

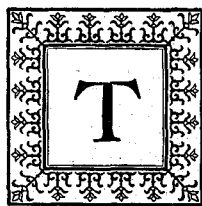
# A Son at the Front

BY EDITH WHARTON

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCES ROGERS

## BOOK II

### X



THE war was three months old—three centuries.

By virtue of some gift of adaptation which seemed forever to discredit human sensibility, people were already beginning to live into the monstrous idea of it, acquire its ways, speak its language, regard it as a thinkable, endurable, arrangeable fact; to eat it by day, and sleep on it—yes, and soundly—at night.

The war went on; life went on; Paris went on. She had had her great hour of resistance, when, alone, exposed and defenseless, she had held back the enemy and broken his strength. She had had, afterward, her hour of triumph, the hour of the Marne; then her hour of passionate and prayerful hope, when it seemed to the watching nations that the enemy was not only held back but thrust back, and victory finally in reach. That hour had passed in its turn, giving way to the grey reality of the trenches. A new speech was growing up in this new world. There were trenches now, there was a "Front"—people were beginning to talk of their sons at the front.

The first time John Campton heard the phrase it sent a shudder through him. Winter was coming on, and he was haunted by the vision of the youths out there, boys of George's age, thousands and thousands of them, exposed by day in reeking wet ditches and sleeping at night under rain and snow. People were talking calmly of victory in the spring—the spring that was still six long months away! And meanwhile, what cold and wet, what blood and agony, what shattered bodies out on that hideous front, what shattered homes in all the lands it guarded!

Campton could bear to think of these things now. *His* son was not at the front—was safe, thank God, and likely to remain so!

During the first awful weeks of silence and uncertainty, when every morning brought news of a fresh disaster, when no letters came from the army and no private messages could reach it—during those weeks, while Campton, like other fathers, was without news of his son, the war had been to him simply a huge featureless mass crushing him earthward, blinding him, letting him neither think nor move nor breathe.

But at last he had got permission to go to Chalons, whither Fortin, who chanced to have begun his career as a surgeon, had been hastily transferred. The physician, called from his incessant labours in a roughly-improvised operating-room, to which Campton was led between rows of stretchers laden with livid blood-splashed men, had said kindly, but with a shade of impatience, that he had not forgotten, had done what he could; that George's health did not warrant his being discharged from the army, but that he was temporarily on a staff-job at the rear, and would probably be kept there if such and such influences were brought to bear. Then, calling for hot water and fresh towels, the surgeon vanished and Campton made his way back with lowered eyes between the stretchers.

The "influences" in question were brought to bear—not without Anderson Brant's assistance—and now that George was fairly certain to be kept at clerical work a good many miles from the danger-zone Campton felt less like an ant under a landslide, and was able for the first time to think of the war as he might have thought of any other war objectively, intellectually, almost dispassionately, as of history in the making.

It was not that he had any doubt as to

the rights and wrongs of the case. The painfully preserved equilibrium of the neutrals made a pitiful show now that the monstrous facts of the first weeks were known: Germany's diplomatic perfidy, her savagery in the field, her premeditated and systematized terrorizing of the civil populations. Nothing could efface what had been done in Belgium and Luxembourg, the burning of Louvain, the bombardment of Rheims. These successive outrages had roused in Campton the same incredulous wrath as in the rest of mankind; but being of a speculative mind—and fairly sure now that George would never lie in the mud and snow with the others—he had begun to consider the landslide in its universal relations, as well as in its effects on his private ant-heap.

His son's situation, however, was still his central thought. That this lad, who was meant to have been born three thousand miles away in his own safe warless country, and who was regarded by the government of that country as having been born there, as subject to her laws and entitled to her protection—that this lad, by the most idiotic of blunders, a blunder perpetrated before he was born, should have been dragged into a conflict in which he was totally unconcerned, should become temporarily and arbitrarily the subject of a foreign state exposed to whatever catastrophes that state might draw upon itself, this fact still seemed to Campton as unjust as when it first dawned on him that his boy's very life might hang on some tortuous secret negotiation between the cabinets of Europe.

He still refused to admit that France had any claim on George, any right to his time, to his suffering or to his life. He had argued it out a hundred times with Adele Anthony. "You say Julia and I were to blame for not going home before the boy was born—and God knows I agree with you! But suppose we'd meant to go? Suppose we'd made every arrangement, taken every precaution, got to Havre or Cherbourg, say, and been told the steamer had broken her screw—or been prevented ourselves, at the last moment, by illness or accident, or any sudden grab of the Hand of God? You'll admit we shouldn't have been to blame for that; yet the law would have recognized no

difference. George would still have found himself a French soldier on the second of last August. And I say that's enough to prove it's an iniquitous law, a travesty of justice. Nobody's going to convince me that, because a steamer may happen to break a flange of her screw at the wrong time, France has the right to force an American boy to go and rot in the trenches!"

"In the trenches—is George in the trenches?" Adele Anthony asked, raising her pale eyebrows.

"No!" Campton thundered, his clenched fist crashing down among her tea-things; "and all your word-juggling isn't going to convince me that he ought to be there." He paused and stared furiously about the little lady-like drawing-room into which Miss Anthony's sharp angles were so incongruously squeezed. She made no answer, and he went on: "George looks at the thing exactly as I do."

"Has he told you so?" Miss Anthony enquired, rescuing his tea-cup and putting sugar into her own.

"He has told me nothing to the contrary. You don't seem to be aware that military correspondence is censored, and that a soldier can't always blurt out everything he thinks."

Miss Anthony followed his glance about the room, and her eyes paused with his on her own portrait, now in the place of honour over the mantelpiece, where it hung incongruously above a menagerie of china animals and a collection of trophies from the Marne.

"I dropped in at the Luxembourg yesterday," she said. "Do you know whom I saw there? Anderson Brant. He was looking at George's portrait, and turned as red as a beet. You ought to do him a sketch of George some day—after this."

Campton's face darkened. He knew it was partly through Brant's influence that George had been detached from his regiment and given a staff-job in the Argonne; but Miss Anthony's reminder annoyed him. The Brants had acted through sheer selfish cowardice, the desire to safeguard something which belonged to them, something they valued as they valued their pictures and tapestries, though of course in a greater degree; whereas he,

Campton, was sustained by a principle which he could openly avow, and was ready to discuss with anyone who had the leisure to listen.

He had explained all this so often to Miss Anthony that the words rose again to his lips without an effort. "If it had been a national issue I should have wanted him to be among the first: such as our having to fight Mexico, for instance——"

"Yes; or the moon! For my part, I understand Julia and Anderson better. They don't care a fig for national issues; they're just animals defending their cub."

"*Their*—thank you!" Campton exclaimed.

"Well, poor Anderson really *was* a dry-nurse to the boy. Who else was there to look after him? You were painting Spanish beauties at the time." She frowned. "Life's a puzzle. I see perfectly that if you'd let everything else go to keep George, you'd never have become the great John Campton: the *real* John Campton you were meant to be. And it wouldn't have been half as satisfactory for you—or for George either. Only, in the meanwhile, somebody had to blow the child's nose, and pay his dentist and doctor; and you ought to be grateful to Anderson for doing it. Aren't there bees or ants, or something, that are kept for such purposes?"

Campton's lips were opened to reply when her face changed, and he saw that he had ceased to exist for her. He knew the reason. That look came over everybody's face nowadays at the hour when the evening paper came in. The old maid servant brought it in, and lingered to hear the *communiqué*. At that hour, everywhere over the globe, business and labour and pleasure (if it still existed) were suspended for a moment while the hearts of all men gathered themselves up in a question and a prayer.

