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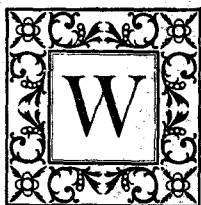
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A Son at the Front

BY EDITH WHARTON

XIV



WHEN Campton took his sketch of George to Léonce Black, the dealer who specialized in "Camptons," he was surprised at the magnitude of the sum which the great picture-broker, lounging in a glossy War Office uniform among his Gauguins and Vuilards, immediately offered.

Léonce Black noted his surprise and smiled. "You think there's nothing doing nowadays? Don't you believe it, Mr. Campton. Now that the big men have stopped painting, the collectors are all the keener to snap up what's left in their portfolios." He placed the cheque in Campton's hand, and drew back to study the effect of the sketch, which he had slipped into a frame against a velvet curtain. "Ah—" he said, as if he were tasting an old wine.

As Campton turned to go the dealer's enthusiasm bubbled over. "Haven't you got anything more? Remember me if you have."

"I don't sell my sketches," said Campton. "This was exceptional—for a charity..."

"I know, I know. Well, you're likely to have a good many more calls of the same sort before we get *this* war over," the dealer remarked philosophically. "Anyhow, remember I can place anything you'll give me. When people want a Campton it's to me they come. I've got standing orders from two clients... both given before the war, and both good today."

Campton paused in the doorway, seized by his old fear of the painting's passing into Anderson Brant's possession.

"Look here: where is this one going?"

The dealer cocked his handsome grey head and glanced archly through plump eyelids. "Violation of professional secrecy? Well... Well... under constraint I'll confess it's to a young lady: great admirer, artist herself. Had her order by cable from New York a year ago. Been on the lookout ever since."

"Oh, all right," Campton answered, re-pocketing the money.

He set out at once for the "Friends of French Art," and Léonce Black, bound for the Ministry of War, walked by his side, regaling him alternately with the gossip of the Ministry and with racy anecdotes of the dealers' world. In M. Black's opinion the war was an inexcusable blunder, since Germany was getting to be the best market for the kind of freak painters out of whom dealers who "know how to make a man 'foam'" can make a big turn-over. "I don't know what on earth will become of all those poor devils now: Paris cared for them only because she knew Germany would give any money for their things. Personally, as you know, I've always preferred sounder goods: I'm a classic, my dear Campton, and I can feel only classic art," said the dealer, swelling out his uniformed breast and stroking his Assyrian nose as though its handsome curve followed the pure Delphic line. "But, as long as things go on as they are at present in *my* department of the administration, the war's not going to end in a hurry," he continued. "And now we're

in for it, we've got to see the thing through."

Campton found Boylston, as usual, in his melancholy *cabinet particulier*. He was listening to the tale of a young woman with streaming eyes and an extravagant hat. She was so absorbed in her trouble that she did not notice Campton's entrance, and behind her back the painter made a sign to say that she was not to be interrupted.

He was as much interested in the suppliant's tale as in watching Boylston's way of listening. That modest and commonplace-looking young man was beginning to excite a lively curiosity in Campton. It was not only that he remembered George's commendation, for he knew that the generous enthusiasms of youth may be inspired by trifles imperceptible to the older. It was Boylston himself who interested the painter. He knew no more of the young man than the scant details Miss Anthony could give. Boylston, it appeared, was the oldest hope of a well-to-do Connecticut family. On his leaving college a place had been reserved for him in the paternal business; but he had announced good-humouredly that he did not mean to spend his life in an office, and one day, after a ten minutes' conversation with his father, as to which details were lacking, he had packed a suitcase and sailed for France. There he had lived ever since, in shabby rooms in the rue de Verneuil, on the scant allowance remitted by an irate parent: apparently never running into debt, yet always ready to help a friend.

All the American art-students in Paris knew Boylston; and though he was still in the early thirties, they all looked up to him. For Boylston had one quality which always impresses youth: Boylston knew everybody. Whether you went with him to a smart restaurant in the rue Royale, or to a wine-shop of the Left Bank, the *patron* welcomed him with the same cordiality, and sent the same emphatic instructions to the cook. The first fresh peas and the tenderest spring chicken were always for this quiet youth, who, when he was alone, dined cheerfully on veal and *vin ordinaire*. If you wanted to know where to get the best Burgundy, Boylston could tell you; he could also tell

you where to buy an engagement ring for your girl, a Ford runabout going at half-price, or the *papier timbré* on which to address a summons to a recalcitrant laundress.

If you got into a row with your landlady you found that Boylston knew her, and that at sight of him she melted and withdrew her claim; or, failing this, he knew the solicitor in whose office her son was a clerk, or had other means of reducing her to reason. Boylston also knew a man who could make old clocks go, another who could clean flannels without their shrinking, and a third who could get you old picture-frames for a song; and, best of all, when any inexperienced American youth was caught in the dark Parisian cobweb (and the people at home were on no account to hear about it) Boylston was found to be the friend and familiar of certain occult authorities who, with a smile and a word of warning, could break the mesh and free the victim.

The mystery was, how and why all these people did what Boylston wanted; but the reason began to dawn on Campton as he watched the young woman in the foolish hat deliver herself of her grievance. Boylston was simply a perfect listener—and most of his life was spent in listening. Everything about him listened: his round forehead and peering screwed-up eyes, his lips twitching responsively under the close-clipped moustache, and every crease and dimple of his sagacious and humorous young countenance; even the attitude of his short fat body, with elbows comfortably bedded in heaped-up papers, and plump brown fingers plunged into his crinkled hair. There was never a hint of hurry or impatience about him: having once asserted his right to do what he liked with his life, he was apparently content to let all his friends prey on it as they pleased. You never caught his eye on the clock, or his lips shaping an answer before you had turned the last corner of your story. Yet when the story was told, and he had surveyed it in all its bearings, you could be sure he would do what he could for you, and do it before the day was over.

"Very well, Mademoiselle," he said, when the young woman had finished. "I

promise you I'll see Mme. Beausite, and try to get her to recognize your claim."

"Mind you, I don't ask charity—I won't *take* charity from your committee!" the young lady hissed, gathering up a tawdry hand-bag.

"Oh, we're not forcing it on any one," smiled Boylston, opening the door for her.

When he turned back to Campton his face was flushed and frowning. "Poor thing! She's a nuisance, but I'll fight to the last ditch for her. The chap she lives with was Beausite's secretary and understudy, and devilled for him before the war. The poor fellow has come back from the front a complete wreck, and can't even collect the salary Beausite owes him for the last three months before the war. Beausite's plea is that he's too poor, and that the war lets him out of paying. Of course he counts on our doing it for him."

