. We have hardly begun to put our house in order. To have expected that we should instantly drop the sword and put our hand to a ready-made ploughshare, would have been too much. We had to have a breathing-space after the conflict. It was natural to indulge in a joy-burst. There had to be an interregnum. But what is really surprising is that the transitional period has lasted so long — or, to speak more correctly, that a sort of No-Man's Time, before the transitional period, should have lasted so long. What was inevitable for a moment becomes alarming when protracted. A passing fever was nothing; but a chronic St. Vitus's dance is deplorable.

One may well ask at the outset whether these phenomena come out of a new permanent philosophy, — the philosophy of the fool who said in his heart, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!' — or whether they are a prelude to an energetic resumption of work — a mere general holiday for mankind. Probably both explanations are partly true. There are many folk in the old world who have given way to a sort of despair, a despair that does not manifest itself in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, but rather in a determined gayety. If there is really nothing to hope for, they seem to say; if the reconstruction of a ruined continent is impossible, or at least painfully slow; if we who possess a little wealth, or who can make a little wealth, are at the perpetual mercy of an ever-threatening revolution or of a constantly menacing economic chaos; if in a month or a year we shall be beggared, struggling desperately for dear life in the vortex, then let us enjoy ourselves while we may. Do not let us worry about what may be. 'After us,' as Louis XV cried, 'the deluge!'

This spirit accounts for much. So does the pure holiday spirit. At first holiday-making was legitimate. Everybody who remembers his school-days, or who even remembers his last vacation, knows how hard it is to take up the task again. Discipline has been broken. Routine has been disturbed. We take another and another day before we begin. Those who have been in the army will realize that army training is the worst preparation for normal life that can be imagined. Even on the front there was a strange mixture of laziness, hardships, and rigorous discipline. It is good to escape the discipline; but its removal after we have been accustomed to it for so long, after we have lost our initiative, leaves us at a loose end, drives us by reaction into undisciplined ways. As for the hardships, we consider that we are entitled to taste the sweeter, more luxurious things; and we go on tasting them beyond measure. Nobody in the army worried about the next day. Nobody worried to work more than was necessary. If one was not sure of life, one was sure of the necessities of life.

When it is considered that the bulk of the man-power on the Continent was subjected to this enervating, demoralizing régime for years, the clue to much of the present discontent is found. There have arisen out of this long habit of soldiering, out of what I may call the military philosophy of heedlessness, — unconcern for human life, one's own and the enemy's; disregard of property, one's own and one's neighbors'; disregard for the sanctity of women, disregard of time and eternity, — a philosophy essentially material, — there have arisen a hundred social evils, which can be eradicated only if we recognize the causes and if we apply ourselves resolutely to the cure.

For the civilians also everything has been dislocated, and it is not easy for

them to find themselves again. Continuity has been broken. All is in the melting-pot. The old landmarks have vanished. People were torn up by the roots. Their habits were shattered. Their beliefs were destroyed. Their very soul was melted in the fiery furnace of war, and moulded and twisted into new shapes. To straighten it back will be a prodigious feat. They have trampled on their religion. They have abandoned those good prejudices which kept society together. They have become cynical and selfish. If I were asked what is the most conspicuous trait of the modern man and woman in Europe, I should unhesitatingly reply — Egoism. The instinct of the hive has gone. We are indifferent to what happens to others. The only person who matters is one's self.

What! you will cry; surely, if the war did anything for Europe, it taught people to think and act in the mass and not as individuals. It made nationalities where nationalities did not exist, and it strengthened nationalities where nationalities were disappearing. It gave everyone a clear-cut sense that he belonged to a particular country. He was not any longer his own man: he was part of the hive. Nay, more: it awoke a new sense of international solidarity. Mankind came to realize that the ego was not sufficient, that the nation was not enough, that the individual was of no importance and must be sacrificed in the common cause, without hesitation and without regret. And since then surely it has been borne in upon all men who think, that not only the fortunes and the misfortunes of their friends and the friends of their country matter greatly to them, but also that the *bonheur* and the *malheur* of their late foes cannot be ignored. Surely the simple truth that the world is one and indivisible has penetrated into the universal conscience. The Gospel

of solidarity has been preached as never before, and who so dull as to be deaf to the formidable voice of strident facts?