Miss Anthony sought for her *lorgnon* and failed to find it. With a shaking hand she passed the newspaper over to Campton.

"Violent enemy attacks in the region of Dixmude, Ypres, Armentières, Arras, in the Argonne, and on the advanced slopes of the Grand Couronné de Nancy, have been successfully repulsed. We

have taken back the village of Soupir, near Vailly (Aisne); we have taken Maucourt and Mogeville, to the north-east of Verdun. Progress has been made in the region of Vermelles (Pas-de-Calais) and south of Aix Noulette. Enemy attacks in the Hauts-de-Meuse and south-east of Saint-Mihiel have also been repulsed.

"In Poland the Austrian retreat is becoming general. The Russians are still advancing in the direction of Kielce-Sandomir and have progressed beyond the San in Galicia. Mława has been reoccupied, and the whole railway system of Poland is now controlled by the Russian forces."

A good day—oh, decidedly a good day! At this rate, what became of the gloomy forecasts of the people who talked of a winter in the trenches, to be followed by a spring campaign? True, the Serbian army was still retreating before superior Austrian forces—but there too the scales would soon be turned if the Russians continued to progress. That day there was hope everywhere: the old maid servant went away smiling, and Miss Anthony poured out another cup of tea.

Campton had not lifted his eyes from the paper. Suddenly they lit on a short paragraph: "Fallen on the Field of Honour." One had got used to that with the rest; used even to the pang of reading names one knew, evoking familiar features, young faces blotted out in blood, young limbs convulsed in the fires of that hell called "the Front." But this time Campton turned pale and the paper fell to his knee.

"Fortin-Lescluze; Jean-Jacques-Marie, lieutenant of Chasseurs à Pied, gloriously fallen for France..." There followed a ringing citation.

Fortin's son, his only son, was dead!

Campton saw before him the honest *bourgeois* dining-room, so strangely out of keeping with the rest of the establishment; he saw the late August sun slanting in on the group about the table, on the ambitious and unscrupulous great man, the two quiet women hidden under his illustrious roof, and the youth who had held together these three dissimilar people, making an invisible home in the heart of all that publicity. Campton remembered his brief exchange of words with Fortin on

the threshold, and the father's uncontrollable outburst: "For his mother and myself it's not a trifle—having our only son in the war."

Campton shut his eyes and leaned back, sick with the memory. This man had had a share in saving George; but his own son he could not save.

"What's the matter?" Miss Anthony asked, her hand on his arm.

Campton could not bring the name to his lips. "Nothing—nothing. Only this room's rather hot—and I must be off anyhow." He got up, escaping from her solicitude, and made his way out. He must go at once to Fortin's. The physician was still at Chalons; but there would surely be some one at the house, and Campton could at least leave a message and ask where to write.

Dusk had fallen. His eyes usually feasted on the beauty of the new Paris, the secret mysterious Paris of veiled lights and deserted streets; but to-night he was blind to it. He could see nothing but Fortin's face, hear nothing but his voice when he said: "Our only son in the war."

He groped along the pitch-black street for the remembered outline of the house (since no house-numbers were visible), and rang several times without result. He was just turning away when a big mud-splashed motor drove up. He noticed a soldier at the steering-wheel, then three people got out stiffly: two women smothered in crape and a haggard man in a dirty uniform. Campton stopped, and Fortin-Lescluze recognized him by the light of the motor-lamp. The four stood and looked at each other. The old mother, under her crape, appeared no bigger than a child.

"Ah—you know?" the doctor said. Campton nodded.

The father spoke in a firm voice. "It happened three days ago—at Suippes. You've seen his citation? They brought him in to me at Chalons without a warning—and too late. I took off both legs, but gangrene had set in. Ah—if I could have got hold of one of our big surgeons! . . . Yes, we're just back from the funeral. . . . My mother and my wife . . . they had that comfort. . . ."

The two women stood beside him, like shrouded statues. Suddenly Mme. For-

tin's deep voice came through the crape: "You saw him, Monsieur, that last day . . . the day you came about your own son, I think?"

"I . . . yes . . ." Campton stammered in anguish.

The physician intervened. "And now, *ma bonne mère*, you're not to be kept standing. You're to go straight in and take your *lisane* and go to bed." He kissed his mother and pushed her into his wife's arms. "Good-bye, my dear. Take care of her."

The women vanished under the portecochère and Fortin turned to the painter.

"Thank you for coming. I can't ask you in—I must go back immediately."

"Back?"

"To my work. Thank God. If it were not for that——!"

He jumped into the motor, called out "*En route!*" and was absorbed into the blackness of the night.

## XI

CAMPTON went home to his studio.

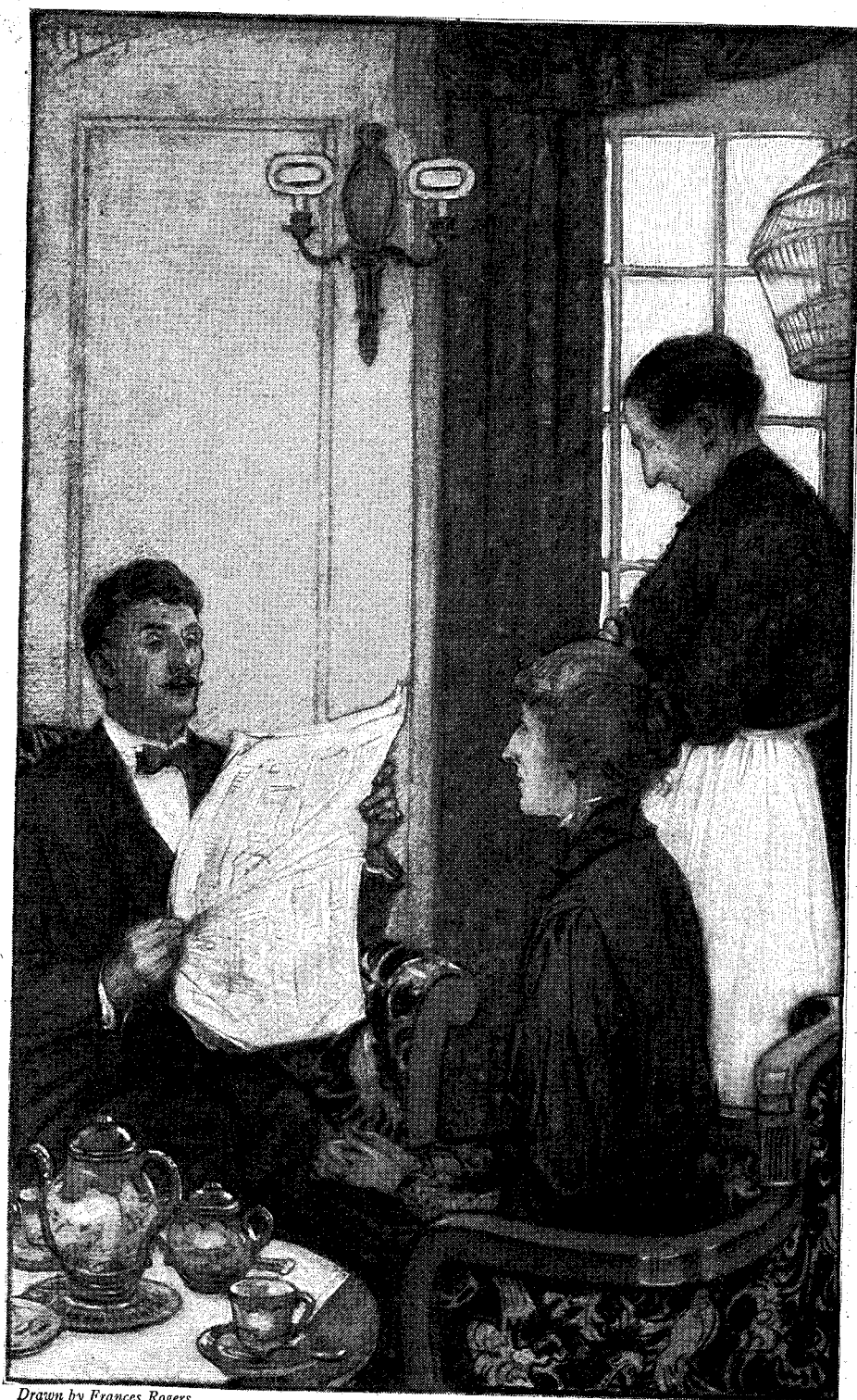
He still lived there, shiftlessly and uncomfortably—for Mariette had never come back from Lille. She had not come back, and there was no news of her. Lille had become a part of the "occupied provinces," from which there was no escape; and people were beginning to find out what that living burial meant.