"And you're not going to?"

"Well," said Boylston humorously, "I shouldn't wonder if he beat us in the long run. But I'll have a try first; and anyhow the poor girl needn't know. She used to earn a little money doing fashion-articles, but of course there's no market for that now, and I don't see how the pair can live. They have a little boy, and there's an infirm mother, and they're waiting to get married till the girl can find a job."

"Good Lord!" Campton groaned, with a sudden vision of the countless little trades and traffics arrested by the war, and all the industrious thousands reduced to querulous pauperism or slow death.

"How *do* they live—all these people?"

"They don't—always. I could tell you——"

"Don't, for God's sake; I can't stand it." Campton drew out the cheque. "Here: this is what I've got for the Davrils."

"Good Lord!" said Boylston, staring with round eyes.

"It will pull them through, anyhow, won't it?" Campton triumphed.

"Well—" said Boylston: "It will if you'll endorse it," he added, smiling. Campton laughed and took up a pen.

A day or two later Campton, returning home one afternoon, overtook a small

black-veiled figure with a limp like his own. He guessed at once that it was the lame Davril girl, come to thank him; and his dislike of such ceremonies caused him to glance about for a way of escape. But as he did so the girl turned with a smile that put him to shame. He remembered Adele Anthony's saying, one day when he had found her in her refugee office patiently undergoing a like ordeal: "We've no right to refuse the only coin they can repay us in."

The Davril girl was a plain likeness of her brother, with the same hungry flame in her eyes. She wore the nondescript black that Campton had remarked at the funeral; and knowing the importance which the French attach to every detail of conventional mourning, he wondered that mother and daughter had not laid out part of his gift in crape. But doubtless the equally strong instinct of thrift had caused Mme. Davril to put away the whole sum.

Mlle. Davril greeted Campton pleasantly, and assured him that she had not found the long way from Villejuif to Montmartre too difficult.

"I would have gone to you," the painter protested; but she answered that she wanted to see with her own eyes where her brother's friend lived.

In the studio she looked about her with a quick searching glance, said "Oh, a piano—" as if the fact were connected with the object of her errand—and then, settling herself in an armchair, unclasped her shabby hand-bag.

"Monsieur, there has been a misunderstanding; this money is not ours," she said, laying Campton's cheque on the table.

A flush of annoyance rose to the painter's face. What on earth had Boylston let him in for? If the Davrils were as proud as all that it was not worth while to have sold a sketch it had cost him such a pang to part with. He felt the exasperation of the would-be philanthropist when he first discovers that nothing complicates life as much as doing good.

"But, Mademoiselle——"

"This money is not ours. If René had lived he would never have sold your picture; and we would starve rather than betray his trust."

When stout ladies in velvet declare that they would starve rather than sacrifice this or that principle, the statement has only the cold beauty of rhetoric; but on the drawn lips of a thinly-clad young woman evidently acquainted with the process, it becomes a fiery reality.

"Starve—nonsense! My dear young lady, you betray him when you talk like that," said Campton, moved by her passion.

She shook her head. "It depends, Monsieur, which things count most to one. We shall never—my mother and I—do anything that René would not have done. The picture was not ours: we brought it back to you—"

"But if the picture's not yours it's mine," Campton interrupted; "and I'd a right to sell it, and a right to do what I choose with the money."

His visitor smiled. "That's what we feel; it was what I was coming to." And clasping her threadbare glove-tips about the arms of the chair Mlle. Davril set forth with extreme precision the object of her visit.

It was to propose that Campton should hand over the cheque to the "Friends of French Art," devoting one-third to the aid of the families of combatant painters, the rest to young musicians and authors. "It doesn't seem right that only the painters' families should benefit by what your committee are doing. And René would have thought so too. He knew so many young men of letters and journalists who, before the war, just managed to keep their families alive; and in my profession I could tell you of poor music-teachers and accompanists whose work stopped the day war broke out, and who have been living ever since on the crusts their luckier comrades could spare them. René would have let us accept from you help that was shared with others: he would have been so glad, often, of a few francs to relieve the misery we see about us. And this great sum might be the beginning of a cooperative work for artists ruined by the war."

She went on to explain that in the families of almost all the young artists at the front there was at least one member at home who practised one of the arts, or who was capable of doing some kind of

useful work. The value of Campton's gift, Mlle. Davril argued, would be tripled if it were so employed as to give the artists and their families occupation: producing at least the illusion that those who could were earning their living, or helping their less fortunate comrades. "It's not only a question of saving their dignity: I don't believe much in that. You have dignity or you haven't—and if you have, it doesn't need any saving," this clear-toned young woman remarked. "The real question, for all of us artists, is that of keeping our hands in, and our interest in our work alive; sometimes, too, of giving a new talent its first chance. At any rate, it would mean work and not stagnation; which is all that most charity produces."

She developed her plan: for the musicians, concerts in private houses, (hence her glance at the piano); for the painters, small exhibitions in the rooms of the committee, where their pictures would be sold with a deduction of twenty per cent, to be returned to the general fund; and for the writers—well, their lot was perhaps the hardest to deal with; but an employment agency might be opened, where those who chose could put their names down and take such work as was offered. Above all, Mlle. Davril again insisted, the fund created by Campton's gift was to be devoted only to giving employment, not to mere relief.

Campton listened with growing attention. Nothing hitherto had been less in the line of his interests than the large schemes of general amelioration which were coming to be classed under the transatlantic term of "Social Welfare." If questioned on the subject a few months earlier he would probably have concealed his fundamental indifference under the profession of an extreme individualism, and the assertion of every man's right to suffer and starve in his own way. Even since René Davril's death had brought home to him the boundless havoc of the war, he had felt no more than the impulse to ease his own pain by putting his hand in his pocket when a particular case was too poignant to be ignored.

Yet here were people who had already offered their dearest to France, and were now pleading to be allowed to give all the rest; and who had had the courage and

wisdom to think out in advance the form in which their gift would do most good. Campton had the awe of the unpractical man for anyone who knows how to apply his ideas. He felt that there was no use in disputing Mlle. Davril's plan; he must either agree to it or repocket his cheque.

"I'll do as you want, of course; but I'm not much good about details. Hadn't you better consult some one else?" he suggested.

Oh, that was already done: she had outlined her project to Miss Anthony and Mr. Boylston, who approved. All she wanted was Campton's consent; and this he gave the more cordially when he learned that, for the present at least, nothing more was expected of him. First steps in beneficence, he felt, were unspeakably terrifying; yet he was already aware that, resist as he might, he would never be able to keep his footing on the brink of that abyss.

