

Locke William John

The Rough Road



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CHAPTER I

This is the story of Doggie Trevor. It tells of his doings and of a girl in England and a girl in France. Chiefly it is concerned with the influences that enabled him to win through the war. Doggie Trevor did not get the Victoria Cross. He got no cross or distinction whatever. He did not even attain the sorrowful glory of a little white cross above his grave on the Western Front. Doggie was no hero of romance, ancient or modern. But he went through with it and is alive to tell the tale.

The brutal of his acquaintance gave him the name of “Doggie” years before the war was ever thought of, because he had been brought up from babyhood like a toy Pom. The almost freak offspring of elderly parents, he had the rough world against him from birth. His father died before he had cut a tooth. His mother was old enough to be his grandmother. She had the intense maternal instinct and the brain, such as it is, of an earwig. She wrapped Doggie – his real name was James Marmaduke – in cotton-wool, and kept him so until he was almost a grown man. Doggie had never a chance. She brought him up like a toy Pom until he was twenty-one – and then she died. Doggie being comfortably off, continued the maternal tradition and kept on bringing himself up like a toy Pom. He did not know what else to do. Then, when he was five-and-twenty, he found himself at the edge of the world gazing in timorous starkness down into the abyss of the Great War. Something kicked him over the brink and sent him sprawling into the thick of it.

That the world knows little of its greatest men is a commonplace among silly aphorisms. With far more justice it may be stated that of its least men the world knows nothing and cares less. Yet the Doggies of the War, who on the cry of “Havoc!” have been let loose, much to their own and everybody else’s stupefaction, deserve the passing tribute sometimes, poor fellows, of a sigh, sometimes of a smile, often of a cheer. Very few of them – very few, at any rate, of the English Doggies – have tucked their little tails between their legs and run away. Once a brawny humorist wrote to Doggie Trevor “*Sursum cauda.*” Doggie happened to be at the time in a water-logged front trench in Flanders and the writer basking in the mild sunshine of Simla with his Territorial regiment. Doggie, bidden by the Hedonist of circumstance to up with his tail, felt like a scorpion.

Such feelings, however, will be more adequately dealt with hereafter. For the moment, it is only essential to obtain a general view of the type to which Trevor belonged.

If there is one spot in England where the present is the past, where the future is still more of the past, where the past wraps you and enfolds you in the dreamy mist of Gothic beauty, where the lazy meadows sloping riverward deny the passage of the centuries, where the very clouds are secular, it is the cathedral town of Durdlebury. No factory chimneys defile with their smoke its calm air, or defy its august and heaven-searching spires. No rabble of factory hands shocks its few and sedate streets. Divine Providence, according to the devout, and the crass stupidity of the local authorities seventy years ago, according to progressive minds, turned the main line of railway twenty miles from the sacred spot. So that to this year of grace it is the very devil of a business to find out, from Bradshaw, how to get to Durdlebury, and, having found, to get there. As for getting away, God help you! But whoever wanted to get away from Durdlebury, except the Bishop? In pre-motor days he used to grumble tremendously and threaten the House of Lords with Railway Bills and try to blackmail the Government with dark hints of resignation, and so he lived and threatened and made his wearisome diocesan round of visits and died. But now he has his episcopal motor-car, which has deprived him of his grievances.

In the Close of Durdlebury, greenswarded, silent, sentinelled by immemorial elms that guard the dignified Gothic dwellings of the cathedral dignitaries, was James Marmaduke Trevor born. His father, a man of private fortune, was Canon of Durdlebury. For many years he lived in the most commodious canonical house in the Close with his sisters Sophia and Sarah. In the course of time a new Dean, Dr. Conover, was appointed to Durdlebury, and, restless innovator that he was, underpinned the North Transept and split up Canon Trevor's home by marrying Sophia. Then Sarah, bitten by the madness, committed abrupt matrimony with the Rev. Vernon Manningtree, Rector of Durdlebury. Canon Trevor, many years older than his sisters, remained for some months in bewildered loneliness, until one day he found himself standing in front of the cathedral altar with Miss Mathilda Jessup, while the Bishop pronounced over them words diabolically strange yet ecclesiastically familiar. Miss Jessup, thus transformed into Mrs. Trevor, was a mature and comfortable maiden lady of ample means, the only and orphan daughter of a late Bishop of Durdlebury. Never had there been such a marrying and giving in marriage in the cathedral circle. Children were born in Decanal, Rectorial and Canonical homes. First a son to the Manningtrees, whom they named Oliver. Then a daughter to the Conovers. Then a son, named James Marmaduke, after the late Bishop Jessup, was born to the Trevors. The profane say that Canon Trevor, a profound patristic theologian and an enthusiastic palæontologist, couldn't make head or tail of it all, and, unable to decide whether James Marmaduke should be attributed to Tertullian or the Neolithic period, expired in an agony of dubiety. At any rate, the poor man died. The widow, of necessity, moved from the Close, in order to make way for the new Canon, and betook herself with her babe to Denby Hall, the comfortable house on the outskirts of the town in which she had dwelt before her marriage.

The saturated essence of Durdlebury ran in Marmaduke's blood: an honourable essence, a proud essence; an essence of all that is statically beautiful and dignified in English life; but an essence which, without admixture of wilder and more fluid elements, is apt to run thick and clog the arteries. Marmaduke was coddled from his birth. The Dean, then a breezy, energetic man, protested. Sarah Manningtree protested. But when the Dean's eldest born died of diphtheria, Mrs. Trevor, in her heart, set down the death as a judgment on Sophia for criminal carelessness; and when young Oliver Manningtree grew up to be an intolerable young Turk and savage, she looked on Marmaduke and, thanking heaven that he was not as other boys were, enfolded him more than ever beneath her motherly wing. When Oliver went to school in the town and tore his clothes, and rolled in mud and punched other boys' heads, Marmaduke remained at home under the educational charge of a governess. Oliver, lean and lanky and swift-eyed, swaggered through the streets unattended from the first day they sent him to a neighbouring kindergarten. As the months and years of his childish life passed, he grew more and more independent and vagabond. He swore blood brotherhood with a butcher-boy and, unknown to his pious parents, became the leader of a ferocious gang of pirates. Marmaduke, on the other hand, was never allowed to cross the road without feminine escort. Oliver had the profoundest contempt for Marmaduke. Being two years older, he kicked him whenever he had a chance. Marmaduke loathed him. Marmaduke shrank into Miss Gunter, the governess's, skirts whenever he saw him. Mrs. Trevor therefore regarded Oliver as the youthful incarnation of Beelzebub, and quarrelled bitterly with her sister-in-law.

One day, Oliver, with three or four of his piratical friends, met Marmaduke and Miss Gunter and a little toy terrier in the High Street. The toy terrier was attached by a lead to Miss Gunter on the one side, Marmaduke by a hand on the other. Oliver straddled rudely across the path.

"Hallo! Look at thet two little doggies!" he cried. He snapped his fingers at the terrier. "Come along, Tiny!" The terrier yapped. Oliver grinned and turned to Marmaduke. "Come along, Fido, dear little doggie."

"You're a nasty, rude, horrid boy, and I shall tell your mother," declared Miss Gunter indignantly.

But Oliver and his pirates laughed with the truculence befitting their vocation, and bowing with ironical politeness, let their victim depart to the parody of a popular song: “Good-bye, Doggie, we shall miss you.”

From that day onwards Marmaduke was known as “Doggie” throughout all Durdlebury, save to his mother and Miss Gunter. The Dean himself grew to think of him as “Doggie.” People to this day call him Doggie, without any notion of the origin of the name.

To preserve him from persecution, Mrs. Trevor jealously guarded him from association with other boys. He neither learned nor played any boyish games. In defiance of the doctor, whom she regarded as a member of the brutal anti-Marmaduke League, Mrs. Trevor proclaimed Marmaduke’s delicacy of constitution. He must not go out into the rain, lest he should get damp, nor into the hot sunshine, lest he should perspire. She kept him like a precious plant in a carefully warmed conservatory. Doggie, used to it from birth, looked on it as his natural environment. Under feminine guidance and tuition he embroidered and painted screens and played the piano and the mandolin, and read Miss Charlotte Yonge and learned history from the late Mrs. Markham. Without doubt his life was a happy one. All that he asked for was sequestration from Oliver and his associates.

Now and then the cousins were forced to meet – at occasional children’s parties, for instance. A little daughter, Peggy, had been born in the Deanery, replacing the lost firstborn, and festivals – to which came the extreme youth of Durdlebury – were given in her honour. She liked Marmaduke, who was five years her senior, because he was gentle and clean and wore such beautiful clothes and brushed his hair so nicely; whereas she detested Oliver, who, even at an afternoon party, looked as if he had just come out of a rabbit-hole. Besides, Marmaduke danced beautifully; Oliver couldn’t and wouldn’t, disdaining such effeminate sports. His great joy was to put out a sly leg and send Doggie and his partner sprawling. Once the Dean caught him at it, and called him a horrid little beast, and threatened him with neck and crop expulsion if he ever did it again. Doggie, who had picked himself up and listened to the rebuke, said:

“I’m very glad to hear you talk to him like that, Uncle. I think his behaviour is perfectly detestable.”

The Dean’s lips twitched and he turned away abruptly. Oliver glared at Doggie.

“Oh, my holy aunt!” he whispered hoarsely. “Just you wait till I get you alone!”

Oliver got him alone, an hour later, in a passage, having lain in ambush for him, and after a few busy moments, contemplated a bruised and bleeding Doggie blubbing in a corner.

“Do you think my behaviour is detestable now?”

“Yes,” whimpered Doggie.

“I’ve a good mind to go on licking you until you say ‘no,’” said Oliver.