That indeed was my hope, as it was the hope of all men of good-will around the globe. It was the doctrine that was inherent in Mr. Wilson's messages, that permeated his declared policy, and that really did thrill the world — the eloquent enunciation of an old truth ever new. What was the Society of Nations in its inception but an endeavor to erect the new church and to found the new religion of mankind — a religion in which there should be no distinction between Jew and Gentile, no distinction between friend and foe; a religion that would give us an intense consciousness, not of ourselves, but of our kind?

Alas! whatever may happen to the projected Society of Nations as an institution, it is certain that the first fine rapture is over, and that, except for a comparatively few earnest spirits, altruism, the human religion, even, to express it in more material terms, the instinct of the hive, is dead; and that for the majority of men the practical creed of life is 'Everyone for himself and the Devil take the hindmost!' Never was Carlyle's image of a basket of serpents, each struggling to get its head above the rest, so expressively precise a picture of humanity as it is to-day.

II

It is not my purpose to discuss the economic and the financial condition of Europe. Yet it has obviously a considerable bearing upon this 'immorality,' — as it has been called by M. Merrheim, a prominent French syndicalist, — which is submerging society. He used the word 'immorality' in a somewhat special sense. He meant, rather, materiality. Now Merrheim has always been looked upon as an advanced revolutionary. He is one of those working-

class leaders who want to transform the world in a hurry. His sympathies are naturally with the bottom dog. He has, with the view of benefiting the laborer, engineered more strikes and preached more violent revolt than, perhaps, any other man. Yet this revolutionary, surveying the situation, watching strike after strike explode like so many mines around him, suddenly grew disgusted and disheartened, suddenly saw that a strike or a revolution that was inspired by no ideal was useless, nay, was disastrous.

What did he discover? He discovered that there was an eternal demand for higher wages and less work. He had always stood for that. Should he not then be pleased at the success of his propaganda? Ah, but he had personally looked upon higher wages and less work, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end — the giving of an opportunity to the workers to uplift themselves. For him the revolutionary spirit was not a claim to so many dollars or francs or pounds a day. However mistaken he might be, he sincerely aimed at the regeneration of society. Hard cash was not for him a rallying cry. When he finds that the movement has been graveled in the sands of mercenary calculations, he is disillusioned, and utters this bitter cry that the working classes, from whom he had hoped so much, had merely entered a get-rich-quick competition with the other classes. That, he said, — and I think the warning is memorable, — is immoral.

For one who has always fought on the side of the oppressed, as I in my humble way have done, it is indeed depressing to feel that behind all these strikes and threats of strikes there is no generous impulse, there is no spiritual stirring. It is all cold materialism. One would like to feel that at least the people, the good little people, were free from this prevailing fault of profiteer-

ing and money-grabbing. It is not so. There is no dim aspiration toward better things. The people have merely taken pattern from the contractors, from the crowd of those who buy and sell at exorbitant profits, and who are frankly unscrupulous. The manufacturer sells at a swindling price because he has had to deal with governments which took no heed of money, or which had officials who were corrupt. And the worker demands his share of the swag. Labor, like leather, is something on which a profit can be made.

What is worse is that in France, in England, in Germany, in Poland, the worker wants to dodge his work. That he should get a high price is permissible. That he should try to escape his obligations is another matter. He thinks no shame if he does not deliver the goods. He is in exactly the same moral position as the grocer who mixes sand with his sugar. I think it may honestly be said that the worker is the last to succumb to this spirit of greed. Now the circle of social immorality is practically complete, and all grades, from the Paris landlord who has doubled his rent because there are not enough houses, the contractor who deliberately supplies shoddy material, the shopkeeper who cheats and robs his customers as a habit, down to the workman who demands the highest possible pay for the least possible work, are doing their best to live at one another's expense.