Into it, as the days went by, his gaze was oftener and oftener plunged. He had begun to feel that pity was his only remaining link with his kind, the one barrier between himself and the dreadful solitude which awaited him when he returned to his studio. What would there have been to think of there, alone among his unfinished pictures and his broken memories, if not the wants and woes of people more bereft than himself? His own future was not a thing to dwell on. George was safe; but what George and he were likely to make of each other after the ordeal was over was a question he preferred to put aside. He was more and more taking George and his safety for granted, as a solid standing-ground from which to reach out a hand to the thousands struggling in the depths. As long as the world's fate was in the balance it was every man's duty to throw into that balance his last ounce of brain and muscle. Campton wondered how he had ever thought that an accident of birth, a remoteness merely geographical, could justify, or even make possible, an attitude of moral aloofness. Harvey Mayhew's reasons for wishing to annihilate Germany began to seem less grotesque than his own for standing aside.

In the heat of his conversion he no longer grudged the hours given to Mr.

Mayhew. He patiently led his truculent relative from one government office to another, everywhere laying stress on Mr. Mayhew's sympathy with France and his desire to advocate her cause in the United States, and trying to curtail his enumeration of his grievances by a glance at the clock, and the reminder that they had another Minister to see. Mr. Mayhew was not very manageable. His adventure had grown with repetition, and he was increasingly disposed to feel that the retaliation he called down on Germany could best be justified by telling every one what he had suffered from her. Intensely aware of the value of time in Utica, he was less sensible to it in Paris, and seemed to think that, since he had left a flourishing business to preach the Holy War, other people ought to leave their affairs to give him a hearing. But his zeal and persistence were irresistible, and doors which Campton had seen barred against the most reasonable appeals flew open at the sound of Mr. Mayhew's trumpet. His pink face and silvery hair gave him an apostolic air, and circles to which America had hitherto been a mere speck in space suddenly discovered that he represented that legendary character, the Typical American.

The keen Boylston, prompt to note and utilize the fact, urged Campton to interest Mr. Mayhew in the "Friends of French Art," and with considerable flourish the former Peace Delegate was produced at a committee meeting and given his head. But his interest flagged when he found that the "Friends" concerned themselves with Atrocities only in so far as any act of war is one, and that their immediate task was the humdrum one of feeding and clothing the families of the combatants, and sending "comforts" to the trenches. He served up, with a somewhat dog-eared eloquence, the usual account of his own experiences, and pressed a modest gift upon the treasurer; but when he departed, after wringing everybody's hands, and leaving the French members bedewed with emotion, Campton had the conviction that their quiet weekly meetings would not often be fluttered by his presence.

Campton was spending an increasing amount of time in the Palais Royal res-

taurant, where he performed any drudgery for which no initiative was required. Once or twice, when Miss Anthony was submerged by a fresh influx of refugees, he lent her a hand too; and on most days he dropped in late at her office, waited for her to sift and dismiss the last applicants, and saw her home through the incessant rain. It interested him to note that the altruism she had so long wasted on pampered friends was developing into a wise and orderly beneficence. He had always thought of her as an eternal school girl; now she had grown into a woman. Sometimes he fancied the change dated from the moment when their eyes had met across the station, the day they had seen George off. He wondered whether it might not be interesting to paint her new face, if ever painting became again thinkable.

"Passion—I suppose the great thing is a capacity for passion," he mused.

In himself he imagined the capacity to be quite dead. He loved his son: yes—but he was beginning to see that he loved him for certain qualities he had read into him, and that perhaps after all—. Well, perhaps after all the sin for which he was now atoning in loneliness was that of having been too exclusively an artist, of having cherished George too egotistically and self-indulgently, too much as his own most beautiful creation. If he had loved him more humanly, more tenderly and recklessly, might he have not put into his son the tenderness and recklessness which were beginning to seem to him the qualities most supremely human?

XV

A WEEK or two later, coming home late from a long day's work at the office, Campton saw Mme. Lebel awaiting him.

He always stopped for a word now; fearing each time that there was bad news of Jules Lebel, but not wishing to seem to avoid her.

To-day, however, Mme. Lebel, though mysterious, was not anxious.

"Monsieur will find the studio open. There's a lady: she insisted on going up."

"A lady? Why did you let her in? What kind of a lady?"

"A lady—well, a lady with such mag-

nificent furs that one couldn't keep her out in the cold," Mme. Lebel answered with simplicity.

Campton went up apprehensively. The idea of unknown persons in possession of his studio always made him nervous. Whoever they were, whatever errands they came on, they always—especially women—disturbed the tranquil course of things, faced him with unexpected problems, unsettled him in one way or another. Bouncing in on people suddenly was like dynamiting fish: it left him with his mind full of fragments of dismembered thoughts.

As he entered he perceived from the temperate atmosphere that Mme. Lebel had not only opened the studio but made up the fire. The lady's furs must indeed be magnificent.

She sat at the farther end of the room, in a high-backed chair near the stove, and when she rose he recognized his former wife. The long sable cloak, which had slipped back over the chair, justified Mme. Lebel's description, but the dress beneath it appeared to Campton simpler than Mrs. Brant's habitual raiment. The lamplight, striking up into her powdered face, puffed out her underlids and made harsh hollows in her cheeks. She looked frightened, ill and yet determined.

"John—" she began, laying her hand on his sleeve.

It was the first time she had ever set foot in his shabby quarters, and in his astonishment he could only stammer out: "Julia——"

But as he looked at her he saw that her face was wet with tears. "Not—bad news?" he broke out.

She shook her head and, drawing a handkerchief from a diamond-monogrammed bag, wiped away the tears and the powder. Then she pressed the handkerchief to her lips, gazing at him with eyes as helpless as a child's.

"Sit down," said Campton.

As they faced each other across the long table, with papers and paint-rags and writing materials pushed aside to make room for the threadbare napkin on which his plate and glass, and bottle of *vin ordinaire*, were set out, he wondered if the scene woke in her any memory of their first days of gaiety and poverty, or if she

merely pitied him for still living in such squalor. And suddenly it occurred to him that when the war was over, and George came back, it would be pleasant to hunt out a little apartment in an old house in the Faubourg St. Germain, put some good furniture in it, and oppose the discreeter charm of such an interior to the heavy splendours of the Avenue Marigny. How could he expect to hold a luxury-loving youth if he had only this dingy studio to receive him in?

Mrs. Brant began to speak.