“You’re a great big bully,” said Doggie.

Oliver reflected. He did not like to be called a bully. “Look here,” said he, “I’ll stick my right arm down inside the back of my trousers and fight you with my left.”

“I don’t want to fight. I can’t fight,” cried Doggie.

Oliver put his hands in his pockets.

“Will you come and play Kiss-in-the-Ring, then?” he asked sarcastically.

“No,” replied Doggie.

“Well, don’t say I haven’t made you generous offers,” said Oliver, and stalked away.

It was all very well for the Rev. Vernon Manningtree, when discussing this incident with the Dean, to dismiss Doggie with a contemptuous shrug and call him a little worm without any spirit. The unfortunate Doggie remained a human soul with a human destiny before him. As to his lack of spirit —

“Where,” said the Dean, a man of wider sympathies, “do you suppose he could get any from? Look at his parentage. Look at his upbringing by that idiot woman.”

“If he belonged to me, I’d drown him,” said the Rector.

“If I had my way with Oliver,” said the Dean, “I’d skin him alive.”

“I’m afraid he’s a young devil,” said the Rector, not without paternal pride. “But he has the makings of a man.”

“So has Marmaduke,” replied the Dean.

“Bosh!” said Mr. Manningtree.

When Oliver went to Rugby, happier days than ever dawned for Marmaduke. There were only the holidays to fear. But as time went on, the haughty contempt of Oliver, the public-school boy, for the home-bred Doggie, forbade him to notice the little creature’s existence; so that even the holidays lost their gloomy menace and became like the normal halcyontide. Meanwhile Doggie grew up. When he reached the age of fourteen, the Dean, by strenuous endeavour, rescued him from the unavailing tuition of Miss Gunter. But school for Marmaduke Mrs. Trevor would not hear of. It was brutal of Edward – the Dean – to suggest such a thing. Marmaduke – so sensitive and delicate – school would kill him. It would undo all the results of her unceasing care. It would make him coarse and vulgar, like other horrid boys. She would sooner see him dead at her feet than at a public school. It was true that he ought to have the education of a gentleman. She did not need Edward to point out her duty. She would engage a private tutor.

“All right. I’ll get you one,” said the Dean.

The Master of his old college at Cambridge sent him an excellent youth, who had just taken his degree – a second class in the Classical Tripos – an all-round athlete and a gentleman. The first thing he did was to take Marmaduke on the lazy river that flowed through the Durdlebury meadows, thereby endangering his life, woefully blistering his hands, and making him ache all over his poor little body. After a quarter of an hour’s interview with Mrs. Trevor, the indignant young man threw up his post and departed.

Mrs. Trevor determined to select a tutor herself. A scholastic agency sent her a dozen candidates. She went to London and interviewed them all. A woman, even of the most limited intelligence, invariably knows what she wants, and invariably gets it. Mrs. Trevor got Phineas McPhail, M.A. Glasgow, B.A. Cambridge (Third Class Mathematical Greats), reading for Holy Orders.

“I was training for the ministry in the Free Kirk of Scotland,” said he, “when I gradually became aware of the error of my ways, and saw that there could only be salvation in the episcopal form of Church government. As the daughter of a bishop, Mrs. Trevor, you will appreciate my conscientious position. An open scholarship and the remainder of my little patrimony enabled me to get my Oxford degree. You would have no objection to my continuing my theological studies while I undertake the education of your son?”

Phineas McPhail pleased Mrs. Trevor. He had what she called a rugged, honest Scotch face, with a very big nose in the middle of it, and little grey eyes overhung by brown and shaggy eyebrows. He spoke with the mere captivating suggestion of an accent. The son of decayed, proud, and now extinct gentlefolk, he presented personal testimonials of an unexceptionable quality.

Phineas McPhail took to Doggie and Durdlebury as a duck to water. He read for Holy Orders for seven years. When the question of his ordination arose, he would declare impressively that his sacred duty was the making of Marmaduke into a scholar and a Christian. That duty accomplished, he would begin to think of himself. Mrs. Trevor accounted him the most devoted and selfless friend that woman ever had. He saw eye to eye with her in every detail of Marmaduke’s upbringing. He certainly taught the boy, who was naturally intelligent, a great deal, and repaired the terrible gaps in Miss Gunter’s system of education. McPhail had started life with many eager curiosities, under the impulse of which he had amassed considerable knowledge of a superficial kind which, lolling in an arm-chair, with a pipe in his mouth, he found easy to impart. To the credit side of Mrs. Trevor’s queer account it may be put that she did not object to smoking. The late Canon smoked incessantly. Perhaps the odour of tobacco was the only keen memory of her honeymoon and brief married life.

During his seven years of soft living, Phineas McPhail scientifically developed an original taste for whisky. He seethed himself in it as the ancients seethed a kid in its mother's milk. He had the art to do himself to perfection. Mrs. Trevor beheld in him the mellowest and blandest of men. Never had she the slightest suspicion of evil courses. To such a pitch of cunning in the observance of the proprieties had he arrived, that the very servants knew not of his doings. It was only later – after Mrs. Trevor's death – when a surveyor was called in by Marmaduke to put the old house in order, that a disused well at the back of the house was found to be half filled with hundreds of whisky bottles secretly thrown in by Phineas McPhail.

The Dean and Mr. Manningtree, although ignorant of McPhail's habits, agreed in calling him a lazy hound and a parasite on their fond sister-in-law. And they were right. But Mrs. Trevor turned a deaf ear to their slanders. They were unworthy to be called Christian men, let alone ministers of the Gospel. Were it not for the sacred associations of her father and her husband, she would never enter the cathedral again. Mr. McPhail was exactly the kind of tutor that Marmaduke needed. Mr. McPhail did not encourage him to play rough games, or take long walks, or row on the river, because he appreciated his constitutional delicacy. He was the only man in the world during her unhappy widowhood who understood Marmaduke. He was a treasure beyond price.

When Doggie was sixteen, fate, fortune, chance, or whatever you like to call it, did him a good turn. It made his mother ill, and sent him away with her to foreign health resorts. Doggie and McPhail travelled luxuriously, lived in luxurious hotels and visited in luxurious ease various picture galleries and monuments of historic or æsthetic interest. The boy, artistically inclined and guided by the idle yet well-informed Phineas, profited greatly. Phineas sought profit to them both in other ways.

"Mrs. Trevor," said he, "don't you think it a sinful shame for Marmaduke to waste his time over Latin and mathematics, and such things as he can learn at home, instead of taking advantage of his residence in a foreign country to perfect himself in the idiomatic and conversational use of the language?"

Mrs. Trevor, as usual, agreed. So thenceforward, whenever they were abroad, which was for three or four months of each year, Phineas revelled in sheer idleness, nicotine, and the skilful consumption of alcohol, while highly paid professors taught Marmaduke – and, incidentally, himself – French and Italian.

Of the world, however, and of the facts, grim or seductive, of life, Doggie learned little. Whether by force of some streak of honesty, whether through sheer laziness, whether through canny self-interest, Phineas McPhail conspired with Mrs. Trevor to keep Doggie in darkest ignorance. His reading was selected like that of a young girl in a convent: he was taken only to the most innocent of plays: foreign theatres, casinos, and such-like wells of delectable depravity, existed almost beyond his ken. Until he was twenty it never occurred to him to sit up after his mother had gone to bed. Of strange goddesses he knew nothing. His mother saw to that. He had a mild affection for his cousin Peggy, which his mother encouraged. She allowed him to smoke cigarettes, drink fine claret, the remains of the cellar of her father, the bishop, a connoisseur, and *crème de menthe*. And, until she died, that was all poor Doggie knew of the lustiness of life.

Mrs. Trevor died, and Doggie, as soon as he had recovered from the intensity of his grief, looked out upon a lonely world. Phineas, like Mrs. Micawber, swore he would never desert him. In the perils of Polar exploration or the comforts of Denby Hall, he would find Phineas McPhail ever by his side. The first half-dozen or so of these declarations consoled Doggie tremendously. He dreaded the Church swallowing up his only protector and leaving him defenceless. Conscientiously, however, he said:

"I don't want your affection for me to stand in your way, sir."

"Sir?" cried Phineas, "is it not practicable for us to do away with the old relations of master and pupil, and become as brothers? You are now a man, and independent. Let us be Pylades and Orestes. Let us share and share alike. Let us be Marmaduke and Phineas."

Doggie was touched by such devotion. “But your ambitions to take Holy Orders, which you have sacrificed for my sake?”

“I think it may be argued,” said Phineas, “that the really beautiful life is delight in continued sacrifice. Besides, my dear boy, I am not quite so sure as I was when I was young, that by confining oneself within the narrow limits of a sacerdotal profession, one can retain all one’s wider sympathies both with human infirmity and the gladder things of existence.”

“You’re a true friend, Phineas,” said Doggie.

“I am,” replied Phineas.

It was just after this that Doggie wrote him a cheque for a thousand pounds on account of a vaguely indicated year’s salary.

If Phineas had maintained the wily caution which he had exercised for the past seven years, all might have been well. But there came a time when unneedfully he declared once more that he would never desert Marmaduke, and declaring it, hiccupped so horribly and stared so glassily, that Doggie feared he might be ill. He had just lurched into Doggie’s own peacock-blue and ivory sitting-room when he was mournfully playing the piano.

“You’re unwell, Phineas. Let me get you something.”

“You’re right, laddie,” Phineas agreed, his legs giving way alarmingly, so that he collapsed on a brocade-covered couch. “It’s a touch of the sun, which I would give you to understand,” he continued with a self-preservatory flash, for it was an overcast day in June, “is often magnified in power when it is behind a cloud. A wee drop of whisky is what I require for a complete recovery.”