The forcing-up of wages means the forcing-up of prices, and the forcing-up of prices means a new clamor for higher wages; and so we are all chasing each other round as a dog chases his tail. It is an endless vicious circle. What has happened is that during the war governments cared nothing about prices — they bought utterly regardless of expense; contractors quickly acquired the habit of robbing the State, and workers naturally claimed a share in this

fictitious prosperity. Now the burden of debt has grown intolerable. Paper money has been issued until it has become in large part worthless. But nobody seems to care as long as they have money, — lots of money, — which signifies very little. It is a house of cards which may be piled up so high that it will crash down. But my immediate point is that this indifference to former values has had a lamentable moral effect on all sections of the community. I do not know how many people nowadays read Rousseau's *Social Contract*. What is certain is that very few people have any notion that they owe anything to society. Their own part of the bargain is shirked, and, indeed, there are governments which are corrupt and effete and only carry on because 'things will last their time.'

Let me relate a significant little fact which will show how the social sense has — inevitably — decayed. While conditions remain so uncertain, it is hard to expect people to remember that the future of their country depends upon the repopulation of their country. Social students in France long ago bewailed the egotism which was at the bottom of the falling birthrate. Today the evil is intensified. A people which deliberately refuses to bring children into the world is on the slippery slope. Only in half a dozen departments in France does the birth-rate exceed the death-rate; and it is estimated that, what with killed and disabled, the excessive mortality among the civilian population, the absence of husbands from home, and the reluctance to marry during the war, there are six or seven million fewer French people than there would normally have been.

That, as I say, is natural enough: it could now be remedied to some extent. But while there is an official propaganda in favor of larger families; while the refusal to procreate, the ap-

palling frequency of abortions consciously brought about, — ask any hospital doctor or nurse: you will learn amazing things, — are giving great anxiety; while even the new President has been chosen partly because he has three children instead of being childless like so many of his predecessors; while there is, on the one hand, this serious effort to get to grips with the thing that will bring France down to the rank of a second-rate nation, there is, on the other hand, a propaganda in the music-halls in the opposite sense.

Whenever I want to know what the people think, I go to the café-concerts, I listen to the songs, and I note what sentiments are the most popular. Thus I recently went to three entertainments in the haunts of the people — one at Montparnasse, another at Montmartre and another on the Boulevard Sebastopol. At these three places I heard the same song uproariously applauded. It was a counter-blast to the propaganda for more babies. It pointed out that life is dear, that wars are not yet ended; and it represented the folly of bringing into the world infants who might be unhappy. Not a voice was raised against these unpatriotic declarations. For myself, I will not venture to discuss the morality or logic of the song; what I am concerned with is to show that the sentiment of social duty in this respect is dead. I confess that it came upon me as a shock to have this proof of a new after-war spirit which makes mock of those sentiments of solidarity that certainly did prevail during the strife.

Yet I cannot be surprised when I consider how sore have been the trials. You can demand only a certain effort; and when, after a tremendous test of strength, national selfishness is rampant, cynicism is a disease in the bones of the rulers, profiteering and international injustices are open, then for the masses to have different ideals is impossible.

III

The New Rich constitute a rottenness in the marrow of civilization, and the rottenness must affect all the members. In England there have been some partial revelations of the colossal profits made, not only by private individuals, but even by the government, which made a corner in wool. I will only briefly, by way of illustration, repeat facts, some of which have already appeared in the newspapers.

The Central Profiteering Commission, which was set up to inquire into the allegations, — one was that profits had been made by the worsted spinners of as much as 3200 per cent, — in its interim report states that, whereas the spinners were allowed by the War Office to make one penny per pound profit, they are now making thirty-three pence. One of the comparative tables prepared by the Committee of Inquiry shows profits seventeen or eighteen times higher than that provided for in the War Office conversion prices. In other cases profits ranging from a shilling to three and sevenpence per pound have been made, instead of one penny, twopence, or, at most threepence, allowed on the carefully prepared costings system of the Army Contracts Department. On thirty-three qualities fully one half show a profit of over two shillings per pound, instead of the 'fair price' of twopence.