"I came here to see you because I didn't wish any one to know; not Adele, nor even Anderson." Leaning toward him she went on in short breathless sentences: "I've just left Madge Talkett: you know her, I think? She's at Mme. de Dolmetsch's hospital. Something dreadful has happened... too dreadful. It seems that Mme. de Dolmetsch was very much in love with Ladislav Isador; a writer, wasn't he? I don't know his books, but Madge tells me they're wonderful... and of course men like that ought not to be sent to the front..."

"Men like what?"

"Geniuses," said Mrs. Brant. "He was dreadfully delicate besides, and was doing wonderful work on some military commission in Paris; I believe he knew any number of languages. And poor Mme. de Dolmetsch—you know I've never approved of her; but things are so changed nowadays, and at any rate she was madly attached to him, and had done everything to keep him in Paris: medical certificates, people at Headquarters working for her, and all the rest. But it seems there are no end of officers always intriguing to get staff-jobs: strong able-bodied young men who ought to be in the trenches, and are fit for nothing else, but who are jealous of the others. And last week, in spite of all she could do, poor Isador was ordered to the front."

Campton made an impatient movement. It was even more distasteful to him to be appealed to by Mrs. Brant in Isador's name than by Mme. de Dolmetsch in George's. His gorge rose at the thought that people should associate in their minds cases as different as those of his son and Mme. de Dolmetsch's lover.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But if you've come to ask me to do something more about George—take any new steps—it's no use. I can't do the sort of thing to keep my son safe that Mme. de Dolmetsch would do for her lover."

Mrs. Brant stared. "Safe? He was killed the day after he got to the front."

"Good Lord—Isador?"

Ladislav Isador killed at the front! The words remained unmeaning; by no effort could Campton relate them to the fat middle-aged philanderer with his Jewish eyes, his Slav eloquence, his Levantine gift for getting on, and for getting out from under. Campton tried to picture the clever contriving devil drawn in his turn into that merciless red eddy, and gulped down the Monster's throat with the rest. What a mad world it was, in which the same horrible and magnificent doom awaited the coward and the hero!

"Poor Mme. de Dolmetsch!" he muttered, remembering with a sense of remorse her desperate appeal and his curt rebuff. Once again the poor creature's love had enlightened her, and she had foreseen what no one else in the world would have believed: that her lover was to die like a hero.

"Isador was nearly forty, and had a weak heart; and she'd left nothing, literally nothing, undone to save him." Campton read in his wife's eyes what was coming. "It's impossible *now* that George should not be taken," Mrs. Brant went on.

The same thought had tightened Campton's own heart-strings; but he had hoped she would not say it.

"It may be George's turn any day," she insisted.

They sat and looked at each other without speaking; then she began again imploringly: "I tell you there's not a moment to be lost!"

Campton picked up a palette-knife and began absently to rub it with an oily rag. Mrs. Brant's anguished voice still sounded on. "Unless something is done immediately... It appears there's a regular hunt for *embusqués*, as they're called. As if it was everybody's business to be killed! How's the staff-work to be carried on if they're all taken? But it's certain that if

we don't act at once... act energetically..."

He fixed his eyes on hers. "Why do you come to *me*?" he asked.

Her lids opened wide. "But he's our child."

"Your husband knows more people—he has ways, you've often told me—"

She reddened faintly and seemed about to speak; but the reply died on her lips.

"Why did you say," Campton pursued, "that you had come here because you wanted to see me without Brant's knowing it?"

She lowered her eyes and fixed them on the knife he was still automatically rubbing.

"Because Anderson thinks... Anderson won't... He says he's done all he can."

"Ah—" cried Campton, drawing a deep breath.

"Well—?"

He threw back his shoulders, as if to shake off an oppressive weight. "I—feel exactly as Brant does."

"You—you feel as he does? You, George's father? But a father has never done all he can for his son! There's always something more that he can do!"

The words, breaking from her in a cry, seemed suddenly to change her from an ageing doll into a living and agonized woman. Campton had never before felt as near to her, as moved to the depths by her. For the length of a heart-beat he saw her again with a red-haired baby in her arms, the light of morning on her face.

"My dear—I'm sorry," he said, his hand on hers.

"Sorry—sorry? I don't want you to be sorry. I want you to do something—I want you to save him!"

He faced her with bent head, gazing absently down on their interwoven fingers: each hand had forgotten to release the other.

"I can't do anything more," he repeated.

She started up with a despairing exclamation. "What's happened to you? Who has influenced you? What has changed you?"

How could he answer her? He hardly knew himself: had hardly been conscious of the change till she suddenly flung it in

his face. If blind animal passion be the profoundest as well as the fiercest form of attachment, his love for his boy was at that moment as nothing to hers. Yet his feeling for George, in spite of all the phrases he dressed it in, had formerly in its essence been no other. That his boy should survive—survive at any price—that had been all he cared for or sought to achieve. It had been convenient to justify himself by arguing that George was not bound to fight for France; but Campton now knew that he would have made the same effort to protect his son if the country engaged had been his own.

In the careless pre-war world, as George himself had once said, it had seemed unbelievable that people should ever again go off and die in a ditch to oblige anybody. Even now, the automatic obedience of the millions of the untaught and the unthinking, though it had its deep pathetic significance, did not move Campton like the clear-eyed sacrifice of the few who knew why they were dying. Jean Fortin, René Davril, and such lads as young Louis Dastrey, with his reasoned horror of butchery and waste in general, and his instant grasp of the necessity of this particular sacrifice: these were the victims who had first shed light on the dark problem.

Campton had never before, at least consciously, thought of himself and the few beings he cared for as part of a greater whole, component elements of the immense amazing spectacle. But the last four months had shown him man as a defenseless animal suddenly torn from his shell, stripped of all the interwoven tendrils of association, habit, background, daily ways and words, daily sights and sounds, and flung out of the human habitable world into naked ether, where nothing breathes or lives. That was what war did; that was why those who best understood it in all its farthest-reaching abomination willingly gave their lives to put an end to it.

He heard Mrs. Brant softly crying.

"Julia," he said, "Julia, I wish you'd try to see..."

She dashed away her tears. "See what? All I see is *you*, sitting here safe and saying you can do nothing to save him! But to have the right to say that

you ought to be in the trenches yourself! What do you suppose those young men out there think of their fathers, safe at home, who are too high-minded and conscientious to protect them?"

He looked at her compassionately. "Yes," he said, "that's the bitterest part of it. But for that, there would hardly be anything in the worst war for us old people to lie awake about."

Mrs. Brant had stood up and was feverishly pulling on her gloves: he saw that she no longer heard him. He helped her to draw her furs about her, and stood waiting while she straightened her veil and tapped the waves of hair into place, her eyes blindly seeking for a mirror. There was nothing more that either could say.