Adele Anthony had urged Campton to go back to the hotel, but he obstinately refused. What business had he to be living in expensive hotels when, for the Lord knew how long, his means of earning a livelihood were gone, and when it was his duty to save up for George—George, who was safe, who was definitely out of danger, and whom he longed more than ever, when the war was over, to withdraw from the stifling atmosphere of his stepfather's millions?

He had been so near to having the boy to himself when the war broke out! He had almost had in sight the proud day when he should be able to say: "Look here: this is your own bank-account. Now you're independent—for God's sake stop and consider what you want to do with your life."

The war had put an end to that—but





*Drawn by Frances Rogers.*

A good day—oh, decidedly a good day!—Page 151.

only for a time. If victory came before long, Campton's reputation would survive the eclipse, his chances of money-making would be as great as ever, and the new George, the George matured and disciplined by war, would come back with a finer sense of values, and a soul steeled against the vulgar opportunities of wealth.

Meanwhile, it behoved his father to save every penny. And the simplest way of saving was to go on camping in the studio, taking his meals at the nearest wine-shop, and entrusting his bed-making and dusting to old Mme. Lebel. In that way he could live for a long time without appreciably reducing his savings.

Mme. Lebel's daughter-in-law, Mme. Jules, who was in the Ardennes with the little girl when the war broke out, was to have replaced Mariette. But, like Mariette, Mme. Jules never arrived, and no word came from her or the child. They too were in an occupied province. So Campton jogged on without a servant. It was very uncomfortable, even for his lax standards; but the dread of letting a stranger loose in the studio made him prefer to put up with Mme. Lebel's intermittent services.

So far she had borne up bravely. Her two orphan grandsons were at the front (how that word had insinuated itself into the language!) but she continued to have fairly frequent reassuring news of them. The *Chasseur Alpin*, slightly wounded in Alsace, was safe in hospital; and the other was well, and wrote cheerfully. Her son Jules, the cabinetmaker, was guarding a bridge at St. Cloud, and came in regularly to see her; but Campton noticed that it was about him that she seemed most concerned.

He was a silent industrious man, who had worked hard to support his orphaned nephews and his mother, and had married in middle age, only four or five years before the war, when the lads could shift for themselves, and his own situation was secure enough to permit the luxury of a wife and baby.

Mme. Jules had waited patiently for him, though she had other chances; and finally they had married and the baby had been born, and blossomed into one of those finished little Frenchwomen who, at

four or five, seem already to be musing on the great central problems of love and thrift. The parents used to bring the child to see Campton, and he had made a celebrated sketch of her, in her Sunday bonnet, with little earrings and a wise smile. And these two, mother and child, had disappeared on the second of August as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them.

As Campton entered he glanced at the old woman's den, saw that it was empty, and said to himself: "She's at St. Cloud again." For he knew that she seized every chance of being with her eldest.

He unlocked his door and felt his way into the dark studio. Mme. Lebel might at least have made up the fire! Campton lit the lamp, found some wood, and knelt down stiffly by the stove. Really, life was getting too uncomfortable. . .

He was still trying to coax a flame when the door opened and he heard Mme. Lebel.

"Really, you know—" he turned to rebuke her; but the words died on his lips. She stood before him, taking no notice; then her shapeless black figure doubled up, and she sank down into his own arm-chair. Mme. Lebel, who, even when he offered her a seat, never did more than rest respectful knuckles on its back!

"What's the matter? What's wrong?" he exclaimed.

She lifted her aged face. "Monsieur, I came about your fire; but I am too unhappy. I have more than I can bear." She fumbled vainly for a handkerchief, and wiped away her tears with the back of her old laborious hand.

"Jules has enlisted, Monsieur; enlisted in the infantry. He has left for the front without telling me."

"Good Lord. Enlisted? At his age—is he crazy?"

"No, Monsieur. But the little girl—he's had news——"

She waited to steady her voice, and then fishing in another slit of her multiple skirts, pulled out a letter. "I got that at midday. I hurried to St. Cloud—but he left yesterday."

The letter was grim reading. The poor father had accidentally run across an escaped prisoner who had regained the French lines near the village where Mme.

Jules and the child were staying. The man, who knew the wife's family, had been charged by them with a message to the effect that Mme. Jules, who was a proud woman, had got into trouble with the authorities, and been sent off to a German prison on the charge of spying. The poor little girl had cried and clung to her mother, and had been so savagely pushed aside by the officer who made the arrest that she had fallen on the stone steps of the "Kommandantur" and fractured her skull. The fugitive reported her as still alive, but unconscious, and dying.

Jules Lebel had received this news the previous day; and within twenty-four hours he was at the front. Guard a bridge at St. Cloud after that? All he asked was to kill and be killed. He knew the name and the regiment of the officer who had denounced his wife. "If I live long enough I shall run the swine down," he wrote. "If not, I'll kill as many of his kind as God lets me."

Mme. Lebel sat silent, her head bowed on her hands; and Campton stood and watched her. Presently she got up, passed the back of her hand across her eyes, and said: "The room is cold. I'll fetch some coal."

Campton protested. "No, no, Mme. Lebel. Don't worry about me. Make yourself something warm to drink, and try to sleep——"

"Oh, Monsieur, thank God for the work! If it were not for that——" she said, in the same words as the physician.

She hobbled away, and presently he heard her bumping up again with the coal.

When his fire was started, and the curtains drawn, and she had left him, the painter sat down and looked about the studio. Bare and untidy as it was, he did not find the sight unpleasant: he was used to it, and being used to things seemed to him the first requisite of comfort. But to-night his thoughts were elsewhere: he saw neither the tattered tapestries with their huge heroes and kings, nor the blotched walls hung with pictures, nor the canvases stacked against the chair-legs, nor the long littered table at which he wrote and ate and mixed his colours. At one moment he was with For-

tin-Leschuze, speeding through the night toward fresh scenes of death; at another, in the *loge* down-stairs, where Mme. Lebel, her day's work done, would no doubt sit down as usual by her smoky lamp and go on with her sewing. "Thank God for the work——" they had both said.

And here Campton sat with idle hands, and did nothing——

It was not exactly his fault. What was there for a portrait-painter to do? He was not a portrait-painter only, and on his brief trip to Chalons some of the scenes by the way—gaunt unshorn faces of territorials at railway bridges, soldiers grouped about a provision-lorry, a mud-splashed company returning to the rear, a long grey train of "seventy-fives" ploughing forward through the rain—at these sights the old graphic instinct had stirred in him. But the approaches of the front were sternly forbidden to civilians, and especially to neutrals (Campton was beginning to wince at the word); he himself, who had been taken to Chalons by a high official of the Army Medical Board, had been given only time enough for his interview with Fortin, and brought back to Paris the same night. If ever there came a time for art to interpret the war, as Raffet, for instance, had interpreted Napoleon's campaigns, the day was not yet; the world in which men lived at present was one in which the word "art" had lost its meaning.