The cotton factories of Lancashire have not scrupled to make the most scandalous gains. Take one case: before the war it earned \$40,000 a year in profits. With the war it reached \$200,000, then \$300,000, then \$600,000; and last year netted \$2,000,000! No wonder it is so difficult to clothe one's self! We have the strange paradox of factories prospering as never before, and their products being almost inaccessible to the ordinary person. The spec-

ulation in shares is amazing. Shares in one instance were bought at \$5 and sold at \$50; in another, bought at \$15 and sold at \$100. So great is the rush, that a new company had a capital of \$1,000,000 subscribed before it could be registered. The 'stink of brass,' to use a local expression, is everywhere. Need I repeat that this prosperity is inflated and fictitious, and one day there will be a dreadful bursting of the bubble? Some will clear out in time, rich men; many others will be ruined.

While we look upon this picture of men scrambling to get rich, we cannot but remember the bankruptcy into which so many European countries are falling. How far the rate of exchange is influenced by American speculation, as is alleged in Europe, I do not personally know, and it is certainly not my purpose to discuss American affairs. But it is obvious that American prosperity is partly built upon Europe; and if the foundations collapse at any point, there will be another Leaning Tower of Pisa in the world. If the original Leaning Tower of Pisa manages to exist out of the perpendicular, it is certain that the laws of financial gravity cannot be defied, and a landslide in Europe will soon throw down the American edifice. Internationalism is no longer a doctrine: it is a fact. We are all bound together: the world is one and indivisible, and it is impossible to escape the common fate of the world. But it is clear that this inexorable unity of civilized mankind is forgotten on both sides of the Atlantic; and that the individual does not remember that he forms part, not only of his country, but of the world.

As I have indicated, besides the getting there is the spending, by which, in Wordsworth's phrase, 'we lay waste our powers.' Lightly come, lightly go. Those who have not handled so much money before are engaged in an eternal round of pleasure — pleasure of

a peculiarly empty but costly kind. They set the pace. They do not care for the price of things, and accordingly the price mounts for those who do care. It is a flood of *billets de banque* — a giddy dance on the edge of a financial precipice. Out they come from the printing presses, those *billets de banque*, all hot and crisp, and they flood the lands. Gold? — there is none. Do you remember that story of Anatole France in which a man who made notes about everything, and carefully classified them in drawers which ranged up to the ceiling of his study, found them all breaking loose upon him one day; and how they began to rise round him in an ever-swelling deluge, reaching his knees, reaching his breast, reaching his head; and how he struggled in this torrent of paper which filled the room, rising higher and higher until at last he was drowned, one hand sticking plaintively out of the sea of paper? Well, that is what is happening: we are being drowned in an ocean of paper money.

At present the waves are being energetically breasted in a happy enough mood. The swimmer rather enjoys the experience. The glittering amusements in every European capital — even those which are suffering most — are amazing. True, Voltaire once said, 'Lisbon burns, but Paris dances.' After Waterloo there were one thousand five hundred balls a night in the French capital. Every *grande crise* in the world's history has been followed by this outbreak of more or less artificial gayety. There is, then, a cause in human nature. It is not a special perversity of our generation. Nevertheless, the spectacle is disturbing, not because it is a joyous one, but because the joyousness is hollow, and because not the most unconscious dancer can altogether escape the feeling of impending doom. A Damoclean sword is suspended above all heads. Yet, knowing

that work and not play is essential, knowing that there are flames of new wars, flames of revolutions, flames of a threatening financial holocaust in the house, knowing that it is a house of death, we go on dancing, and our laughter is broken uneasily, and the gay music seems to sob sometimes.