He lifted the lamp, and went out of the door ahead of her.

"You needn't come down," she said in a sob; but leaning over the rail into the darkness he answered: "I'll give you a light: the concierge has forgotten the lamp on the stairs."

He went ahead of her down the long greasy flights, and as they reached the ground floor he heard a noise of feet coming and going, and frightened voices exclaiming in the porter's lodge. In the doorway Mrs. Brant's splendid chauffeur stood looking on compassionately at a group of women gathered about Mme. Lebel.

The old woman sat in her den, her arms stretched across the table, her sewing in a heap at her feet. On the table lay an open letter. The grocer's wife from the corner stood by, sobbing.

Mrs. Brant stopped involuntarily, and Campton, sure of what was coming, pushed his way through the neighbours about the door. Mme. Lebel's eyes met his with the mute reproach of a tortured animal. "Jules," she said, "last Wednesday . . . through the heart."

Campton took her old withered hand. The women ceased sobbing and a hush fell upon the stifling little room. When Campton looked up again he saw Julia Brant, pale and bewildered, hurrying toward her motor; and the vault of the porte-cochère sent back the chauffeur's answer to her startled question: "Poor old lady—yes, it's her only son who's been killed at the front."

XVI

CAMPTON sat with his friend Dastrey in the latter's pleasant little *entresol* crowded with Chinese lacquer and Venetian furniture.

Dastrey, in the last days of January, had been sent home from his ambulance with an attack of rheumatism; and when it became clear that he could no longer be of use in the mud and cold of the army zone he had reluctantly taken his place behind a desk at the Ministry of War. The friends had dined early, so that he might get back to his night-shift; and they sat over coffee and liqueurs, the mist of their cigars floating across lustrous cabinet-fronts and the worn gilding of slender consoles.

On the other side of the hearth young Boylston, sunk in an armchair, smoked and listened.

"It always comes back to the same thing," Campton was saying nervously. "What right have useless old men like me, sitting here with my cigar by this good fire, to preach blood and butchery to boys like George and your nephew?"

Again and again, during the days since Mrs. Brant's visit, he had turned over in his mind the same torturing question. How was he to answer that last taunt of hers?

Not long ago, Paul Dastrey would have seemed the last person to whom he could have submitted such a problem. Dastrey, in the black August days, starting for the front in such a frenzy of baffled blood-lust, had remained for Campton the type of man with whom it was impossible to discuss the war. But three months of hard and courageous service in *Postes de Secours* and along the awful battle-edge had sent him home with a mind no longer befogged by personal problems. He had done his utmost, and knew it; and the fact gave him the professional calm which keeps surgeons and nurses steady through all the horrors they live among. Those few months at the front had matured and mellowed him more than a lifetime of Paris.

He leaned back with half-closed lids, dispassionately considering his friend's difficulty.

"I see. Your idea is that, being unable

to do even the humble kind of job that I've been assigned to, you've no right *not* to try to keep your boy out of it if you can?"

"Well—by any honourable means."

Dastrey laughed faintly, and Campton reddened. "The word's not happy, I admit."

"I wasn't thinking of that: I was considering how the meaning had evaporated out of lots of our old words, as if the general smash-up had broken their stoppers. So many of them, you see," said Dastrey smiling, "we'd taken good care not to uncork for centuries. Since I've been on the edge of what's going on fifty miles from here a good many of my own words have lost their meaning, and I'm not prepared to say where honour lies in a case like yours." He mused a moment, and then went on: "What would George's view be?"

Campton did not immediately reply. Not so many weeks ago he would have welcomed the chance of explaining that George's view, thank God, had remained perfectly detached and objective, and that the cheerful acceptance of duties forcibly imposed on him had not in the least obscured his sense of the fundamental injustice of his being mixed up in the thing at all.

But how could he say this now? If George's view were still what his father had been in the habit of saying it was, then he held that view alone: Campton himself no longer thought that any civilized man could afford to stand aside from such a conflict.

"As far as I know," he said, "George hasn't changed his mind."

Boylston stirred in his armchair, knocked the ash from his cigar, and looked up at the ceiling.

"Whereas *you*—" Dastrey suggested.

"Yes," said Campton. "I feel differently. You speak of the difference of having been in contact with what's going on out there. But how can anybody *not* be in contact, who has any imagination, any sense of right and wrong? Do these pictures and hangings ever shut it out from you—or those books over there, when you turn to them after your day's work? Perhaps they do, because you've got a real job, a job you've been ordered

to do, and can't not do. But for a useless drifting devil like me—my God, the sights and the sounds of it are always with me!"

"There are a good many people who wouldn't call you useless, Mr. Campton," said Boylston.

Campton shook his head. "I wish there were any healing in the kind of thing I'm doing; perhaps there is to you, to whom it appears to come naturally to love your kind." (Boylston laughed.) "Service is of no use without conviction: that's one of the uncomfortable truths this stir-up has brought to the surface. I was meant to paint pictures in a world at peace, and I should have more respect for myself if I could go on unconcernedly doing it, instead of pining to be in all the places where I'm not wanted, and should be of no earthly use. That's why—" he paused, looked about him, and sought understanding in Dastrey's friendly gaze: "That's why I respect George's opinion, which really consists in not having any, and simply doing without comment the work assigned to him. The whole thing is so far beyond human measure that one's individual rage and revolt seem of no more use than a woman's scream at an accident she isn't in."

As he spoke, Campton knew that he was only arguing against himself. He did not in the least believe that any individual sentiment counted for nothing at such a time, and Dastrey really spoke for him in rejoining: "Every one can at least contribute an attitude: as you have, my dear fellow. Boylston's here to confirm it."

Boylston grunted his assent.

"An attitude—an attitude?" Campton retorted. "The word is revolting to me! Anything a man like me can do is too easy to be worth doing. And as for anything one can *say*: how dare one say anything, in the face of what is being done out there to keep this room and this fire and this ragged end of life safe for such survivals as you and me?" Campton crossed to the table to take another cigar. As he did so he laid an apologetic pressure on his host's shoulder. "Men of our age are the chorus of the tragedy, Dastrey: we can't help ourselves. As soon as I open my lips to

blame or praise I see myself in white petticoats, with a long beard held on by an elastic, goading on the combatants in a cracked voice from a safe corner of the ramparts. On the whole I'd sooner be spinning among the women."

"Well," said Dastrey, getting up, "I've got to get back to my spinning: where, by the way, there are some very pretty young women at the distaff. It's extraordinary how much better pretty girls type than plain ones: I see now why they get all the jobs."