And what was Campton, what had he ever been, but an artist? . . . A father; yes, he had waked up to the practice of that other art, he was learning to be a father. And now, at a stroke, his only two reasons for living were gone: since the second of August he had had no portraits to paint, no son to guide and to companion.

Other people, he knew, had found jobs: most of his friends had been drawn into some form of war-work. Dastrey, after vain attempts to enlist, thwarted by an untimely sciatica, had found a post near the front, on the staff of a Red Cross Ambulance. Adele Anthony was working eight or nine hours a day in a Depot which distributed food and clothing to refugees from the invaded provinces; and Mrs. Brant's name figured on the committees of most of the newly-organ-



ized war charities. Among Campton's other friends many had accepted humbler tasks. Some devoted their time to listing and packing hospital supplies, keeping accounts in ambulance offices, sorting out refugees at the railway-stations, and telling them where to go for food and help; still others spent their days, and sometimes their nights, at the bitter-cold suburban sidings where the long train-loads of wounded stopped on the way to the hospitals of the interior. There was enough misery and confusion at the rear for every civilian volunteer to find his task.

Among them all, Campton could not see his place. His lameness put him at a disadvantage, since taxicabs were few, and it was difficult for him to travel in the crowded métro. He had no head for figures, and would have thrown the best-kept accounts into confusion; he could not climb steep stairs to seek out refugees, nor should he have known what to say to them when he reached their attics. And so it would have been at the railway canteens; he choked with rage and commiseration at all the suffering about him, but found no word to cheer the sufferers.

Secretly, too, he feared the demands that would be made on him if he once let himself be drawn into the network of war charities. Tiresome women would come and beg for money, or for pictures for bazaars: they were already getting up bazaars.

Money he could not spare, since it was his duty to save it for George; and as for pictures—why, there were a few sketches he might give, but here again he was checked by his fear of establishing a precedent. He had seen in the papers that the English painters were already giving blank canvases to be sold by auction to millionaires in quest of a portrait. But that form of philanthropy would lead to his having to paint all the unpaintable people who had been trying to bribe a picture out of him since his sudden celebrity. No artist had a right to cheapen his art in that way: it could only result in his turning out work that would injure his reputation and reduce his sales after the war.

So far, Campton had not been troubled by many appeals for help; but that was probably because he had kept out of sight,

and thrown into the fire the letters of the few ladies who had begged a sketch for their sales, or his name for their committees.

One appeal, however, he had not been able to avoid. About two months earlier he had had a visit from George's friend Boylston, the youth he had met at Dastrey's dinner the night before war was declared. In the interval he had entirely forgotten Boylston; but as soon as he saw the fat brown young man with a twinkle in his eyes and his hair, Campton recalled him, and held out a cordial hand. Had not George said that Boylston was the best fellow he knew?

Boylston seemed much impressed by the honour of waiting on the great man. In spite of his cool twinkling air he was evidently full of reverence for the things and people he esteemed, and Campton's welcome sent the blood up to the edge of his tight curls. It also gave him courage to explain his visit.

He had come to beg Campton to accept the chairmanship of the American Committee of "The Friends of French Art," an international group of painters who proposed to raise funds for the families of mobilized artists. The American group would naturally be the most active, since Americans had, in larger numbers than any other foreigners, sought artistic training in France; and all the members agreed that Campton's name must figure at their head. But Campton was known to be inaccessible, and the committee, aware that Boylston was a friend of George's, had asked him to transmit their request.

"You see, sir, nobody else represents. . ."

Campton thought as seldom as possible of what followed: he hated the part he had played. But, after all, what else could he have done? Everything in him recoiled from what acceptance would bring with it: publicity, committee meetings, speechifying, writing letters, seeing troublesome visitors, hearing harrowing stories, asking people for money—above all, having to give his own; a great deal of his own.

He stood before the young man, abject, irresolute, chinking a bunch of keys in his trouser-pockets, and remembering after-



ward that the chink must have sounded as if they were full of money. He remembered too, oddly enough, that as his own embarrassment increased Boylston's vanished. It was as though the modest youth, taking his host's measure, had reluctantly found him wanting, and from that moment had felt less in awe of his genius. Illogical, of course, and unfair—but there it was.

The talk had ended by Campton's refusing the chairmanship, but agreeing to let his name figure on the list of honorary members, where he hoped it would be overshadowed by rival glories. And, having reached this conclusion, he had limped to his desk, produced a handful of notes, and after a moment's hesitation held out two hundred francs with the stereotyped: "Sorry I can't make it more. . ."

He had meant it to be two hundred and fifty; but, with his usual luck, all his fumbling had failed to produce a fifty-franc note; and he could hardly ask Boylston to "make the change."

On the threshold the young man paused to ask for the last news of George; and on Campton's assuring him that it was excellent, added, with evident sincerity: "Still hung up on that beastly staff-job? I do call that hard luck—." And now, of all the unpleasant memories of the visit, that phrase kept the sharpest sting.

Was it in fact hard luck? And did George himself think so? There was nothing in his letters to show it. He seemed to have undergone no change of view as to his own relation to the war; he had shown no desire to "be in it," as that mad young Upsher said.

For the first time since he had seen George's train pull out of the Gare de l'Est Campton found himself wondering at the perfection of his son's moral balance. So many things had happened since; war had turned out to be so immeasurably more hideous and abominable than those who most abhorred war had dreamed it could be; the issues at stake had become so glaringly plain, right and wrong, honour and dishonour, humanity and savagery faced each other so squarely across the trenches, that it seemed strange to Campton that his boy, so eager, so im-

pressionable, so quick on the uptake, should not have felt some such burst of wrath as had driven even poor Jules Lebel into the conflict.

The comparison, of course, was absurd. Lebel had been parted from his dearest, his wife dragged to prison, his child virtually murdered: any man, in his place, must have felt the blind impulse to kill. But what was Lebel's private plight but a symbol of the larger wrong? This war could no longer be compared to other wars: Germany was conducting it on methods that civilization had made men forget. The occupation of Luxembourg; the systematic destruction of Belgium; the savage treatment of the people of the invaded regions; the outrages of Louvain and Rheims and Ypres; the voice with which these offences cried to heaven had waked the indignation of humanity. Yet George, in daily contact with all this woe and ruin, seemed as unmoved as though he had been behind a desk in the New York office of Bullard and Brant.

If there were any change in his letters it was rather that they were more indifferent. His reports of himself became drier, more stereotyped, his comments on the situation fewer: he seemed to have subdued to the hideous business he worked in. It was true that his letters had never been expressive: his individuality seemed to dry up in contact with pen and paper. It was true also that letters from the front were severely censored, and that it would have been foolish to put in them anything likely to prevent their delivery. But George had managed to send several notes by hand, and these were as colourless as the others; and so were his letters to his mother, which Mrs. Brant always sent to Miss Anthony, who privately passed them on to Campton.

Besides, there were other means of comparison. People with sons at the front were beginning to hand about copies of their letters; a few passages, strangely moving and beautiful, had found their way into the papers. George, God be praised, was not at the front; but he was in the war zone, far nearer the sights and sounds of death than his father, and he had comrades and friends in the trenches. Strange that what he wrote was still so cold to the touch. . .