Doggie ran into the dining-room and returned with a decanter of whisky, glass and siphon – an adjunct to the sideboard since Mrs. Trevor’s death. Phineas filled half the tumbler with spirit, tossed it off, smiled fantastically, tried to rise, and rolled upon the carpet. Doggie, frightened, rang the bell. Peddle, the old butler, appeared.

“Mr. McPhail is ill. I can’t think what can be the matter with him.”

Peddle looked at the happy Phineas with the eyes of experience.

“If you will allow me to say so, sir,” said he, “the gentleman is dead drunk.”

And that was the beginning of the end of Phineas. He lost grip of himself. He became the scarlet scandal of Durdlebury and the terror of Doggie’s life. The Dean came to the rescue of a grateful nephew. A swift attack of delirium tremens crowned and ended Phineas McPhail’s Durdlebury career.

“My boy,” said the Dean on the day of Phineas’s expulsion, “I don’t want to rub it in unduly, but I’ve warned your poor mother for years, and you for months, against this bone-idle, worthless fellow. Neither of you would listen to me. But you see that I was right. Perhaps now you may be more inclined to take my advice.”

“Yes, Uncle,” replied Doggie submissively.

The Dean, a comfortable florid man in the early sixties, took up his parable and expounded it for three-quarters of an hour. If ever young man heard that which was earnestly meant for his welfare, Doggie heard it from his Very Reverend Uncle’s lips.

“And now, my dear boy,” said the Dean by way of peroration, “you cannot but understand that it is your bounden duty to apply yourself to some serious purpose in life.”

“I do,” said Doggie. “I’ve been thinking over it for a long time. I’m going to gather material for a history of wall-papers.”

CHAPTER II

Thenceforward Doggie, like the late Mr. Matthew Arnold's fellow-millions, lived alone. He did not complain. There was little to complain about. He owned a pleasant old house set in fifteen acres of grounds. He had an income of three thousand pounds a year. Old Peddle, the butler, and his wife, the housekeeper, saved him from domestic cares. Rising late and retiring early, like the good King of Yvetot, he cheated the hours that might have proved weary. His meals, his toilet, his music, his wall-papers, his drawing and embroidering – specimens of the last he exhibited with great success at various shows held by Arts and Crafts Guilds, and such-like high and artistic fellowships – his sweet-peas, his chrysanthemums, his postage stamps, his dilettante reading and his mild social engagements, filled most satisfyingly the hours not claimed by slumber. Now and then appointments with his tailor summoned him to London. He stayed at the same mildewed old family hotel in the neighbourhood of Bond Street at which his mother and his grandfather, the bishop, had stayed for uncountable years. There he would lunch and dine stodgily in musty state. In the evenings he would go to the plays discussed in the less giddy of Durdlebury ecclesiastical circles. The play over, it never occurred to him to do otherwise than drive decorously back to Sturrocks's Hotel. Suppers at the Carlton or the Savoy were outside his sphere of thought or opportunity. His only acquaintance in London were vague elderly female friends of his mother, who invited him to chilly semi-suburban teas and entertained him with tepid reminiscence and criticism of their divers places of worship. The days in London thus passed drearily, and Doggie was always glad to get home again.

In Durdlebury he began to feel himself appreciated. The sleepy society of the place accepted him as a young man of unquestionable birth and irreproachable morals. He could play the piano, the harp, the viola, the flute, and the clarinet, and sing a very true mild tenor. As secretary of the Durdlebury Musical Association, he filled an important position in the town. Dr. Flint – Joshua Flint, Mus. Doc. – organist of the cathedral, scattered broadcast golden opinions of Doggie. There was once a concert of old English music, which the dramatic critics of the great newspapers attended – and one of them mentioned Doggie – “Mr. Marmaduke Trevor, who played the viol da gamba as to the manner born.” Doggie cut out the notice, framed it, and stuck it up in his peacock and ivory sitting-room.

Besides music, Doggie had other social accomplishments. He could dance. He could escort young ladies home of nights. Not a dragon in Durdlebury would not have trusted Doggie with untold daughters. With women, old and young, he had no shynesses. He had been bred among them, understood their purely feminine interests, and instinctively took their point of view. On his visits to London, he could be entrusted with commissions. He could choose the exact shade of silk for a drawing-room sofa cushion, and had an unerring taste in the selection of wedding presents. Young men, other than budding ecclesiastical dignitaries, were rare in Durdlebury, and Doggie had little to fear from the competition of coarser masculine natures. In a word, Doggie was popular.

Although of no mean or revengeful nature, he was human enough to feel a little malicious satisfaction when it was proved to Durdlebury that Oliver had gone to the devil. His Aunt Sarah, Mrs. Manningtree, had died midway in the Phineas McPhail period; Mr. Manningtree a year or so later had accepted a living in the North of England, and died when Doggie was about four-and-twenty. Meanwhile Oliver, who had been withdrawn young from Rugby, where he had been a thorn in the side of the authorities, and had been pinned like a cockchafer to a desk in a family counting-house in Lothbury, E.C., had broken loose, quarrelled with his father, gone off with paternal malediction and a maternal heritage of a thousand pounds to California, and was lost to the family ken. When a man does not write to his family, what explanation can there be save that he is ashamed to do so? Oliver was ashamed of himself. He had taken to desperate courses. He was an outlaw. He had gone to the

devil. His name was rarely mentioned in Durdlebury – to Marmaduke Trevor's very great and catlike satisfaction. Only to the Dean's ripe and kindly wisdom was his name not utterly anathema.

"My dear," said he once to his wife, who was deploring her nephew's character and fate – "I have hopes of Oliver even yet. A man must have something of the devil in him if he wants to drive the devil out."

Mrs. Conover was shocked. "My dear Edward!" she cried.

"My dear Sophia," said he, with a twinkle in his mild blue eyes that had puzzled her from the day when he first put a decorous arm round her waist. "My dear Sophia, if you knew what a ding-dong scrap of fiends went on inside me before I could bring myself to vow to be a virtuous milk-and-water parson, your hair, which is as long and beautiful as ever, would stand up straight on end."

Mrs. Conover sighed.

"I give you up."

"It's too late," said the Dean.

The Manningtrees, father and mother and son, were gone. Doggie bore the triple loss with equanimity. Then Peggy Conover, hitherto under the eclipse of boarding-schools, finishing schools and foreign travel, swam, at the age of twenty, within his orbit. When first they met, after a year's absence, she very gracefully withered the symptoms of the cousinly kiss, to which they had been accustomed all their lives, by stretching out a long, frank, and defensive arm. Perhaps if she had allowed the salute, there would have been an end of the matter. But there came the phenomenon which, unless she was a minx of craft and subtlety, she did not anticipate; for the first time in his life he was possessed of a crazy desire to kiss her. Doggie fell in love. It was not a wild consuming passion. He slept well, he ate well, and he played the flute without a sigh causing him to blow discordantly into the holes of the instrument. Peggy vowing that she would not marry a parson, he had no rivals. He knew not even the pinpricks of jealousy. Peggy liked him. At first she delighted in him as in a new and animated toy. She could pull strings and the figure worked amazingly and amusingly. He proved himself to be a useful toy, too. He was at her beck all day long. He ran on errands, he fetched and carried. Peggy realized blissfully that she owned him. He haunted the Deanery.

One evening after dinner the Dean said:

"I am going to play the heavy father. How are things between you and Peggy?"

Marmaduke, taken unawares, reddened violently. He murmured that he didn't know.

"You ought to," said the Dean. "When a young man converts himself into a girl's shadow, even although he is her cousin and has been brought up with her from childhood, people begin to gossip. They gossip even within the august precincts of a stately cathedral."

"I'm very sorry," said Marmaduke. "I've had the very best intentions."

The Dean smiled.

"What were they?"

"To make her like me a little," replied Marmaduke. Then, feeling that the Dean was kindly disposed, he blurted out awkwardly: "I hoped that one day I might ask her to marry me."

"That's what I wanted to know," said the Dean.

"You haven't done it yet?"

"No," said Marmaduke.

"Why don't you?"

"It seems taking such a liberty," replied Marmaduke.

The Dean laughed. "Well, I'm not going to do it for you. My chief desire is to regularize the present situation. I can't have you two running about together all day and every day. If you like to ask Peggy, you have my permission and her mother's."

"Thank you, Uncle Edward," said Marmaduke.

"Let us join the ladies," said the Dean.

In the drawing-room the Dean exchanged glances with his wife. She saw that he had done as he had been bidden. Marmaduke was not an ideal husband for a brisk, pleasure-loving modern young woman. But where was another husband to come from? Peggy had banned the Church. Marmaduke was wealthy, sound in health and free from vice. It was obvious to maternal eyes that he was in love with Peggy. According to the Dean, if he wasn't, he oughtn't to be for ever at her heels. The young woman herself seemed to take considerable pleasure in his company. If she cared nothing for him, she was acting in a reprehensible manner. So the Dean had been deputed to sound Marmaduke.

Half an hour later the young people were left alone. First the Dean went to his study. Then Mrs. Conover departed to write letters. Marmaduke advancing across the room from the door which he had opened, met Peggy's mocking eyes as she stood on the hearthrug with her hands behind her back. Doggie felt very uncomfortable. Never had he said a word to her in betrayal of his feelings. He had a vague idea that propriety required a young man to get through some wooing before asking a girl to marry him. To ask first and woo afterwards seemed putting the cart before the horse. But how to woo that remarkably cool and collected young person standing there, passed his wit.

"Well," she said, "the dear old birds seem very fussy to-night. What's the matter?" And as he said nothing, but stood confused with his hands in his pockets, she went on. "You, too, seem rather ruffled. Look at your hair."