The three went out into the winter blackness. They were all used by this time to the new Paris: to extinguished lamps, shuttered windows, empty streets, the almost total cessation of wheeled traffic. All through the winter, life had seemed in suspense everywhere, as much on the battle-front as in the rear. Day after day, week after week, of rain and sleet and mud; day after day, week after week, of vague non-committal news from west and east; everywhere the enemy baffled but still menacing, everywhere death, suffering, destruction, without any perceptible oscillation of the scales, any compensating hope of good to come out of the long slow endless waste. The benumbed and darkened Paris of those February days seemed the visible image of a benumbed and darkened world.

Down the asphalt sheeted with fine rain the rare street lights stretched their interminable reflections. The three men crossed the bridge and stood watching the rush of the Seine. Below them gloomed the vague bulk of deserted bath-houses, unlit barges, river-steamers out of commission. The Seine too had ceased to live: only a single orange gleam, low on the water's edge, undulated on the jetty waves like a long streamer of seaweed.

The two Americans left Dastrey at his Ministry, and the painter strolled on to Boylston's lodging before descending to the underground railway. He, whom his lameness had made so heavy and indolent, now limped about for hours at a time over wet pavements and under streaming skies: these midnight tramps had become a sort of expiatory need to him. "Out there—out there, if they had these wet stones under them they'd think it was

the floor of heaven!" he used to muse, driving on obstinately through the mud and darkness.

The thought of "Out there" besieged him day and night, the phrase was always in his ears. Wherever he went he was pursued by visions of that land of doom: visions of fathomless mud, rat-haunted trenches, freezing nights under the sleety sky, men dying in the barbed wire between the lines, or crawling out to save a comrade and being shattered to death on the return. His collaboration with Boylston had brought Campton into close contact with these things. He knew by heart the history of scores and scores of young men of George's age who were doggedly suffering and dying a few hours away from the Palais Royal office where their records were kept. Some of these histories were so heroically simple that the sense of pain was lost in beauty, as though one were looking at suffering transmuted into poetry. But others were abominable, unendurable, in their long-drawn useless horror: stories of cold and filth and hunger, of ineffectual effort, of hideous mutilation, of men dying of thirst in a shell-hole, and half-dismembered bodies dragging themselves back to shelter only to perish as they reached it. Worst of all were the perpetually recurring reports of military blunders, medical neglect, carelessness in high places: the torturing knowledge of the lives that might have been saved if this or that officer's brain, this or that surgeon's hand, had acted more promptly. A disheartening impression of waste, confusion, ignorance, obstinacy, prejudice, and the indifference of selfishness or of mortal fatigue, emanated from these narratives written home from the front, or faltered out by white lips on hospital pillows.

The "Friends of French Art," especially since they had enlarged their range, had to do with young men accustomed to the freest play of thought and criticism. A nation in arms does not judge a war as simply as an army of professional soldiers. All these young intelligences were so many subtly-adjusted instruments for the testing of the machinery of which they formed a part; and not one accepted the results passively. Yet in one respect all were agreed: the "had to be" of the first

days was still on every lip. The German menace must be met: chance willed that theirs should be the generation to meet it; and on that point speculation was vain, discussion useless. The question that stirred them all was how the country they were defending was helping them to carry on the struggle. There the evidence was cruelly clear, the comment often scathingly explicit; and Campton, bending still farther over the abyss, caught a shuddering glimpse of what might be—must be—if political blunders, inertia, tolerance, perhaps even evil ambitions and connivances, should at last outweigh the effort of the front. There was no logical argument against such a possibility. All civilizations had their orbit; all societies rose and fell. Some day, no doubt, by the action of that law, everything that made the world livable to Campton and his kind would crumble in new ruins above the old. Yes—but woe to them by whom such things came; woe to the generation that bowed to such a law. The Powers of Darkness were always watching and seeking their hour; but the past was a record of their failures as well as of their triumphs. Campton, brushing up his history, remembered the great turning-points of progress, saw how the liberties of England had been born of the ruthless discipline of the Norman conquest, and how even out of the hideous welter of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had come more freedom and a wiser order. The point was to remember that the efficacy of the sacrifice was always in proportion to the worth of the victims; and there at least his faith was sure.

He could not, he felt, leave his former wife's appeal unnoticed; and after a day or two he wrote to George, telling him of Mrs. Brant's anxiety, and asking in vague terms if George himself thought any change in his situation probable. His letter ended abruptly: "I suppose it's hardly time yet to ask for leave——"

XVII

Nor long after his midnight tramp with Boylston and Dastrey the post brought Campton two letters. One was postmarked Paris, the other bore the military frank and was addressed in his son's

hand: he laid it aside while he glanced at the first. It contained an engraved card:

MRS. ANDERSON BRANT

At Home on February 20th at 4 o'clock

Mr. Harvey Mayhew will give an account of his captivity in Germany.

Mme. de Dolmetsch will sing.

For the benefit of the "Friends of French Art Committee."

Tickets 100 francs.

Enclosed was the circular of the subcommittee in aid of Musicians at the Front, with which Campton was not directly associated. It bore the names of Mrs. Talkett, Mme. Beausite, and a number of other French and American ladies of his wife's group.

Campton tossed the card away. He was not annoyed by the invitation: he knew that Miss Anthony and Mlle. Davril were getting up a series of drawing-room entertainments for that branch of the charity, and that the card had been sent to him as a member of the Honorary Committee. But any reminder of the sort always gave a sharp twitch to the Brant nerve in him. He turned to George's letter.

As usual it was not long; but in other respects it was unlike his son's usual communications. Campton read it over two or three times.

"Dear Dad, thanks for yours of the tenth, which must have come to me on skis, the snow here is so deep." (There had, in fact, been a heavy snow-fall in the Argonne). "Sorry mother is bothering about things again: as you've often reminded me, they always have a way of 'being as they will be,' and even war doesn't seem to change it. Nothing to worry her in my case—but you can't expect her to believe that, can you? Neither you nor I can help it, I suppose.

"There's one thing that might help, though; and that is, your letting her feel that you're a little nearer to her. War makes a lot of things look differently, especially this sedentary kind of war: it's rather like going over all the old odds-and-ends in one's cupboards. And some of them do look so foolish.

"I wish you'd see her now and then—just naturally, as if it had happened.

You know you've got one Inexhaustible Topic between you. The said I. T. is doing well, and has nothing new to communicate up to now except a change of address. Hereafter please write to my Base instead of directing here, as there's some chance of a shift of H. Q. The precaution is probably just a new twist of the old red tape, signifying nothing; but Base will always reach me if we *are* shifted. Let mother know, and explain, please; otherwise she'll think the unthinkable.