"It's the scientific mind, I suppose," Campton reflected. "These youngsters are all rather like beautifully made machines..." Yet it had never before struck him that his son was like a beautifully made machine.

He remembered that he had not dined, and got up wearily. As he passed out he noticed on a pile of letters and papers a brand-new card: he could always tell the new cards by their whiteness, which twenty-four hours of studio-dust turned to grey.

Campton held the card to the light. It was large and glossy, a beautiful thick pre-war card; and on it was engraved:

#### HARVEY MAYHEW

Délégué des Etats Unis au Congrès de la Paix

with a pen-stroke through the lower line. Beneath was written an imperative "p.t.o."; and reversing the card, Campton read, in an agitated hand: "Must see you at once. Call up Nouveau Luxe"; and, lower down: "Excuse ridiculous card. Impossible get others under six weeks."

So Mayhew had turned up! Well, it was a good thing: perhaps he might have news of that mad Benny Upsher whose doings had caused Campton so much trouble in the early days that he could never recall the boy's obstinate rosy face without a stir of irritation.

"I want to be *in* this thing—" Well, young Upsher had apparently been in it with a vengeance; but what he had cost Campton in cables to his distracted family, and in weary pilgrimages to the War Office, the American Embassy, the Consulate, the Prefecture of Police, and divers other supposed sources of information, the painter meant some day to tell his young relative in no measured terms. That is, if the chance ever presented itself; for, since he had left the studio that morning four months ago, Benny had so completely vanished that Campton sometimes wondered, with a little shiver, if they were ever likely to exchange words again in this world.

"Mayhew will know; he wants to tell me about the boy, I suppose," he mused.

Harvey Mayhew—Harvey Mayhew with a pen-stroke through the title which, so short a time since, it had been his chief

ambition to display on his cards! No wonder it embarrassed him now. But where on earth had he been all this time? As Campton pondered on the card a memory flashed out. Mayhew? Mayhew? Why, wasn't it Mayhew who had waylaid him in the Crillon a few hours before war was declared, to ask his advice about the safest way of travelling to the Hague? And hadn't he, Campton, in all good faith, counselled him to go by Luxembourg "in order to be out of the way of trouble"?

The remembrance swept away the painter's sombre thoughts, and he burst into a laugh that woke the echoes of the studio.

#### XII

Nor having it in his power to call up his cousin on the telephone, Campton went the next morning to the Nouveau Luxe.

It was the first time that he had entered the famous hotel since the beginning of the war; and at sight of the long hall his heart sank as it used to whenever some untoward necessity forced him to run its deadly blockade.

But the hall was empty when he entered, empty not only of the brilliant beings who filled his soul with such dismay, but also of the porters, footmen and lift-boys who, even in its unfrequented hours, lent it the lustre of their liveries.

A tired concierge sat at the desk, and near the door a boy scout, coiling his bare legs about a high stool, raised his head languidly from his book. But for these two, the world of the Nouveau Luxe had disappeared.

As the lift was not running there was nothing to disturb their meditations; and when Campton had learned that Mr. Mayhew would receive him he started alone up the deserted stairs.

Only a few dusty trunks remained in the corridors where luggage used to be piled as high as in the passages of the great liners on sailing-day; and instead of the murmur of ladies'-maids' skirts, and explosions of laughter behind glazed service-doors, the swish of a charwoman's mop alone broke the oppressive silence.

"After all," Campton thought, "if war didn't kill people how much pleasanter it might make the world!"

This was evidently not the opinion of Mr. Harvey Mayhew, whom he found agitatedly pacing a large room hung in shrimp-pink brocade, which opened on a vista of turquoise tiling and porcelain tub.

Mr. Mayhew's round countenance, composed of the same simple curves as his nephew's, had undergone a remarkable change. He was still round, but he was ravaged. His fringe of hair had grown greyer, and there were crow's-feet about his blue eyes, and wrathful corrugations in his benignant forehead.

He seized Campton's hands and glared at him through indignant eye-glasses.

"My dear fellow, I looked you up as soon as I arrived. I need you—we all need you—we need your powerful influence and your world-wide celebrity. Campton, the day for words has gone by. We must *act!*"

Campton let himself down into an arm-chair. No verb in the language terrified him as much as that which his cousin had flung at him. He gazed at the ex-Delegate with dismay. "I didn't know you were here. Where have you come from?" he asked.

Mr. Mayhew, resting a manicured hand on the edge of a gilt table, looked down awfully on him.

"I come," he said, "from a German prison."

"Good Lord—you?" Campton gasped.

He continued to gaze at his cousin with terror, but of a new kind. Here at last was someone who had actually been in the jaws of the monster, who had seen, heard, suffered—a witness who could speak of that which he knew! No wonder Mr. Mayhew took himself seriously—at last he had something to be serious about! Campton stared at him as if he had risen from the dead.

Mr. Mayhew cleared his throat and went on: "You may remember our meeting at the Crillon—on the 31st of last July it was—and my asking you the best way of getting to the Hague, in view of impending events. At that time" (his voice took a note of irony) "I was a Delegate to the Peace Congress at the Hague, and conceived it to be my duty to carry out my mandate at whatever personal risk. You advised me—as you may also remember—in order to be out

of the way of trouble, to travel by Luxembourg," (Campton stirred uneasily). "I followed your advice; and, not being able to go by train, I managed, with considerable difficulty, to get permission to travel by motor. I reached Luxembourg as the German army entered it—the next day I was in a German prison."

The next day! Then this pink and white man who stood there with his rimless eye-glasses and neatly trimmed hair, and his shining nails reflected in the plate glass of the table-top, this perfectly typical, usual sort of harmless rich American, had been for four months in the depths of the abyss that men were beginning to sound with fearful hearts!

"It is a simple miracle," said Mr. Mayhew, "that I was not shot as a spy."

Campton's voice choked in his throat. "Where were you imprisoned?"

"The first night, in the Police commissariat, with common thieves and vagabonds—with—" Mr. Mayhew lowered his voice and his eyes: "With prostitutes, Campton..."

He waited for this to take effect, and continued: "The next day, in consequence of the energetic intervention of our consul—who behaved extremely well, as I have taken care to let them know in Washington—I was sent back to my hotel on parole, and kept there, kept there, Campton—I, the official representative of a friendly country—under strict police surveillance, like... like an unfortunate woman... for eight days: a week and one day over!"

Mr. Mayhew sank into a chair and passed a scented handkerchief across his forehead. "When I was finally released I was without money, without luggage, without my motor or my wretched chauffeur—a Frenchman, who had been instantly carried off to Germany. In this state of destitution, and without an apology, I was shipped to Rotterdam and put on a steamer sailing for America." He wiped his forehead again, and the corners of his agitated lips. "Peace, Campton—Peace? When I think that I believed in a thing called Peace! That I left Utica—always a difficult undertaking for me—because I deemed it my duty, in the interests of *Peace*," (the word became a hiss) "to travel to the other side of the



world, and use the weight of my influence and my experience in such a cause!"

He clenched his fist and shook it in the face of an invisible foe.

"My influence, if I have any; my experience—ha, I *have* had experience now, Campton! And, my God, sir, they shall both be used till my last breath to show up these people, to proclaim to the world what they really are, to rouse public opinion in America against a nation of savages who ought to be hunted off the face of the globe like vermin—like the vermin in their own prison cells! Campton—if I may say so without profanity—I come to bring not Peace but a Sword!"