Doggie, turning to a mirror, perceived that an agitated hand had disturbed the symmetry of his sleek black hair, brushed without a parting away from the forehead over his head. Hastily he smoothed down the cockatoo-like crest.

"I've been talking to your father, Peggy."

"Have you really?" she said with a laugh.

Marmaduke summoned his courage.

"He told me I might ask you to marry me," he said.

"Do you want to?"

"Of course I do," he declared.

"Then why not do it?"

But before he could answer, she clapped her hands on his shoulders, and shook him, and laughed out loud.

"Oh, you dear silly old thing! What a way to propose to a girl!"

"I've never done such a thing before," said Doggie, as soon as he was released.

She resumed her attitude on the hearthrug.

"I'm in no great hurry to be married. Are you?"

He said: "I don't know. I've never thought of it. Just whenever you like."

"All right," she returned calmly. "Let it be a year hence. Meanwhile, we can be engaged. It'll please the dear old birds. I know all the tabbies in the town have been mewling about us. Now they can mew about somebody else."

"That's awfully good of you, Peggy," said Marmaduke. "I'll go up to town to-morrow and get you the jolliest ring you ever saw."

She sketched him a curtsy. "That's one thing, at any rate, I can trust you in – your taste in jewellery."

He moved nearer to her. "I suppose you know, Peggy dear, I've been awfully fond of you for quite a long time."

"The feeling is more or less reciprocated," she replied lightly. Then, "You can kiss me if you like. I assure you it's quite usual."

He kissed her somewhat shyly on the lips.

She whispered: "I do think I care for you, old thing." Marmaduke replied sententiously: "You have made me a very happy man." Then they sat down side by side on the sofa, and for all Peggy's mocking audacity, they could find nothing in particular to say to each other.

“Let us play patience,” she said at last.

And when Mrs. Conover appeared awhile later, she found them poring over the cards in a state of unruffled calm. Peggy looked up, smiled, and nodded.

“We’ve fixed it up, Mummy; but we’re not going to be married for a year.”

Doggie went home that evening in a tepid glow. It contented him. He thought himself the luckiest of mortals. A young man with more passion or imagination might have deplored the lack of romance in the betrothal. He might have desired on the part of the maiden either more shyness, delicacy, and elusiveness, or more resonant emotion. The finer tendrils of his being might have shivered, ready to shrivel, as at a touch of frost, in the cool ironical atmosphere which the girl had created around her. But Doggie was not such a young man. Such passions as heredity had endowed him with had been drugged by training. No tales of immortal love had ever fired his blood. Once, somewhere abroad, the unprincipled McPhail found him reading *Manon Lescaut*— he had bought a cheap copy haphazard – and taking the delectable volume out of his hands, asked him what he thought of it.

“It’s like reading about a lunatic,” replied the bewildered Doggie. “Do such people as Des Grieux exist?”

“Ay, laddie,” replied McPhail, greatly relieved. “Your acumen has pierced to the root of the matter. They do exist, but nowadays we put them into asylums. We must excuse the author for living in the psychological obscurity of the eighteenth century. It’s just a silly, rotten book.”

“I’m glad you’re of the same opinion as myself,” said Doggie, and thought no more of the absurd but deathless pair of lovers. The unprincipled McPhail, not without pawky humour, immediately gave him *Paul et Virginie*, which Doggie, after reading it, thought the truest and most beautiful story in the world. Even in later years, when his intelligence had ripened and his sphere of reading expanded, he looked upon the passion of a Romeo or an Othello as a conventional peg on which the poet hung his imagery, but having no more relation to real life as it is lived by human beings than the blood-lust of the half-man, half-bull Minotaur, or the uncomfortable riding conversation of the Valkyrie.

So Doggie Trevor went home perfectly contented with himself, with Peggy Conover, with his Uncle and Aunt, of whom hitherto he had been just a little bit afraid, with Fortune, with Fate, with his house, with his peacock and ivory room, with a great clump of typescript and a mass of coloured proof-prints, which represented a third of his projected history of wall-papers, with his feather-bed, with Goliath, his almost microscopic Belgian griffon, with a set of Nile-green silk underwear that had just come from his outfitters in London, with his new Rolls-Royce car and his new chauffeur Briggins (parenthetically it may be remarked that a seven-hour excursion in this vehicle, youth in the back seat and Briggins at the helm, all ordained by Peggy, had been the final cause of the evening’s explanations), with the starry heavens above, with the well-ordered earth beneath them, and with all human beings on the earth, including Germans, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks – all save one: and that, as he learned from a letter delivered by the last post, was a callous, heartless London manicurist who, giving no reasons, regretted that she would be unable to pay her usual weekly visit to Durdlebury on the morrow. Of all days in the year: just when it was essential that he should look his best!

“What the deuce am I going to do?” he cried, pitching the letter into the waste-paper basket.

He sat down to the piano in the peacock and ivory room and tried to play the nasty crumpled rose-leaf of a manicurist out of his mind.

Suddenly he remembered, with a kind of shock, that he had pledged himself to go up to London the next day to buy an engagement-ring. So after all the manicurist’s defection did not matter. All was again well with the world.

Then he went to bed and slept the sleep of the just and perfect man living the just and perfect life in a just and perfect universe.

And the date of this happening was the fifteenth day of July in the year of grace one thousand nine hundred and fourteen.

CHAPTER III

The shadow cast by the great apse of the cathedral slanted over the end of the Deanery garden, leaving the house in the blaze of the afternoon sun, and divided the old red-brick wall into a vivid contrast of tones. The peace of centuries brooded over the place. No outside convulsions could ever cause a flutter of her calm wings. As it was thirty years ago, when the Dean first came to Durdlebury, as it was three hundred, six hundred years ago, so it was now; and so it would be hundreds of years hence as long as that majestic pile housing the Spirit of God should last.

Thus thought, thus, in some such words, proclaimed the Dean, sitting in the shade, with his hands clasped behind his head. Tea was over. Mrs. Conover, thin and faded, still sat by the little table, wondering whether she might now blow out the lamp beneath the silver kettle. Sir Archibald Bruce, a neighbouring landowner, and his wife had come, bringing their daughter Dorothy to play tennis. The game had already started on the court some little distance off – the players being Dorothy, Peggy and a couple of athletic, flannel-clad parsons. Marmaduke Trevor reposed on a chair under the lee of Lady Bruce. He looked very cool and spick and span in a grey cashmere suit, grey shirt, socks and tie, and grey *suède* shoes. He had a weak, good-looking little face and a little black moustache turned up at the ends. He was discoursing to his neighbour on Palestrina.

The Dean's proclamation had been elicited by some remark of Sir Archibald.

"I wonder how you have stuck it for so long," said the latter. He had been a soldier in his youth and an explorer, and had shot big game.

"I haven't your genius, my dear Bruce, for making myself uncomfortable," replied the Dean.

"You were energetic enough when you first came here," said Sir Archibald. "We all thought you a desperate fellow who was going to rebuild the cathedral, turn the Close into industrial dwellings, and generally play the deuce."

The Dean sighed pleasantly. He had snowy hair and a genial, florid, clean-shaven face.

"I was appointed very young – six-and-thirty – and I thought I could fight against the centuries. As the years went on I found I couldn't. The grey changelessness of things got hold of me, incorporated me into them. When I die – for I hope I shan't have to resign through doddering senility – my body will be buried there" – he jerked his head slightly towards the cathedral – "and my dust will become part and parcel of the fabric – like that of many of my predecessors."

"That's all very well," said Sir Archibald, "but they ought to have caught you before this petrification set in, and made you a bishop."

It was somewhat of an old argument, for the two were intimates. The Dean smiled and shook his head.

"You know I declined –"

"After you had become petrified."

"Perhaps so. It is not a place where ambitions can attain a riotous growth."

"I call it a rotten place," said the elderly worldling. "I wouldn't live in it myself for twenty thousand a year."

"Lots like you said the same in crusading times – Sir Guy de Chevenix, for instance, who was the Lord, perhaps, of your very Manor, and an amazing fire-eater – but – see the gentle irony of it – there his bones lie, at peace for ever, in the rotten place, with his effigy over them cross-legged and his dog at his feet, and his wife by his side. I think he must sometimes look out of Heaven's gate down on the cathedral and feel glad, grateful – perhaps a bit wistful – if the attribution of wistfulness, which implies regret, to a spirit in Paradise doesn't savour of heresy –"

"I'm going to be cremated," interrupted Sir Archibald, twirling his white moustache.

The Dean smiled and did not take up the cue. The talk died. It was a drowsy day. The Dean went off into a little reverie. Perhaps his old friend's reproach was just. Dean of a great cathedral at thirty-

six, he had the world of dioceses at his feet. Had he used to the full the brilliant talents with which he started? He had been a good Dean, a capable, business-like Dean. There was not a stone of the cathedral that he did not know and cherish. Under his care the stability of every part of the precious fabric had been assured for a hundred years. Its financial position, desperate on his appointment, was now sound. He had come into a scene of petty discords and jealousies; for many years there had been a no more united chapter in any cathedral close in England. As an administrator he had been a success. The devotion of his life to the cathedral had its roots deep in spiritual things. For the greater glory of God had the vast edifice been erected, and for the greater glory of God had he, its guardian, reverently seen to its preservation and perfect appointment. Would he have served God better by pursuing the ambitions of youth? He could have had his bishopric; but he knew that the choice lay between him and Chanways, a flaming spirit, eager for power, who hadn't the sacred charge of a cathedral, and he declined. And now Chanways was a force in the Church and the country, and was making things hum. If he, Conover, after fifteen years of Durdlebury, had accepted, he would have lost the power to make things hum. He would have made a very ordinary, painstaking bishop, and his successor at Durdlebury might possibly have regarded that time-worn wonder of spiritual beauty merely as a stepping-stone to higher sacerdotal things. Such a man, he considered, having once come under the holy glamour of the cathedral, would have been guilty of the Unforgivable Sin. He had therefore saved two unfortunate situations.