I stand looking on at the brilliant scene in the ballroom of one of the most fashionable Continental hotels. The dresses are dazzling: they are violently vivid, flaring colors, sumptuous stuffs, — shining satin, rich velvet, gold and silver brocades, — with flaunting feathers, scintillating jewels, white flesh, all turning, turning: a kaleidoscopic confusion which more nearly resembles a futurist picture than anything I have seen. No harm in all that? No, except that the unprecedented display of wealth shamelessly contrasts with the deep misery of masses of people; that the whirl of pleasure, repeated in every quarter on a larger or smaller scale, makes us forget common duties.

It was so at Berlin, where the mark was valueless; it was so even in starving Vienna; London and Paris were full of dancing-halls, big and little. At Paris indeed it was necessary to turn the theatres into ballrooms. There was dancing at tea-time, dancing at dinner, dancing throughout the long evening. The charges were utterly unreasonable, — that is, if one took the pre-war standards which somehow remain in the minds of men like myself, — and yet they were cheerfully paid. This is, in fact, one of the most extraordinary of social phenomena: that there exist large classes who are only too happy to pay extravagantly. One hotel, for example, for a piece of toast and a cup of tea could obtain three or four dollars: it was always full. That was precisely what was wanted. If ten dollars had been demanded, you would

not have been able to get near the place.

After that it is unnecessary to insist upon the expensive restaurants which sprang up in profusion like a crop of mirobolant mushrooms. To give some idea of the amount spent upon theatres and other pleasures, so far as they can be computed, — many pleasures, such as gambling, are of course illicit, or at least surreptitious, — it is necessary only to take the sums compiled after investigating by a semi-official scribe, who arrives at this result: that the money spent on theatres, dancing-halls, and cinemas in 1919 in a certain European city is just double that spent in 1913, when we were supposed to have touched high-water mark in frivolity. Every other form of entertainment has increased in the same proportion; and what is true of one place is true of all.

Then there is the positive craze for eccentricity — for mad fashions, for whatever will startle; and with this goes a plentiful exhibition of jewelry. The jewelers charge twice as much for gold, four times as much for silver, and five times as much for platinum, while the value of precious stones has soared out of sight. Yet they are all purchased eagerly, and the jewelers cannot keep pace with the demand. The increase in cost is constant. Personally I bought a ring a year ago as a present: it was lost, and I wished to replace it. For an exact replica I had to pay double the price of last year. I was talking to a well-known jeweler, who told me that it was impossible to find sufficient workmen, and it was not the smaller pieces but the most expensive which were chiefly called for. He produced a brooch of emeralds and diamonds worth \$100,000; he declared that \$20,000 dollars for a ring was not at all an out-of-the-way amount. Men's jewelry, such as studs and sleeve-links and vest-buttons, used to be a comparatively small branch of the business; now it is highly

important, with vest-buttons running to \$6000 or \$7000, and a pair of cuff-links not much less. The diamond clubs of Antwerp are now notorious. There is a feverish speculation in diamonds. Fortunes are made and lost in dealing in these stones. It would seem that the Germans first began to buy diamonds as a sort of safe and portable investment. If everything smashed, they would at least be able to get away with a pocketful of diamonds, which would in any event be worth something. The price of the diamond sold by carat weight has certainly grown sevenfold. Pearls also have changed hands with a facility that has forced up prices. Doubtless the stream of refugees from Russia and from Eastern countries brought their fortunes in the shape of necklaces and other articles of jewelry; but if large quantities were thrown into the market, they did not have the effect of sending down prices, for the buyers were still more numerous and they did not count their cash. Doubtless the two explanations — of *nouveaux riches* who want to make a show, and of panicky persons who want portable investments against the day when paper becomes worthless or Bolsheviks put them to flight — are both true.

IV

These are follies, these are offenses against a wise social code, these are proofs of the materiality of which I have spoken; but they are not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, crimes against society. No law touches them. There is, however, another side of this moral bankruptcy which remains to be noticed — the prevalence of actual lawlessness.