It was some time before the flood of Mr. Mayhew's wrath subsided, or before there floated up from its agitated depths some fragments of his subsequent history and present intentions. Eventually, however, Campton gathered that after a short sojourn in America, where he found opinion too lukewarm for him, he had come back to Europe to collect the experiences of other victims of German savagery. Mr. Mayhew, in short, meant to devote himself to Atrocities; and he had sought out Campton to ask his help, and especially to be put in contact with persons engaged in refugee-work, and likely to have come across flagrant offences against the law of nations.

It was easy to comply with the latter request. Campton scribbled a message to Adele Anthony at her refugee Depot; and he undertook also to find out from what officials Mr. Mayhew might obtain leave to visit the front.

"I know it's difficult—" he began; but Mr. Mayhew laughed. "I am here to surmount difficulties—after what I've been through."

It was not until then that Mr. Mayhew found time to answer an enquiry about his nephew.

"Benny Upsher? Ha—I'm proud of Benny! He's a hero, that nephew of mine—he was always my favourite."

He went on to say that the youth, having failed to enlist in the French army, had managed to get back to England, and there, passing himself off as a Canadian ("Born at Murray Bay, sir—wasn't it lucky?") had joined an English regiment, and, after three months' training, was

now on his way to the front. His parents had made a great outcry—moved heaven and earth for news of him—but the boy had covered up his tracks so cleverly that they had had no word till he was starting for Boulogne with his draft. Rather high-handed—and poor Madeline had nearly gone out of her mind; but Mr. Mayhew confessed that he had no patience with such feminine weakness. "Benny's a man, and must act as a man. That boy, Campton, saw things as they were from the first."

Campton took leave dazed and crushed by the conversation. It was all one to him if Harvey Mayhew chose to call on America to avenge his wrongs; Campton himself was beginning to wish that his country would wake up to what was going on in the world; but that he, Campton, should be drawn into the affair, should have to write letters, accompany the ex-Delegate to Embassies and Red Crosses, languish with him in ministerial antechambers, and be deafened with appeals to his own celebrity and efficiency; that he should have ascribed to himself that mysterious gift of "knowing the ropes" in which his whole blundering career had proved him to be cruelly lacking: this was so dreadful to him as to obscure every other question.

"Thank the Lord," he muttered, "I haven't got the telephone anyhow!"

He glanced cautiously down the wide stairs of the hotel to assure himself of a safe retreat; but in the hall an appealing voice detained him.

"Dear Master! Dear great Master! I've been lying in wait for you!"

A Red Cross nurse advanced: not the majestic figure of the Crimean legend, but the new version evolved in the rue de la Paix: short skirts, long ankles, pearls and curls. The face under the coif was young, wistful, haggard with the perpetual hurry of the aimless. Where had he seen those tragic eyes, so full of questions and so invariably uninterested in the answers?

"I'm Madge Talkett—I saw you at—I saw you the day war was declared," the young lady corrected herself. Campton remembered their meeting at Mrs. Brant's, and was grateful for her evident embarrassment. So few of the new generation

seemed aware that there were any privacies left to respect! He looked at Mrs. Talkett more kindly.

"You *must* come," she continued, laying her hand on his arm (her imperatives were always in italics). "Just a step from here—to my hospital. There's someone asking for you."

"For me? Someone wounded?" What if it were Benny Upsher? A cold fear broke over Campton.

"Someone dying," Mrs. Talkett said. "Oh, nobody you know—a poor young French soldier. He was brought here two days ago . . . and he keeps on repeating your name. . ."

"My name? Why my name?"

"We don't know. We don't think he knows you . . . but he's shot to pieces and half delirious. He's a painter, and he's seen pictures of yours, and keeps talking about them, and saying he wants you to look at his. . . You *will* come? It's just next door, you know."

He did not know—having carefully avoided all knowledge of hospitals in his dread of being drawn into war-work, and his horror of coming as a mere spectator to gaze on agony he could neither comfort nor relieve. Hospitals were for surgeons and women; if he had been rich he would have given big sums to aid them; being unable to do even that, he preferred to keep aloof.

He followed Mrs. Talkett out of the hotel and around the corner. The door of another hotel, with a big Red Cross above it, admitted them to a marble vestibule full of the cold smell of disinfectants. An orderly sat reading a newspaper behind the desk, and nurses whisked backward and forward with trays and pails. A lady with a bunch of flowers came down the stairs drying her eyes.

Campton's whole being recoiled from what awaited him. Since the poor youth was delirious, what was the use of seeing him? But women took a morbid pleasure in making one do things that were useless!

On an upper floor they paused at a door where there was a moment's muffled parleying.

"Come," Mrs. Talkett said; "he's a little better."

The room contained two beds. In one

lay a haggard elderly man with closed eyes and lips drawn back from his clenched teeth. His legs stirred restlessly, and one of his arms was in a lifted sling attached to a horrible kind of gallows above the bed. It reminded Campton of Juan de Borgoña's pictures of the Inquisition, in the Prado.

"Oh, *he's* all right; he'll get well. It's the other. . ."

The other lay quietly in his bed. No gallows overhung him, no visible bandaging showed his wound. There was a flush on his young cheeks and his eyes looked out, large and steady, from their hollow brows. But he was the one who would not get well.

Mrs. Talkett bent over him: her voice was sweet when it was lowered.

"I've kept my promise. Here he is."

The eyes turned in the lad's immovable head, and he and Campton looked at each other. The painter had never seen the face before him: a sharp irregular face, prematurely hollowed by pain, with thick chestnut hair tumbled above the forehead.

"It's you, Master!" the boy said.

Campton sat down beside him. "How did you know? Have you seen me before?"

"Once—at one of your exhibitions." He paused and drew a hard breath. "But the first thing was the portrait at the Luxembourg . . . your son. . ."

"Ah, you look like him!" Campton broke out.

The eyes of the young soldier lit up. "Do I? . . . Someone told me he was your son. I went home from seeing that and began to paint. After the war, would you let me come and work with you? My things . . . wait . . . I'll show you my things first." He tried to raise himself. Mrs. Talkett slipped her arm under his shoulders, and resting against her he lifted his hand and pointed to the bare wall facing him.

"There—there; you see? Look for yourself. The brushwork . . . not too bad, eh? I was . . . getting it. . . There, that head of my grandfather, eh? And my lame sister. . . Oh, I'm young. . ." he smiled . . . "never had any models. . . But after the war you'll see. . ."

Mrs. Talkett let him down again, and

feverishly, vehemently, he began to describe, one by one, and over and over again, the pictures he saw on the naked wall in front of him.

A nurse had slipped in, and Mrs. Talkett signed to Campton to follow her out. The boy seemed aware that the painter was going, and interrupted his enumeration to say: "As soon as the war's over you'll let me come?"

"Of course I will," Campton promised.

In the passage he asked: "Can nothing save him? Has everything possible been done?"

"Everything. We're all so fond of him—the biggest surgeons have seen him. It seems he has great talent—but he never could afford models, so he has painted his family over and over again." Mrs. Talkett looked at Campton with a good deal of feeling in her changing eyes. "You see, it *did* help, your coming. I know you thought it tiresome of me to insist."

She led him down-stairs and into the office, where a lame officer with the Croix de Guerre sat at the desk. The officer wrote out the young soldier's name—René Davril—and his family's address.

"They're quite destitute, Monsieur. An old infirm grandfather, a lame sister who taught music, a widowed mother and several younger children..."

"I'll come back, I'll come back," Campton again promised, as he parted from Mrs. Talkett.

He had not thought it possible that he would ever feel so kindly toward her as at that moment. And then, a second later, she nearly spoiled it by saying: "Dear Master—you see the penalty of greatness!"