"You are quite an intelligent man, Bruce," he said, with a sudden whimsicality, "but I don't think you would ever understand."

The set of tennis being over, Peggy, flushed and triumphant, rushed into the party in the shade.

"Mr. Petherbridge and I have won – six – three," she announced. The old gentlemen smiled and murmured their congratulations. She swung to the tea-table some paces away, and plucked Marmaduke by the sleeve, interrupting him in the middle of an argument. He rose politely.

"Come and play."

"My dear," he said, "I'm such a duffer at games."

"Never mind; you'll learn in time."

He drew out a grey silk handkerchief as if ready to perspire at the first thought of it. "Tennis makes one so dreadfully hot," said he.

Peggy tapped the point of her foot irritably, but she laughed as she turned to Lady Bruce.

"What's the good of being engaged to a man if he can't play tennis with you?"

"There are other things in life besides tennis, my dear," replied Lady Bruce.

The girl flushed, but being aware that a pert answer turneth away pleasant invitations, said nothing. She nodded and went off to her game, and informing Mr. Petherbridge that Lady Bruce was a platitudinous old tabby, flirted with him up to the nice limits of his parsonical dignity. But Marmaduke did not mind.

"Games are childish and somewhat barbaric. Don't you think so, Lady Bruce?"

"Most young people seem fond of them," replied the lady. "Exercise keeps them in health."

"It all depends," he argued. "Often they get exceedingly hot, then they sit about and catch their death of cold."

"That's very true," said Lady Bruce. "It's what I'm always telling Sir Archibald about golf. Only last week he caught a severe chill in that very way. I had to rub his chest with camphorated oil."

"Just as my poor dear mother used to do to me," said Marmaduke.

There followed a conversation on ailments and their treatment, in which Mrs. Conover joined. Marmaduke was quite happy. He knew that the two elderly ladies admired the soundness of his views and talked to him as to one of themselves.

"I'm sure, my dear Marmaduke, you're very wise to take care of yourself," said Lady Bruce, "especially now, when you have the responsibilities of married life before you."

Marmaduke curled himself up comfortably in his chair. If he had been a cat, he would have purred. The old butler, grown as grey in the service of the Deanery as the cathedral itself – he had been page and footman to Dr. Conover's predecessor – removed the tea-things and brought out a tray of glasses and lemonade with ice clinking refreshingly against the sides of the jug. When the game was over, the players came and drank and sat about the lawn. The shadow of the apse had spread over the garden to the steps of the porch. Anyone looking over the garden wall would have beheld a scene typical of the heart of England – a scene of peace, ease and perfectly ordered comfort. The two well-built young men, one a minor canon, the other a curate, lounging in their flannels, clever-faced, honest-eyed, could have been bred nowhere but in English public schools and at Oxford or Cambridge. The two elderly ladies were of the fine flower of provincial England; the two old men, so different outwardly, one burly, florid, exquisitely ecclesiastical, the other thin, nervous, soldierly, each was an expression of high English tradition. The two young girls, unerringly correct and dainty, for all their modern abandonment of attitude, pretty, flushed of cheek, frank of glance, were two of a hundred thousand flowers of girlhood that could have been picked that afternoon in lazy English gardens. And Marmaduke's impeccable grey costume struck a harmonizing English note of Bond Street and the Burlington Arcade. The scent of the roses massed in delicate splendour against the wall, and breathing now that the cool shade had fallen on them, crept through the still air to the flying buttresses and the window mullions and traceries and the pinnacles of the great English cathedral. And in the midst of the shaven lawn gleamed the old cut-glass jug on its silver tray.

Some one did look over the wall and survey the scene: a man, apparently supporting himself with tense, straightened arms on the coping; a man with a lean, bronzed, clean-shaven face, wearing an old soft felt hat at a swaggering angle; a man with a smile on his face and a humorous twinkle in his eyes. By chance he had leisure to survey the scene for some time unobserved. At last he shouted:

"Hello! Have none of you ever moved for the last ten years?"

At the summons every one was startled. The young men scrambled to their feet. The Dean rose and glared at the intruder, who sprang over the wall, recklessly broke through the rose-bushes and advanced with outstretched hand to meet him.

"Hello, Uncle Edward!"

"Goodness gracious me!" cried the Dean. "It's Oliver!"

"Right first time," said the young man, gripping him by the hand. "You're not looking a day older. And Aunt Sophia –" He strode up to Mrs. Conover and kissed her. "Do you know," he went on, holding her at arm's length and looking round at the astonished company, "the last time I saw you all you were doing just the same! I peeped over the wall just before I went away, just such a summer afternoon as this, and you were all sitting round drinking the same old lemonade out of the same old jug – and, Lady Bruce, you were here, and you, Sir Archibald" – he shook hands with them rapidly. "You haven't changed a bit. And you – good Lord! Is this Peggy?" He put his hand on the Dean's shoulder and pointed at the girl.

"That's Peggy," said the Dean.

"You're the only thing that's grown. I used to gallop with you on my shoulders all round the lawn. I suppose you remember? How do you do?"

And without waiting for an answer he kissed her soundly. It was all done with whirlwind suddenness. The tempestuous young man had scattered every one's wits. All stared at him. Releasing Peggy —

"My holy aunt!" he cried, "there's another of 'em. It's Doggie! You were in the old picture, and I'm blessed if you weren't wearing the same beautiful grey suit. How do, Doggie?"

He gripped Doggie's hand. Doggie's lips grew white.

"I'm glad to welcome you back, Oliver," he said. "But I would have you to know that my name is Marmaduke."

"Sooner be called Doggie myself, old chap," said Oliver.

He stepped back, smiling at them all – a handsome devil-may-care fellow, tall, tough and supple, his hands in the pockets of a sun-stained double-breasted blue jacket.

“We’re indeed glad to see you, my dear boy,” said the Dean, recovering equanimity; “but what have you been doing all this time? And where on earth have you come from?”

“I’ve just come from the South Seas. Arrived in London last evening. This morning I thought I’d come and look you up.”

“But if you had let us know you were coming, we should have met you at the station with the car. Where’s your luggage?”

He jerked a hand. “In the road. My man’s sitting on it. Oh, don’t worry about him,” he cried airily to the protesting Dean. “He’s well trained. He’ll go on sitting on it all night.”

“You’ve brought a man – a valet?” asked Peggy.

“It seems so.”

“Then you must be getting on.”

“I don’t think he turns you out very well,” said Doggie.

“You must really let one of the servants see about your things, Oliver,” said Mrs. Conover, moving towards the porch. “What will people say?”

He strode after her, and kissed her. “Oh, you dear old Durdlebury Aunt! Now I know I’m in England again. I haven’t heard those words for years!”

Mrs. Conover’s hospitable intentions were anticipated by the old butler, who advanced to meet them with the news that Sir Archibald’s car had been brought round. As soon as he recognized Oliver he started back, mouth agape.

“Yes, it’s me all right, Burford,” laughed Oliver. “How did I get here? I dropped from the moon.”

He shook hands with Burford, of whose life he had been the plague during his childhood, proclaimed him as hardy and unchanging as a gargoyle, and instructed him where to find man and luggage.

The Bruces and the two clerical tennis players departed. Marmaduke was for taking his leave too. All his old loathing of Oliver had suddenly returned. His cousin stood for everything he detested – swagger, arrogance, self-assurance. He hated the shabby rakishness of his attire, the self-assertive aquiline beak of a nose which he had inherited from his father, the Rector. He dreaded his aggressive masculinity. He had come back with the same insulting speech on his lips. His finger-nails were dreadful. Marmaduke desired as little as possible of his odious company. But his Aunt Sophia cried out:

“You’ll surely dine with us to-night, Marmaduke, to celebrate Oliver’s return?”

And Oliver chimed in, “Do! And don’t worry about changing,” as Doggie began to murmur excuses, “I can’t. I’ve no evening togs. My old ones fell to bits when I was trying to put them on, on board the steamer, and I had to chuck ’em overboard. They turned up a shark, who went for ’em. So don’t you worry, Doggie, old chap. You look as pretty as paint as you are. Doesn’t he, Peggy?”

Peggy, with a slight flush on her cheek, came to the rescue and linked her arm in Marmaduke’s.

“You haven’t had time to learn everything yet, Oliver; but I think you ought to know that we are engaged.”

“Holy Gee! Is that so? My compliments.” He swept them a low bow. “God bless you, my children!”

“Of course he’ll stay to dinner,” said Peggy; and she looked at Oliver as who should say, “Touch him at your peril: he belongs to me.”

So Doggie had to yield. Mrs. Conover went into the house to arrange for Oliver’s comfort, and the others strolled round the garden.

“Well, my boy,” said the Dean, “so you’re back in the old country?”

“Turned up again like a bad penny.”

The Dean’s kindly face clouded. “I hope you’ll soon be able to find something to do.”

“It’s money I want, not work,” said Oliver.

“Ah!” said the Dean, in a tone so thoughtful as just to suggest a lack of sympathy.

Oliver looked over his shoulder – the Dean and himself were preceding Marmaduke and Peggy on the trim gravel path. “Do you care to lend me a few thousands, Doggie?”

“Certainly not,” replied Marmaduke.

“There’s family affection for you, Uncle Edward! I’ve come half-way round the earth to see him, and – say, will you lend me a fiver?”

“If you need it,” said Marmaduke in a dignified way, “I shall be very happy to advance you five pounds.”

Oliver brought the little party to a halt and burst into laughter.