"Interrupted by big drive—quill-drive, of course!

"As ever

"GEORGIUS SCRIBLERUS.

"P. S. Don't be too savage to Uncle Andy either.

"No. 2.—I *had* thought of leave; but perhaps you're right about that."

It was the first time George had written in that way of his mother. His smiling policy had always been to let things alone, and go on impartially dividing his devotion between his parents, since they refused to share even that common blessing. But war gave everything a new look; and he had evidently, as he put it, been turning over the old things in his cupboards. How was it possible, Campton wondered, that after such a turning-over he was still content to write "Nothing new to communicate," and to make jokes about another big quill-drive? Glancing at the date of the letter, Campton saw that it had been written on the day after the first ineffectual infantry assault on Vauquois. And George was sitting a few miles off, safe in headquarters at Sainte Menchould, with a stout roof over his head and a beautiful brown gloss on his boots, scribbling punning letters while his comrades fell back from that bloody summit. . .

Suddenly Campton's eyes filled. No; George had not written that letter for the sake of the joke: the joke was meant to cover what went before it. Ah, how young the boy was to imagine that his father would not see! Yes, as he said, war made so many of the old things look foolish. . .

Campton set out for the Palais Royal.

He felt happier than for a long time past: the tone of his boy's letter seemed to correspond with his own secret change of spirit. He knew the futility of attempting to bring the Brants and himself together, but was glad that George had made the suggestion. He resolved to see Julia that afternoon.

At the Palais Royal he found the indefatigable Boylston busy with an exhibition of paintings sent home from the front, and Mlle. Davril helping to catalogue them. Lamentable pensioners came and went, bringing fresh tales of death, fresh details of savagery: the air was dark with poverty and sorrow. In the background, Mme. Beausite fidgeted about, tragic and ineffectual. Boylston had not been able to extract a penny from Beausite for his secretary and the latter's left-handed family; but Mme. Beausite had discovered a newly-organized charity which lent money to "temporarily embarrassed" war-victims; and with a perfectly artless self-satisfaction she had obtained a small loan for the victim of her own thrift. "For what other purpose are such charities founded?" she said, gently disclaiming in advance the praise which Miss Anthony and Boylston had no thought of offering her. Whenever Campton came in she effaced herself behind a desk, where she bent her beautiful white head over a card-catalogue without any perceptible results.

The telephone rang, and Boylston, after a moment, looked up from the receiver.

"Mr. Campton!"

The painter glanced apprehensively at the instrument, which still seemed to him charged with explosives.

"Take the message, do. The thing always snaps at me."

There was a listening pause: then Boylston said: "It's about Upsher—"

Campton started up. "Killed—?"

"Not sure. It's Mr. Brant. The news was wired to the bank; they want you to break it to Mr. Mayhew."

"Oh, Lord," the painter groaned, the boy's face suddenly rising before his blurred eyes. Miss Anthony was not at the office that morning, or he would have turned to her; at least she might have accompanied him on his quest. He could

not ask Boylston to leave the office, and he felt that curious incapacity to deal with the raw fact of sorrow which had often given an elfin unreality to the most poignant moments of his life. It was as though experience had to enter into the very substance of his soul before he could even feel it.

"Other people," he thought, "would know what to say, and I shan't."

Some one, meanwhile, had fetched a cab, and he drove to the Nouveau Luxe, though with little hope of finding Mr. Mayhew. But Mr. Mayhew had grown two secretaries, and turned the shrimp-pink drawing-room into an office. One of the secretaries was there, hammering at a typewriter. She was a competent young woman, who instantly extracted from her pocket-diary the fact that her chief was at Mrs. Anderson Brant's, rehearsing.

"Rehearsing——?"

"Why, yes; he's to speak at Mrs. Brant's next week on Atrocities," she said, surprised at Campton's ignorance.

She suggested telephoning; but in the shrunken households of the rich, where but one or two servants remained, telephoning had become as difficult as in the under-staffed hotels; and after one or two vain attempts Campton decided to go to the Avenue Marigny. He felt that to get hold of Mayhew as soon as possible might still in some vague way help poor Benny—since it was not yet sure that he was dead. "Or else it's just the need to rush about," he thought, conscious that the only way he had yet found of dealing with calamity was a kind of ant-like agitation.

On the way the round pink face of Benny Upsher continued to float before him in its very substance, with the tangibility that only a painter's visions wear. "I want to be *in* this thing," he heard the boy repeating, as if impelled by some blind instinct flowing down through centuries and centuries of persistent childish minds.

"If he or his forebears had ever thought things out he probably would have been alive and safe to-day," Campton mused, "like George. . . The average person is always just obeying impulses stored up thousands of years ago, and never re-

examined since." But this consideration, though it was drawn from George's own philosophy, did not greatly comfort him.

At the Brants' a bewildered concierge admitted him and rang a bell which no one answered. The vestibule and the stairs were piled with bales of sheeting, bulging jute-bags, stacked-up hospital supplies. A boy in scout's uniform swung his inadequate legs from the lofty porter's armchair which stood beside the table with its monumental inkstand. Finally, from above, a maid invited Campton to ascend.

In the drawing-room the pictures and tapestries, bronzes and *pâtes tendres* had vanished, and a plain moquette replaced the priceless Savonnerie across whose pompous wreaths Campton had walked on the day of his last visit.

The maid led him to the ballroom. Through its double doors of glass Mr. Mayhew's oratorical accents, accompanied by faint chords on the piano, reached Campton's ears: he paused and looked. At the farther end of the great gilded room, on a platform backed by velvet draperies, stood Mr. Mayhew, a perfect pearl in his tie and a perfect crease in his trousers. Beside him was a stage-property tripod surmounted by a perfume-burner; and on it Mme. de Dolmetsch, swathed in black, leaned in an attitude of grief.

At the piano beneath the platform a bushy-headed youth struck an occasional chord from Chopin's Dead March; and near the door three or four Red Cross nurses perched on bales of blankets and listened. Under one of their coifs Campton recognized Mrs. Talkett. She saw him and made a sign to the lady nearest her; and the latter, turning, revealed the astonished eyes of Julia Brant.

Campton's first impression, while they shook hands under cover of Mr. Mayhew's rolling periods, was of her extraordinary gift of adaptation. She had made herself a nurse's face, not a theatrical imitation of it like Mme. de Dolmetsch's, nor yet the face of a nurse on a war-poster, like Mrs. Talkett's. Her lovely hair smoothed away under her strict coif, her chin devoutly framed in linen, Mrs. Brant looked serious, tender and efficient.

Was it possible that she had found her vocation?