The name of René Davril was with Campton all day. The boy had believed in him—his eyes had been opened by the sight of George's portrait! And now, in a day or two more, he would be filling a three-by-six ditch in a crowded graveyard. At twenty—and with eyes like George's.

What could Campton do? No one was less visited by happy inspirations; the "little acts of kindness" recommended to his pious infancy had always seemed to him far harder to think of than to perform. But now some instinct carried him

straight to the corner of his studio where he remembered having shoved out of sight a half-finished study for George's portrait. He found it, examined it critically, scribbled his signature in one corner, and set out with it for the hospital. On the way he had to stop at the Ministry of War on Mayhew's tiresome business, and was delayed there till too late to proceed with his errand before luncheon. But in the afternoon he passed in again through the revolving plate glass, and sent up his name. Mrs. Talkett was not there, but a nurse came down, to whom, with embarrassment, he explained himself.

"Poor little Davril? Yes—he's still alive. Will you come up? His family are with him."

Campton shook his head and held out the parcel. "It's a picture he wanted—"

The nurse promised it should be given. She looked at Campton with a vague benevolence, having evidently never heard his name; and the painter turned away with a cowardly sense that he ought to have taken the picture up himself. But to see the death-change on a face so like his son's, and its look reflected in other anguished faces, was more than he could endure. He turned away.

The next morning Mrs. Talkett wrote that René Davril was better, that the fever had dropped, and that he was lying quietly looking at the sketch. "The only thing that troubles him is that he realizes now that you have not seen his pictures. But he is very happy, and blesses you for your goodness."

His goodness! Campton, staring at the letter, could only curse himself for his stupidity. He saw now that the one thing which might have comforted the poor lad would have been to have his own pictures seen and judged; and that one thing, he, Campton, so many years vainly athirst for the approbation of the men he revered—that one thing he had never thought of doing! The only way of atoning for his negligence was instantly to go out to the suburb where the Davril family lived. Campton, without a scruple, abandoned Mr. Mayhew, with whom he had an appointment at the Embassy and another at the War Office, and devoted the rest of the day to the expedition. It was



after six when he reached the hospital again; and when Mrs. Talkett came down he went up to her impetuously.

"Well—I've seen them; I've seen his pictures, and he's right. They're astonishing! Awkward, still, and hesitating; but with such a sense of air and mass. He'll do things— May I go up and tell him?"

He broke off and looked at her.

"He died an hour ago. If you'd only seen them yesterday!" she said.

### XIII

THE killing of René Davril seemed to Campton one of the most senseless crimes the war had yet perpetrated. It brought home to him, far more vividly than the distant death of poor Jean Fortin, what an incalculable sum of gifts and virtues went to make up the monster's daily meal.

"Ah, you want genius, do you? Mere youth's not enough... and health and gaiety and courage; you want brains in the bud, imagination and poetry, ideas all folded up in their sheath! It takes that, does it, to tempt your jaded appetite?" He was reminded of the rich vulgarians who will eat only things out of season. "That's what war is like," he muttered savagely to himself.

The next morning he went to the funeral with Mrs. Talkett—between whom and himself the tragic episode had created a sort of improvised intimacy—walking at her side through the November rain, behind the poor hearse with the tricolour over it.

At the church, while the few mourners shivered in a damp side chapel, he had time to study the family: a poor sobbing mother, two anæmic little girls, and the lame sister who was musical—a piteous group, smelling of poverty and tears. Behind them, to his surprise, he saw the curly brown head and short-sighted eyes of Boylston. Campton wondered at the latter's presence; then he remembered "The Friends of French Art," and concluded that the association had probably been interested in poor Davril.

With some difficulty he escaped from the thanks of the mother and sisters, and picked up a taxi to take Mrs. Talkett home.

"No—back to the hospital," she said. "A lot of bad cases have come in, and I'm on duty again all day." She spoke as if it were the most natural thing in the world; and he shuddered at the serenity with which women endure the unendurable.

At the hospital he followed her in. The Davril family, she told him, had insisted that they had no claim on his picture, and that it must be returned to him. Mrs. Talkett went up to fetch it; and Campton waited in one of the drawing-rooms. A step sounded behind him, and another nurse came in—but was it a nurse, or some haloed nun from a Umbrian triptych, her pure oval framed in white, her long fingers clasping a book and lily?

"Mme. de Dolmetsch!" he cried; and thought: "A new face again—what an artist!"

She seized his hands.

"I heard from dear Madge Talkett that you were here, and I've asked her to leave us together." She looked at him with ravaged eyes, as if just risen from a penitential vigil.

"Come, please, into my little office: you didn't know that I was the *Infirmière-Major*? My dear friend, what upheavals, what cataclysms! I see no one now: all my days and nights are given to my soldiers."

She glided ahead on noiseless sandals to a little room where a bowl of jade filled with gardenias, and a tortoise-shell box of gold-tipped cigarettes, stood on a desk among torn and discoloured *livrets militaires*. The room was empty, and Mme. de Dolmetsch, closing the door, drew Campton to a seat at her side. So close to her, he saw that the perfect lines of her face were flawed by marks of suffering. "The woman really has a heart," he thought, "or the war couldn't have made her so much handsomer."

Mme. de Dolmetsch leaned closer: a breath of incense floated from her conventional draperies.

"I know why you came," she continued; "you were good to that poor little Davril." She clutched Campton suddenly with a blue-veined hand. "My dear friend, can anything justify such horrors? Isn't it abominable that boys

like that, should be murdered? That some senile old beast of a diplomatist should decree, after a good dinner, that all we love best must be offered up?" She caught his hands again, her liturgical scent enveloping him. "Campton, I know you feel as I do." She paused, pressing his fingers hard, her beautiful mouth trembling. "For God's sake tell me," she implored, "how you've managed to keep your son from the front!"

Campton drew away, red and inarticulate. "I—my son? Those things depend on the authorities. My boy's health..." he stammered.

"Yes, yes; I know. Your George is delicate. But so is Ladislas—dreadfully. The lungs too. I've trembled for him for so long; and now, at any moment..." Two tears gathered on her long lashes and rolled down... "at any moment he may be taken from the War Office, where he's doing invaluable work, and forced into all that blood and horror; he may be brought back to me like those poor creatures upstairs, who are hardly men any longer... mere vivisected animals, without eyes, without faces." She lowered her voice and drew her lids together, so that her very eyes seemed to be whispering. "Ladislas has enemies who are jealous of him (I could give you their names); at this moment someone who ought to be at the front is intriguing to turn him out and get his place. Oh, Campton, you've known this terror—you know what one's nights are like! Have pity—tell me how you managed!"

He had no idea of what he answered, or how he finally got away. Everything that was dearest to him, the thought of George, the vision of the lad dying upstairs, was defiled by this monstrous coupling of their names with that of the supple middle-aged adventurer safe in his spotless uniform at the War Office. And beneath the boiling-up of Campton's disgust a new fear lifted its head. How did Mme. de Dolmetsch know about George? And what did she know? Evidently there had been foolish talk somewhere. Perhaps it was Mrs. Brant—or perhaps Fortin himself. All these great doctors forgot the professional secret with some one woman, if not with many. Had not Fortin revealed to his own wife the reason of

Campton's precipitate visit? The painter escaped from Mme. de Dolmetsch's scented lair, and from the sights and sounds of the hospital, in a state of such perturbation that for a while he stood in the street wondering where he had meant to go next.

He had his own reasons for agreeing to the Davrils' suggestion that the picture should be returned to him; and presently these reasons came back. "They'd never dare to sell it themselves; but why shouldn't I sell it for them?" he had thought, remembering their denuded rooms, and the rusty smell of the women's mourning. It cost him a pang to part with a study of his boy; but he was in a superstitious and expiatory mood, and eager to act on it.