“I believe you good people think I’ve come back broke to the world. The black sheep returned like a wolf to the fold. Only Peggy drew a correct inference from the valet – wait till you see him! As Peggy said, I’ve been getting on.” He laid a light hand on the Dean’s shoulder. “While all you folks in Durdlebury, especially my dear Doggie, for the last ten years have been durdling, I’ve been doing. I’ve not come all this way to tap relations for five-pound notes. I’m swaggering into the City of London for Capital – with a great big C.”

Marmaduke twirled his little moustache. “You’ve taken to company promoting,” he remarked acidly.

“I have. And a damn – I beg your pardon, Uncle Edward – we poor Pacific Islanders lisp in damns for want of deans to hold us up – and a jolly good company too. We – that’s I and another man – that’s all the company as yet – two’s company, you know – own a trading fleet.”

“You own ships?” cried Peggy.

“Rather. Own ’em, sail ’em, navigate ’em, stoke ’em, clean out the boilers, sit on the safety valves when we want to make speed, do every old thing – ”

“And what do you trade in?” asked the Dean.

“Copa, bêche-de-mer, mother-of-pearl – ”

“Mother-of-pearl! How awfully romantic!” cried Peggy.

“We’ve got a fishery. At any rate, the concession. To work it properly we require capital. That’s why I’m here – to turn the concern into a limited company.”

“And where is this wonderful place?” asked the Dean.

“Huaheine.”

“What a beautiful word!”

“Isn’t it?” said Oliver. “Like the sigh of a girl in her sleep.”

The old Dean shot a swift glance at his nephew; then took his arm and walked on, and looked at the vast mass of the cathedral and at the quiet English garden in its evening shadow.

“Copa, bêche-de-mer, mother-of-pearl, Huaheine,” he murmured. “And these strange foreign things are the commonplaces of your life!”

Peggy and Marmaduke lagged behind a little. She pressed his arm.

“I’m so glad you’re staying for dinner. I shouldn’t like to think you were running away from him.”

“I was only afraid of losing my temper and making a scene,” replied Doggie with dignity.

“His manners are odious,” said Peggy. “You leave him to me.”

Suddenly the Dean, taking a turn that brought him into view of the porch, stopped short.

“Goodness gracious!” he cried. “Who in the world is that?”

He pointed to a curious object slouching across the lawn; a short hirsute man wearing a sailor’s jersey and smoking a stump of a blackened pipe. His tousled head was bare; he had very long arms and great powerful hands protruded at the end of long sinewy wrists from inadequate sleeves. A pair of bright eyes shone out of his dark shaggy face, like a Dandy Dinmont’s. His nose was large and red. He rolled as he walked. Such a sight had never been seen before in the Deanery garden.

“That’s my man. Peggy’s valet,” said Oliver airily. “His name is Chipmunk. A beauty, isn’t he?”

“Like master, like man,” murmured Doggie.

Oliver’s quick ears caught the words intended only for Peggy. He smiled brightly.

“If you knew what a compliment you were paying me, Doggie, you wouldn’t have said such a thing.”

The man seeing the company stare at him, halted, took his pipe out of his mouth, and scratched his head.

“But – er – forgive me, my dear Oliver,” said the Dean. “No doubt he is an excellent fellow – but don’t you think he might smoke his pipe somewhere else?”

“Of course he might,” said Oliver. “And he jolly well shall.” He put his hand to his mouth, sea-fashion – they were about thirty yards apart – and shouted: “Here, you! What the eternal blazes are you doing here?”

“Please don’t hurt the poor man’s feelings,” said the kindly Dean.

Oliver turned a blank look on his Uncle. “His what? Ain’t got any. Not that kind of feelings.” He proceeded: “Now then, look lively! Clear out! Skidoo!”

The valet touched his forehead in salute, and – “Where am I to go to, Cap’en?”

“Go to – ”

Oliver checked himself in time, and turned to the Dean.

“Where shall I tell him to go?” he asked sweetly.

“The kitchen garden would be the best place,” replied the Dean.

“I think I’d better go and fix him up myself,” said Oliver. “A little conversation in his own language might be beneficial.”

“But isn’t he English?” asked Peggy.

“Born and bred in Wapping,” said Oliver.

He marched off across the lawn; and, could they have heard it, the friendly talk that he had with Chipmunk would have made the Saint and the Divines, and even the Crusader, Sir Guy de Chevenix, who were buried in the cathedral, turn in their tombs.

Doggie, watching the disappearing Chipmunk, Oliver’s knuckles in his neck, said:

“I think it monstrous of Oliver to bring such a disreputable creature down here.”

Said the Dean: “At any rate, it brings a certain excitement into our quiet surroundings.”

“They must be having the time of their lives in the Servants’ Hall,” said Peggy.

CHAPTER IV

After breakfast the next morning Doggie, attired in a green shot-silk dressing-gown, entered his own particular room and sat down to think. In its way it was a very beautiful room – high, spacious, well-proportioned, facing south-east. The wall-paper, which he had designed himself, was ivory-white with veinings of peacock-blue. Into the ivory-silk curtains were woven peacocks in full pride. The cushions were ivory and peacock-blue. The chairs, the writing-table, the couch, the bookcases, were pure Sheraton and Hepplewhite. Vellum-bound books filled the cases – Doggie was very particular about his bindings. Delicate water-colours alone adorned the walls. On his neatly arranged writing-table lay an ivory set – inkstand, pen-tray, blotter and calendar. Bits of old embroidery harmonizing with the peacock shades were spread here and there. A pretty collection of eighteenth-century Italian ivory statuettes were grouped about the room. A spinet, inlaid with ebony and ivory, formed a centre for the arrangement of many other musical instruments – a viol, mandolins gay with ribbons, a theorbo, flutes and clarinets. Through the curtains, draped across an alcove, could be guessed the modern monstrosity of a grand piano. One tall closed cabinet was devoted to his collection of wall-papers. Another, open, to a collection of little dogs in china, porcelain, faïence; thousands of them; he got them through dealers from all over the world. He had the finest collection in existence, and maintained a friendly and learned correspondence with the other collector – an elderly, disillusioned Russian prince, who lived somewhere near Nijni-Novgorod. On the spinet and on the writing-table were great bowls of golden *rayon d'or* roses.

Doggie sat down to think. An unwonted frown creased his brow. Several problems distracted him. The morning sun streaming into the room disclosed, beyond doubt, discolorations, stains and streaks on the wall-paper. It would have to be renewed. Already he had decided to design something to take its place. But last night Peggy had declared her intention to turn this abode of bachelor comfort into the drawing-room, and to hand over to his personal use some other apartment, possibly the present drawing-room, which received all the blaze and glare of the afternoon sun. What should he do? Live in the sordidness of discoloured wall-paper for another year, or go through the anxiety of artistic effort and manufacturers' stupidity and delay, to say nothing of the expense, only to have the whole thing scrapped before the wedding? Doggie had a foretaste of the dilemmas of matrimony. He had a gnawing suspicion that the trim and perfect life was difficult of attainment.

Then, meandering through this wilderness of dubiety, ran thoughts of Oliver. Every one seemed to have gone crazy over him. Uncle Edward and Aunt Sophia had hung on his lips while he lied unblushingly about his adventures. Even Peggy had listened open-eyed and open-mouthed when he had told a tale of shipwreck in the South Seas: how the schooner had been caught in some beastly wind and the masts had been torn out and the rudder carried away, and how it had struck a reef, and how something had hit him on the head, and he knew no more till he woke up on a beach and found that the unspeakable Chipmunk had swum with him for a week – or whatever the time was – until they got to land. If hulking, brainless dolts like Oliver, thought Doggie, like to fool around in schooners and typhoons, they must take the consequences. There was nothing to brag about. The higher man was the intellectual, the æsthetic, the artistic being. What did Oliver know of Lydian modes or Louis Treize decoration or Astec clay dogs? Nothing. He couldn't even keep his socks from slopping about over his shoes. And there was Peggy all over the fellow, although before dinner she had said she couldn't bear the sight of him. Doggie was perturbed. On bidding him good night, she had kissed him in the most perfunctory manner – merely the cousinly peck of a dozen years ago – and had given no thought to the fact that he was driving home in an open car without an overcoat. He had felt distinctly chilly on his arrival, and had taken a dose of ammoniated quinine. Was Peggy's indifference a sign that she had ceased to care for him? That she was attracted by the buccaneering Oliver?

Now suppose the engagement was broken off, he would be free to do as he chose with the redecoration of the room. But suppose, as he sincerely and devoutly hoped, it wasn't? Dilemma on dilemma. Added to all this, Goliath, the miniature Belgian griffon, having probably overeaten himself, had complicated pains inside, and the callous vet. could or would not come round till the evening. In the meantime, Goliath might die.

He was at this point of his reflections, when to his horror he heard a familiar voice outside the door.

"All right, Peddle. Don't worry. I'll show myself in. Look after that man of mine. Quite easy. Give him some beer in a bucket and leave him to it."

Then the door burst open and Oliver, pipe in mouth and hat on one side, came into the room.

"Hallo, Doggie! Thought I'd look you up. Hope I'm not disturbing you."

"Not at all," said Doggie. "Do sit down."

But Oliver walked about and looked at things.

"I like your water-colours. Did you collect them yourself?"

"Yes."

"I congratulate you on your taste. This is a beauty. Who is it by?"

The appreciation brought Doggie at once to his side. Oliver, the connoisseur, was showing himself in a new and agreeable light. Doggie took him delightedly round the pictures, expounding their merits and their little histories. He found that Oliver, although unlearned, had a true sense of light and colour and tone. He was just beginning to like him, when the tactless fellow, stopping before the collection of little dogs, spoiled everything.