You will find this subject discussed in the newspapers of any European country. It may be divided into two parts: passionate crime, which springs

from sexual irregularities, and brutal crime, which springs from a disregard for property and person; and it would be possible, of course, to show that the root is really the same in both categories. There is a looseness of what are specifically called morals such as has rarely if ever been equaled.

It is quite obvious that the war is responsible for this terrible derangement. It has broken down restraints between man and woman; it has separated husband from wife; it has furnished opportunities; and it has created new tastes and fresh distastes. That there should be a crop of tragedies arising out of this great sowing of irregularities is inevitable. In England the number of divorces is much larger than before the war; and in Paris there were at the end of last year no fewer than 120,000 suits for divorce awaiting trial. Now this is fatal for the family. But it might be thought to be — though on so large a scale — an accidental effect, a pure outcome of circumstances, and not likely to continue. Alas! the truth is that there is one highly important evil factor which cannot disappear for a long time. The men-folk of marriageable age, particularly in Allied countries, are so reduced in numbers that millions of women, in whom the sex-hunger is strong, are, as it were, let loose upon society, and are pulling down the pillars of civilized institutions.

In England a million 'superfluous' women; in France two millions — does it need any long psychological investigation to prove that they must as a body be the enemies of marriage and of family life? When the sexes are fairly evenly divided, there still exists a margin of women who must necessarily constitute a certain moral peril. But they are largely driven into fatiguing industrial occupations, or they subdue their physical appetites, or they join the ranks of paid or unpaid courtesans.

Now I would not for a moment give an exaggerated place to sex in life. But millions of healthy unmated women! Can it be pretended that their existence outside the conventional bands of matrimony will make no difference? As a fact, they are in a large measure answerable for the hectic fever of revelry which brings men and women together. It is a subject upon which I will not insist: its implications are obvious.

When passionate crimes occur, the 'unwritten law' is invoked. In England it was, until after the war, unknown to the courts. Judges frowned upon such a plea. A man might be wronged, a woman might be tempted by a blackguard, but the law refused in its majesty to accept the plea of passion. Now the courts have registered many cases in which skillful pleading by an advocate who knew how to touch upon this human chord has been successful. Especially is this so where the husband, a soldier, found his domestic happiness wrecked in his absence. But this is by no means the only kind of crime which has been condoned; and in France it is only necessary to utter the words *crime passionel* for the result of the trial to be known in advance.

Resort to violence is not the final thought, but the first. Attacks which are in some sense provoked are easily paralleled by completely unprovoked crimes. Robbery is not the comparatively 'gentle' business it was. Human life has become of no consequence. Who has not read of the motor-car bandits who, like *condottieri*, ravage a district of France? The German papers are full of horrors. The British journals record revolting incidents daily. This is no mere coincidence. It is a phenomenon which has its roots in the war.

I find the following main reasons set out by an English writer to explain this crime wave, and I do not disagree.

(1) That many men who had crimi-

nal instincts, but also a horror of killing, before the war are now more or less devoid of that horror.

(2) That many men who had embarked on a career of crime before the war were liberated from prison during hostilities, and entered the army, and that these are now free again to resume their depredations against society.

(3) That unemployment and the high cost of living have forced many men who would otherwise have been law-abiding citizens into criminality.

(4) That the general feeling of unrest which is permeating all classes is responsible for much crime.

It should be added that nervous diseases, which it would be difficult to diagnose, abound: many men whom I have questioned closely confess to me that it was a year or so after the war that they first felt a strange depression, a lowering of vitality, a mental and moral degeneration; and they wonder how these things can be connected with the war. They can. The gap is quite unimportant. Often nervous effects manifest themselves after the casual circumstances are forgotten. Again, in the mix-up of society, the higgledy-piggledy regrouping of men, the old restraints of custom, of respectability, have gone. One's neighbor is nobody; one's situation is uncertain; social shame has little hold upon men, and the disgrace of prison has disappeared. Prison! Why all sorts of people have gone to prison, from conscientious objectors to socialists, from rich merchants, who have somehow been caught cheating and profiteering, to the poor devil who said, 'Damn you,' to the sergeant, or who came back to barracks half an hour late. What terrors has prison left for men who have faced death daily,

who have grown accustomed to the arbitrary punishments of our modern world, and who have hardly a settled soil to which they cling? They are uprooted.