He remembered having been told by Boylston that "The Friends of French Art" had their office in the Palais Royal, and he made his way through the deserted arcades to the door of a once-famous restaurant.

Behind the plate-glass windows young women with rolled-up sleeves and straw in their hair were delving in packing-cases, while, divided from them by an improvised partition, another group were busy piling on the cloak-room shelves garments such as had never before dishonoured them.

Campton stood fascinated by the sight of the things these young women were sorting; pink silk combinations, sporting ulsters in glaring black and white checks, straw hats wreathed with last summer's sunburnt flowers, high-heeled satin shoes split on the instep, and fringed and bugled garments that suggested obsolete names like "dolman" and "mantle," and looked like the costumes dug out of a country-house attic by amateurs preparing to play "Caste." Was it possible that "The Friends of French Art" proposed to clothe the families of fallen artists in these prehistoric properties?

Boylston appeared, flushed and delighted (and with straw in his hair also), and led his visitor up a cork-screw stair. They passed a room where a row of people in shabby mourning like that of the Davril family sat on restaurant chairs before a *caissière's* desk; and at the desk Campton saw Miss Anthony, her veil pushed

back and a card-catalogue at her elbow, listening to a young woman who was dramatically stating her case.

Boylston saw Campton's surprise, and said: "Yes, we're desperately short-handed, and Miss Anthony has deserted her refugees for a day or two to help me to straighten things out."

His own office was in a faded *cabinet particulier* where the dinner-table had been turned into a desk, and the weak-springed divan was weighed down under suits of ready-made clothes bearing the label of a wholesale clothier.

"These are the things we really give them; but they cost a lot of money to buy," Boylston explained. On the divan sat a handsomely dressed elderly lady with a long emaciated face and red eyes, who rose as they entered. Boylston spoke to her in an undertone and led her into another *cabinet*, where Campton saw her tragic figure sink down on the sofa, under a glass scrawled with amorous couplets.

"That was Mme. Beausite... You didn't recognize her? Poor thing! Her youngest boy is blind: his eyes were put out by a shell. She is very unhappy, and she comes here and helps now and then. Beausite? Oh no, we never see *him*. He's only our Honorary President."

Boylston obviously spoke without afterthought; but Campton felt the sting. He too was on the honorary committee.

"Poor woman! What? The young fellow who did Cubist things? I hadn't heard..." He remembered the cruel rumour that Beausite, when his glory began to wane, had encouraged his three sons in three different lines of art, so that there might always be a Beausite in the fashion... "You must have to listen to pretty ghastly stories here," he said.

The young man nodded, and Campton, with less embarrassment than he had expected, set forth his errand. In that atmosphere it seemed natural to be planning ways of relieving misery, and Boylston at once put him at his ease by looking pleased but not surprised.

"You mean to sell the sketch, sir? That will put the Davrils out of anxiety for a long time; and they're in a bad way, as you saw." Boylston undid the parcel, with a respectful: "May I?" and put the canvas on a chair. He gazed at it for

a few moments, the blood rising sensitively over his face till it reached his tight ridge of hair. Campton remembered what George had said of his friend's silent admirations; he was glad the young man did not speak.

When he did, it was to say with a businesslike accent: "We're trying to get up an auction of pictures and sketches—and if we could lead off with this..."

It was Campton's turn to reddens. The possibility was one he had not thought of. If the picture were sold at auction, Anderson Brant would be sure to buy it! But he could not say this to Boylston. He hesitated, and the other, who seemed quick at feeling his way, added at once: "But perhaps you'd rather sell it privately? In that case we should get the money sooner."

It was just the right thing to say: and Campton thanked him and picked up his sketch. But at the door he hesitated, feeling that it became a member of the honorary committee to add something more.

"How are you getting on? Getting all the help you need?"

Boylston smiled. "We need such a lot. People have been very generous: we've had several big sums. But look at those ridiculous clothes down-stairs—we get boxes and boxes of such rubbish! And there are so many applicants, and such hard cases. Take those poor Davrils, for instance. The lame Davril girl has a talent for music: plays the violin. Well, what good does it do her now? The artists are having an awful time. If this war goes on much longer, it won't be only at the front that they'll die."

"Ah—" said Campton. "Well, I'll take this to a dealer—"

On the way down he turned in to greet Miss Anthony. She looked up in surprise, her tired face haloed in tumbling hairpins; but she was too busy to do more than nod across the group about her desk.

At his offer to take her home she shook her head. "I'm here till after seven. Mr. Boylston and I are nearly snowed under. We've got to go down presently and help unpack; and after that I'm due at my refugee canteen at the Nord. It's my night shift."

Campton, on the way back to Mont-



martre, fell to wondering if such excesses of altruism were necessary, or a mere vain overflow of energy. He was terrified by his first close glimpse of the ravages of war; and the efforts of the little band struggling to heal them seemed pitifully ineffectual. No doubt they did good here and there, made a few lives less intolerable; but how the insatiable monster must laugh at them as he spread his red havoc wider!

On reaching home, he forgot everything at sight of a letter from George. He had not had one for two weeks, and this interruption, just as the military mails were growing more regular, had made him anxious. But it was the usual letter: brief, cheerful, inexpressive. Apparently there was no change in George's situation, nor any wish on his part that there should be. He grumbled humorously at the dullness of his work and the monotony of life in the war-zone town; and wondered whether, if this sort of thing went on, there might not soon be some talk of leave. And just at the end of his affectionate and unsatisfactory two pages, Campton lit on a name that roused him.

"I saw a fellow who'd seen Benny Upsher yesterday on his way to the English front. The young lunatic looked very fit. You know he volunteered in the English

army when he found he couldn't get into the French. He's likely to get all the fighting he wants." It was a relief to know that someone had seen Benny Upsher lately. The letter was but four days old, and he was then on his way to the front. Probably he was not yet in the fighting he wanted, and one could, without remorse, call up an unmutilated face and clear blue eyes.

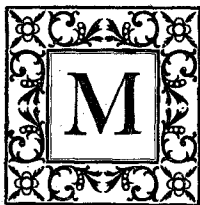
Campton, re-reading the postscript, was struck by a small thing. George had originally written "I saw Benny Upsher yesterday," and had then altered the phrase to: "I saw a fellow who'd seen Benny Upsher." There was nothing out of the way in that: it simply showed that he had written in haste and revised the sentence. But he added: "The young lunatic looked very fit." Well: that too was natural. It was "the fellow" who reported Benny as looking fit; the phrase was rather elliptic, but Campton could hardly have said why it gave him the impression that it was George himself who had seen Upsher. The idea was manifestly absurd, since there was the length of the front between George's staff-town and the fiery pit yawning for his cousin. Campton laid aside the letter with the distinct wish that his son had not called Benny Upsher a young lunatic.

(To be continued.)

## Recent Trends in Protestantism

BY CHARLES FOSTER KENT

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ONSIGNOR BICKERSTAFFE-DREW, head of the Allied chaplains in the Great War and also chaplain of the late pope, had been telling fascinating tales of the way in

which, during the strenuous war days, all faiths worshipped together under the same roof and vied with each other in acts of kindly service. With evident ap-

proval, he had told of the Jewish rabbi who, in the absence of a priest, had administered the last sacrament to a Roman Catholic soldier, and how he himself had knelt down in the trenches and prayed with a dying Scotch Presbyterian. The moment seemed opportune, and so, over the tea-cups, I asked him what he thought of the possibility of Christian unity.

With a captivating smile he replied: "I am going to be saucy! I have heard