"My holy aunt!" he cried – an objurgation which Doggie had abhorred from boyhood – and he doubled with laughter in his horrid schoolboy fashion – "My dear Doggie – is that your family? How many litters?"

"It's the finest collection of the kind in the world," replied Doggie stiffly, "and is worth several thousand pounds."

Oliver heaved himself into a chair – that was Doggie's impression of his method of sitting down – a Sheraton chair with delicate arms and legs.

"Forgive me," he said, "but you're such a funny devil." – Doggie gaped. The conception of himself as a funny devil was new. – "Pictures and music I can understand. But what the deuce is the point of these dam little dogs?"

But Doggie was hurt. "It would be useless to try to explain," said he.

Oliver took off his hat and sent it skimming on to the couch.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "I seem to have put my foot into it again. I didn't mean to, really. Peggy gave me hell this morning for not treating you as a man and a brother, and I came round to try to put things right."

"It's very considerate of Peggy, I'm sure," said Marmaduke.

"Now look here, old Doggie – "

"I told you when we first met yesterday that I vehemently object to being called Doggie."

"But why?" asked Oliver. "I've made inquiries, and find that all your pals – "

"I haven't any pals, as you call them."

"Well, all our male contemporaries in the place who have the honour of your acquaintance – they all call you Doggie, and you don't seem to mind."

"I do mind," replied Marmaduke angrily, "but as I avoid their company as much as possible, it doesn't very much matter."

Oliver stretched out his legs and put his hands behind his back – then wriggled to his feet. "What a beast of a chair! Anyhow," he went on, puffing at his pipe, "don't let us quarrel. I'll call you Marmaduke, if you like, when I can remember – it's a beast of a name – like the chair. I'm a rough sort of chap. I've had ten years' pretty rough training. I've slept on boards. I've slept in the open

without a cent to hire a board. I've gone cold and I've gone hungry, and men have knocked me about and I've knocked men about – and I've lost the Durdlebury sense of social values. In the wilds if a man once gets the name, say, of Duck-Eyed Joe, it sticks to him, and he accepts it and answers to it, and signs 'Duck-Eyed Joe' on an IOU and honours the signature."

"But I'm not in the wilds," said Marmaduke, "and haven't the slightest intention of ever leading the unnatural and frightful life you describe. So what you say doesn't apply to me."

"Quite so," replied Oliver. "That wasn't the moral of my discourse. The habit of mind engendered in the wilds applies to me. Just as I could never think of Duck-Eyed Joe as George Wilkinson, so you, James Marmaduke Trevor, will live imperishably in my mind as Doggie. I was making a sort of apology, old chap, for my habit of mind."

"If it is an apology –" said Marmaduke.

Oliver, laughing, clapped him boisterously on the shoulder. "Oh, you solemn comic cuss!" He strode to a rose-bowl and knocked the ashes of his pipe into the water – Doggie trembled lest he might next squirt tobacco juice over the ivory curtains. "You don't give a fellow a chance. Look here, tell me, as man to man, what are you going to do with your life? I don't mean it in the high-brow sense of people who live in unsuccessful plays and garden cities, but in the ordinary common-sense way of the world. Here you are, young, strong, educated, intelligent –"

"I'm not strong," said Doggie.

"Oh, shucks! A month's exercise would make you as strong as a mule. Here you are – what the blazes are you going to do with yourself?"

"I don't admit that you have any right to question me," said Doggie, lighting a cigarette.

"Peggy has given it to me. We had a heart to heart talk this morning, I assure you. She called me a swaggering, hectoring barbarian. So I told her what I'd do. I said I'd come here and squeak like a little mouse and eat out of your hand. I also said I'd take you out with me to the Islands and give you a taste for fresh air and salt water and exercise. I'll teach you how to sail a schooner and how to go about barefoot and swab decks. It's a life for a man out there, I tell you. If you've nothing better to do than living here snug like a flea on a dog's back, until you get married, you'd better come."

Doggie smiled pityingly, but said politely:

"Your offer is very kind, Oliver; but I don't think that kind of life would suit me."

"Oh yes it would," said Oliver. "It would make you healthy, wealthy – if you took a fancy to put some money into the pearl fishery – and wise. I'd show you the world, make a man of you, for Peggy's sake, and teach you how men talk to one another in a gale of wind."

The door opened and Peddle appeared.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Oliver – but your man –"

"Yes? What about him? Is he misbehaving himself? Kissing the maids?"

"No, sir," said Peddle – "but none of them can get on with their work. He has drunk two quart jugs of beer and wants a third."

"Well, give it to him."

"I shouldn't like to see the man intoxicated, sir," said Peddle.

"You couldn't. No one has or ever will."

"He is also standing on his head, sir, in the middle of the kitchen table."

"It's his great parlour-trick. You just try to do it, Peddle – especially after two quarts of beer. He's showing his gratitude, poor chap – just like the juggler of Notre-Dame in the story. And I'm sure everybody's enjoying themselves?"

"The maids are nearly in hysterics, sir."

"But they're quite happy?"

"Too happy, sir."

"Lord!" cried Oliver, "what a lot of stuffy owls you are! What do you want me to do? What would you like me to do, Doggie? It's your house."

"I don't know," said Doggie. "I've had nothing to do with such people. Perhaps you might go and speak to him."

"No, I won't do that. I tell you what, Peddle," said Oliver brightly. "You lure him out into the stable yard with a great hunk of pie – he adores pie – and tell him to sit there and eat it till I come. Tell him I said so."

"I'll see what can be done, sir," said Peddle.

"I don't mean to be inhospitable," said Doggie, after the butler had gone, "but why do you take this extraordinary person about with you?"

"I wanted him to see Durdlebury and Durdlebury to see him. Do it good," replied Oliver. "Now, what about my proposition? Out there of course you'll be my guest. Put yourself in charge of Chipmunk and me for eight months, and you'll never regret it. What Chipmunk doesn't know about ships and drink and hard living isn't knowledge. We'll let you down easy – treat you kindly – word of honour."

Doggie being a man of intelligence realized that Oliver's offer arose from a genuine desire to do him some kind of service. But if a friendly bull out of the fullness of its affection invited you to accompany him to the meadow and eat grass, what could you do but courteously decline the invitation? This is what Doggie did. After a further attempt at persuasion, Oliver grew impatient, and picking up his hat stuck it on the side of his head. He was a simple-natured, impulsive man. Peggy's spirited attack had caused him to realize that he had treated Doggie with unprovoked rudeness; but then, Doggie was such a little worm. Suddenly the great scheme for Doggie's regeneration had entered his head, and generously he had rushed to begin to put it into execution. The pair were his blood relations after all. He saw his way to doing them a good turn. Peggy, with all her go – exemplified by the manner in which she had gone for him – was worth the trouble he proposed to take with Doggie. It really was a handsome offer. Most fellows would have jumped at the prospect of being shown round the Islands with an old hand who knew the whole thing backwards, from company promoting to beach-combing. He had not expected such a point-blank, bland refusal. It made him angry.

"I'm really most obliged to you, Oliver," said Doggie finally. "But our ideals are so entirely different. You're primitive, you know. You seem to find your happiness in defying the elements, whereas I find mine in adopting the resources of civilization to circumvent them."

He smiled, pleased with his little epigram.

"Which means," said Oliver, "that you're afraid to roughen your hands and spoil your complexion."

"If you like to put it that way – symbolically."

"Symbolically be hanged!" cried Oliver, losing his temper. "You're an effeminate little rotter, and I'm through with you. Go on and wag your tail and sit up and beg for biscuits –"

"Stop!" shouted Doggie, white with sudden anger which shook him from head to foot. He marched to the door, his green silk dressing-gown flapping round his legs, and threw it wide open. "This is my house. I'm sorry to have to ask you to get out of it."

Oliver looked intently for a few seconds into the flaming little dark eyes. Then he said gravely:

"I'm a beast to have said that. I take it all back. Good-bye!"

"Good day to you," said Doggie; and when the door was shut he went and threw himself, shaken, on the couch, hating Oliver and all his works more than ever. Go about barefoot and swab decks! It was Bedlam madness. Besides being dangerous to health, it would be excruciating discomfort. And to be insulted for not grasping at such martyrdom. It was intolerable.

Doggie stayed away from the Deanery all that day. On the morrow he heard, to his relief, that Oliver had returned to London with the unedifying Chipmunk. He took Peggy for a drive in the Rolls-Royce, and told her of Oliver's high-handed methods. She sympathized. She said, however:

"Oliver's a rough diamond."

"He's one of Nature's non-gentlemen," said Doggie.

She laughed and patted his arm. "Clever lad!" she said.

So Doggie's wounded vanity was healed. He confided to her some of his difficulties as to the peacock and ivory room.

"Bear with the old paper for my sake," she said. "It's something you can do for me. In the meanwhile, you and I can put our heads together and design a topping scheme of decoration. It's not too early to start in right now, for it'll take months and months to get the house just as we want."

"You're the best girl in the world," said Doggie; "and the way you understand me is simply wonderful."

"Dear old thing," smiled Peggy; "you're no great conundrum."