If transportation is disorganized, if the monetary system is in disorder, if society is confounded, morals too are in chaos. What most appalled me, perhaps, was the cynical disregard of suffering displayed by governments and peoples: Austrian children could starve, millions of Russian babies could perish in misery, without moving the rest of mankind. A few people pleaded for them; the most shocking revelations, which had not the smallest character of propaganda, which were obviously exact, perfectly sincere, only brought forth the mockery of several of the best-known and most powerful newspapers. Anything more disgusting than such sneers, anything more calculated to make one despair of humanity, I cannot conceive. The men who wrote like that had surely lost all sense of pity, all sense of justice. Yet they wrote like that because what they wrote corresponded with the brutal feelings of their readers — who made up the 'largest circulation.'

Turn where one will, one finds only that the war has worsened mankind. Those who speak of the heroic virtues which are born on the battlefield, which spring, like the Phoenix, out of the ashes of war, are uttering the most stupid claptrap. The dominion of darkness has spread over Europe, and a slimy progeny of cruelty, of bestiality, of insensibility, of egoism, of violence, of materiality, has crawled into the light of day — a noisome brood, of which it will be long before we can dispossess ourselves.

A YEAR LATER

BY JOHN SHERIDAN ZELIE

I

AN accomplished woman who had rendered great service with the Red Cross in France had come to talk with me about the joys and surprises of working with the men overseas. She had heard that I had once worked in the same château at Luzancy on the Marne to which she had gone months afterward.

It is always the same in one of these interviews: the talkers vie with each other only in seeing which has the richest instances to tell of kindly approaches, of beauties of action, of inexhaustible fun and unforgettable men, and by talking try to recapture a little of the joy of it all. But except for some such slight revival of the old satisfactions as a chance conversation might give, my friend was tacitly taking the ground that it was all over and must all slowly fade into the past. With the same fear myself, I had determined not to let it fade if I could help it, and for three months past had gone about whenever I could, just for the sheer joy of finding some of the men again. My journeys had taken me into five states, following all kinds of clues; and when I began to speak of doughboys as if they were still with us and one could still see as much as he would of the wounded, she seemed rather puzzled and asked, 'But why do you take all that trouble?' She had too easily given in to the conventional idea that it was all over.

Spaced out all over the land as he is, the doughboy, the artilleryman, the

ambulancier, the hospital and medical man, is just the same person that he was in France. He has brought home with him just what gladdened our souls over there. He will not say much about it while this strange vogue of silence is on; but anyone who wants it can have much of the old experience still.

If I were a millionaire, — 'which the reader will be pleased to have mentioned so early in the narrative,' — I should go on one grand tour to find again the men I came to know on stretchers or in hospitals, or whom I met by chance on French roads for only a little space, but long enough for them to say or do something that gripped one's heart forever. But the grand tour being impossible, I take the short ones, and turn aside whenever a *détour* will bring me within hail of them.

Never did I imagine that Pittsburgh and its environs could suddenly become endowed in my imagination with all the colors of romance; but this is what has come to pass; for out in that region live a great number of those who surprised me into the happiest days of my life. A week in Pittsburgh, with the privilege of looking up the doctors, the cook, the bell-hop, the bar-keep, the street-car conductor, the drug-clerk, the hostler, the automobile agent, the shoe-clerk, the miner, the student, the farmer, the drummer, the lawyer, and McCafferty of the pickle factory, quite casts Atlantic City and Mt. Desert into the shade. I knew nothing about Pennsylvania