She gave him a look of alarm, but his eyes must have told her that he had not come about George, for with a reassured glance she laid a finger on her lip and pointed to the platform; Campton noticed that her nails were as beautifully polished as ever.

Mr. Mayhew was saying: "All that I have to give, yes, all that is most precious to me, I am ready to surrender, to offer up, to lay down in the Great Struggle which is to save the world from barbarism. I, who was one of the first Victims of that barbarism. . ."

He paused and looked impressively at the bales of blankets. The piano filled in the pause, and Mme. de Dolmetsch, without changing her attitude, almost without moving her lips, sang a few muffled notes of lamentation.

"Of that hideous barbarism—" Mr. Mayhew began again. "I repeat that I stand here ready to give up everything I hold most dear—"

"Do stop him," Campton whispered to Mrs. Brant.

Little Mrs. Talkett, with the quick intuition he had noted in her, sprang up and threaded her way between the bales to the stage. Mme. de Dolmetsch flowed from one widowed attitude into another, and Mr. Mayhew, descending, majestically approached Mrs. Brant.

"You agree with me, I hope? You feel that anything more than Mme. de Dolmetsch's beautiful voice—anything in the way of a choral accompaniment—would only weaken my effect? Where the facts are so overwhelming it is enough to state them; that is," Mr. Mayhew added modestly, "if they are stated vigorously and tersely—as I hope they are."

Mme. de Dolmetsch, forsaking the tripod with the gesture of a marble mourner torn from her cenotaph, glided up and laid her hand in Campton's.

"Dear friend, you've heard? . . . You remember our talk? I am Cassandra, cursed with the hideous gift of divination." Tears rained down her cheeks, washing off the paint like mud swept by a shower. "My only comfort," she added, fixing her perfect eyes on Mr. Mayhew, "is to help our great good

friend in this crusade against the assassins of my Ladislas."

Mrs. Talkett said a word to Mr. Mayhew, and Campton saw his complacent face go to pieces as if it had been vitrioled.

"Benny—Benny—" he screamed, "Benny hurt? My Benny? It's some mistake! What makes you think—?" His eyes met Campton's. "Oh, my God! Why, he's my sister's child!" he cried, plunging his face into his soft manicured hands.

In the cab to which Campton led him, he continued to sob with the full-throated sobs of a large invertebrate distress, beating his breast for an unfindable handkerchief, and, when he finally found it, immediately weeping it into pulp.

Campton had meant to leave him at the bank; but when the taxi stopped Mr. Mayhew was too collapsed for the painter to resist his pleading hand.

"It was you who saw Benny last—you can't leave me!" the poor man implored; and Campton followed him up the majestic stairway.

Their names were taken in to Mr. Brant, and with a motion of wonder at the unaccountable humours of fate, Campton found himself for the first time entering the banker's private office.

Mr. Brant was elsewhere in the great glazed labyrinth, and while the visitors waited, the painter's registering eye took in the details of the room, from the Barye *cire-perdue* on the peach-coloured marble mantel to the blue morocco armchairs about a giant writing-table. On the table was an electric lamp in a celadon vase, and just the right number of neatly folded papers lay under a paper-weight of Chinese crystal. The room was as tidy as an expensive stage-setting or the cage of a well-kept canary: the only object marring its order was a telegram lying open on the desk.

Mr. Brant, grey and glossy, slipped in on noiseless patent leather. He shook hands with Mr. Mayhew, bowed stiffly but deprecatingly to Campton, gave his usual cough, and said: "This is terrible."

And suddenly, as the three men sat there, so impressive and important and powerless, with the fatal telegram marring the tidiness of the banker's table, Campton murmured to himself: "If this

thing were to happen to me I couldn't bear it. . . I simply couldn't bear it. . ."

Benny Upsher was not dead—at least his death was not certain. He had been seen to fall in a surprise attack near Neuve Chapelle; the telegram, from his commanding officer, reported him as "wounded and missing."

The words had taken on a hideous significance in the last months. Freezing to death between the lines, mutilation and torture, or weeks of slow agony in German hospitals: these were the alternative visions associated with the now familiar formula. Mr. Mayhew had spent a part of his time collecting details about the treatment of those who had fallen, alive but wounded, into German hands; and Campton guessed that as he sat there every one of these details, cruel, sanguinary, remorseless, had started to life, and that all their victims wore the face of Benny.

The wretched man sat speechless, so unhinged and swinging loose in his grief that Mr. Brant and Campton could only look on, following the thoughts he was thinking, seeing the sights he was seeing, and each avoiding the other's eye lest they should betray to one another the secret of their shared exultation at George's safety.

Finally, Mr. Mayhew was put in charge of a confidential clerk, who was to go with him to the English Military Mission in the hope of getting farther information. He went away, small and shrunk, with the deprecating smile of a man who seeks to ward off a blow; as he left Campton heard him say timidly to the clerk: "No doubt you speak French, sir? The words I want don't seem to come to me."

Campton had meant to leave at the same time; but some vague impulse held him back. He remembered George's

postscript: "Don't be too savage to Uncle Andy," and wished he could think of some friendly phrase to ease off his leave-taking. Mr. Brant seemed to have the same wish. He stood, erect and tightly buttoned, one small hand resting on the arm of his desk-chair, as though he were posing for a cabinet size, with the photographer telling him to look natural. His lids twitched slightly behind his protective glasses, and his upper lip, which was as straight as a ruler, detached itself by a hair's breadth from the lower; but no word came.

Campton glanced up and down the white-panelled walls, and spoke abruptly. "There was no reason on earth," he said, "why poor young Upsher should ever have been in this thing."

Mr. Brant bowed.

"This sort of crazy impulse to rush into things," Campton continued with rising vehemence, "is of no more use to a civilized state than any other unreasoned instinct. At bottom it's nothing but what George calls the baseball spirit: just an ignorant passion for fisticuffs."

Mr. Brant looked at him intently. "When did—George say that?" he asked, with his little cough before the name.

Campton coloured. "Oh—er—some time ago: in the very beginning, I think. It was the view of most thoughtful young fellows at that time."

"Quite so," said Mr. Brant, cautiously stroking his moustache.

Campton's eye again wandered about the room.

"Now, of course—"

"Ah—now. . ."

The two men looked at each other for a second, and then Campton held out his hand. Mr. Brant, growing pink about the forehead, extended his dry fingers, and they shook hands in silence.

(To be continued.)



Chicago

Nine Sketches by Frederick Polley



Grand Central Station.

There are six general passenger-stations in the city, the terminals of some twenty-four or more steam-roads.
These stations are located in a cluster around the "Loop" district.