Happiness once more settled on Doggie Trevor. For the next two or three days he and Peggy tackled the serious problem of the reorganization of Denby Hall. Peggy had the large ideas of a limited though acute brain, stimulated by social ambitions. When she became mistress of Denby Hall, she intended to reverse the invisible boundary that included it in Durdlebury and excluded it from the County. It was to be County – of the fine inner Arcanum of County – and only Durdlebury by the grace of Peggy Trevor. No "durdling," as Oliver called it, for her. Denby Hall was going to be the very latest thing of September, 1915, when she proposed, the honeymoon concluded, to take smart and startling possession. Lots of Mrs. Trevor's rotten old stuffy furniture would have to go. Marmaduke would have to revolutionize his habits. As she would have all kinds of jolly people down to stay, additions must be made to the house. Within a week after her engagement she had devised all the improvements. Marmaduke's room, with a great bay thrown out, would be the drawing-room. The present drawing-room, nucleus of a new wing, would be a dancing-room, with parquet flooring; when not used for tangos and the fashionable negroid dances, it would be called the morning-room; beyond that there would be a billiard-room. Above this first floor there could easily be built a series of guest chambers. As for Marmaduke's library, or study, or den, any old room would do. There were a couple of bedrooms overlooking the stable yard which thrown into one would do beautifully.

With feminine tact she dangled these splendours before Doggie's infatuated eyes, instinctively choosing the opportunity of his gratitude for soothing treatment. Doggie telegraphed for Sir Owen Julius, R.A., Surveyor to the Cathedral, the only architect of his acquaintance. The great man sent his partner, plain John Fox, who undertook to prepare a design.

Mr. Fox came down to Durdlebury on the 28th of July. There had been a lot of silly talk in the newspapers about Austria and Serbia, to which Doggie had given little heed. There was always trouble in the Balkan States. Recently they had gone to war. It had left Doggie quite cold. They were all "Merry Widow," irresponsible people. They dressed in queer uniforms and picturesque costumes, and thought themselves tremendously important, and were always squabbling among themselves and would go on doing it till the day of Doom. Now there was more fuss. He had read in the *Morning Post* that Sir Edward Grey had proposed a Conference of the Great Powers. Only sensible thing to do, thought Doggie. He dismissed the trivial matter from his mind. On the morning of the 29th he learned that Austria had declared war on Serbia. Still, what did it matter?

Doggie had held aloof from politics. He regarded them as somewhat vulgar. Conservative by caste, he had once, when the opportunity was almost forced on him, voted for the Conservative candidate of the constituency. European politics on the grand scale did not arouse his interest at all. England, save as the wise Mentor, had nothing to do with them. Still, if Russia fought, France would have to join her ally. It was not till he went to the Deanery that he began to contemplate the possibility of a general European war. For the next day or two he read his newspapers very carefully.

On Saturday, the 1st of August, Oliver suddenly reappeared, proposing to stay over the Bank Holiday. He brought news and rumours of war from the great city. He had found money very tight, Capital with a big C impossible to obtain. Every one told him to come back when the present European cloud had blown over. In the opinion of the judicious, it would not blow over. There was going to be war, and England could not stay out of it. The Sunday morning papers confirmed all he said.

Germany had declared war on Russia. France was involved. Would Great Britain come in, or for ever lose her honour?

That warm beautiful Sunday afternoon they sat on the peaceful lawn under the shadow of the great cathedral. Burford brought out the tea-tray and Mrs. Conover poured out tea. Sir Archibald and Lady Bruce and their daughter Dorothy were there. Doggie, impeccable in dark purple. Nothing clouded the centuries-old serenity of the place. Yet they asked the question that was asked on every quiet lawn, every little scrap of shaded garden throughout the land that day: Would England go to war?

And if she came in, as come in she must, what would be the result? All had premonitions of strange shifting of destinies. As it was yesterday so it was to-day in that gracious shrine of immutability. But every one knew in his heart that as it was to-day so would it not be to-morrow. The very word "war" seemed as out of place as the suggestion of Hell in Paradise. Yet the throb of the War Drum came over the broad land of France and over the sea and half over England, and its echo fell upon the Deanery garden, flung by the flying buttresses and piers and towers of the grey cathedral.

On the morning of Wednesday, the 5th of August, it thundered all over the Close. The ultimatum to Germany as to Belgium had expired the night before. We were at war.

"Thank God," said the Dean at breakfast, "we needn't cast down our eyes and slink by when we meet a Frenchman."

CHAPTER V

The first thing that brought the seriousness of the war home to Doggie was a letter from John Fox. John Fox, a major in a Territorial regiment, was mobilized. He regretted that he could not give his personal attention to the proposed alterations at Denby Hall. Should the plans be proceeded with in his absence from the office, or would Mr. Trevor care to wait till the end of the war, which, from the nature of things, could not last very long? Doggie trotted off to Peggy. She was greatly annoyed.

"What awful rot!" she cried. "Fox, a major of artillery! I'd just as soon trust you with a gun. Why doesn't he stick to his architecture?"

"He'd be shot or something if he refused to go," said Doggie. "But why can't we turn it over to Sir Owen Julius?"

"That old archæological fossil?"

Peggy, womanlike, forgot that they had approached him in the first place.

"He'd never begin to understand what we want. Fox hinted as much. Now Fox is modern and up to date and sympathetic. If I can't have Fox, I won't have Sir Owen. Why, he's older than Dad! He's decrepit. Can't we get another architect?"

"Do you think, dear," said Doggie, "that, in the circumstances, it would be a nice thing to do?"

She flashed a glance at him. She had woven no young girl's romantic illusions around Marmaduke. Should necessity have arisen, she could have furnished you with a merciless analysis of his character. But in that analysis she would have frankly included a very fine sense of honour. If he said a thing wasn't quite nice – well, it wasn't quite nice.

"I suppose it wouldn't," she admitted. "We shall have to wait. But it's a rotten nuisance all the same."

Hundreds of thousands of not very intelligent, but at the same time by no means unpatriotic, people, like Peggy, at the beginning of the war thought trivial disappointments rotten nuisances. We had all waxed too fat during the opening years of the twentieth century, and, not having a spiritual ideal in God's universe, we were in danger of perishing from Fatty Degeneration of the Soul. As it was, it took a year or more of war to cure us.

It took Peggy quite a month to appreciate the meaning of the mobilization of Major Fox, R.F.A. A brigade of Territorial artillery flowed over Durdlebury, and the sacred and sleepy meadows became a mass of guns and horse-lines and men in khaki, and waggons and dingy canvas tents – and the old quiet streets were thick with unaccustomed soldiery. The Dean called on the Colonel and officers, and soon the house was full of eager young men holding the King's commission. Doggie admired their patriotism, but disliked their whole-hearted embodiment of the military spirit. They seemed to have no ideas beyond their new trade. The way they clanked about in their great boots and spurs got on his nerves. He dreaded also lest Peggy should be affected by the meretricious attraction of a uniform. There were fine hefty fellows among the visitors at the Deanery, on whom Peggy looked with natural admiration. Doggie bitterly confided to Goliath that it was the "glamour of brawn." It never entered his head during those early days that all the brawn of all the manhood of the nation would be needed. We had our well-organized Army and Navy, composed of peculiarly constituted men whose duty it was to fight; just as we had our well-organized National Church, also composed of peculiarly constituted men whose duty it was to preach. He regarded himself as remote from one as from the other.

Oliver, who had made a sort of peace with Doggie and remained at the Deanery, very quickly grew restless.

One day, walking with Peggy and Marmaduke in the garden, he said: "I wish I could get hold of that confounded fellow, Chipmunk!"

Partly through deference to the good Dean's delicately hinted distaste for that upsetter of decorous households, and partly to allow his follower to attend to his own domestic affairs, he had left Chipmunk in London. Fifteen years ago Chipmunk had parted from a wife somewhere in the neighbourhood of the East India Docks. Both being illiterate, neither had since communicated with the other. As he had left her earning good money in a factory, his fifteen years' separation had been relieved from anxiety as to her material welfare. A prudent, although a beer-loving man, he had amassed considerable savings, and it was the dual motive of sharing these with his wife and of protecting his patron from the ever-lurking perils of London, that had brought him across the seas. When Oliver had set him free in town, he was going in quest of his wife. But as he had forgotten the name of the street near the East India Docks where his wife lived, and the name of the factory in which she worked, the successful issue of the quest, in Oliver's opinion, seemed problematical. The simple Chipmunk, however, was quite sanguine. He would run into her all right. As soon as he had found her he would let the Captain know. Up to the present he had not communicated with the Captain. He could give the Captain no definite address, so the Captain could not communicate with him. Chipmunk had disappeared into the unknown.

"Isn't he quite capable of taking care of himself?" asked Peggy.

"I'm not so sure," replied Oliver. "Besides, he's hanging me up. I'm kind of responsible for him, and I've got sixty pounds of his money. It's all I could do to persuade him not to stow the lot in his pocket, so as to divide it with Mrs. Chipmunk as soon as he saw her. I must find out what has become of the beggar before I move."

"I suppose," said Doggie, "you're anxious now to get back to the South Seas?"

Oliver stared at him. "No, sonny, not till the war's over."

"Why, you wouldn't be in any great danger out there, would you?"

Oliver laughed. "You're the funniest duck that ever was, Doggie. I'll never get to the end of you." And he strolled away.

"What does he mean?" asked the bewildered Doggie.

"I think," replied Peggy, smiling, "that he means he's going to fight."

"Oh," said Doggie. Then after a pause he added, "He's just the sort of chap for a soldier, isn't he?"

The next day Oliver's anxiety as to Chipmunk was relieved by the appearance of the man himself, incredibly dirty and dusty and thirsty. Having found no trace of his wife, and having been robbed of the money he carried about him, he had tramped to Durdlebury, where he reported himself to his master as if nothing out of the way had happened.

"You silly blighter," said Oliver. "Suppose I had let you go with your other sixty pounds, you would have been pretty well in the soup, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, Cap'en," said Chipmunk.

"And you're not going on any blethering idiot wild-goose chases after wives and such-like truck again, are you?"

"No, Cap'en," said Chipmunk.

This was in the stable-yard, after Chipmunk had shaken some of the dust out of his hair and clothes and had eaten and drunk voraciously. He was now sitting on an upturned bucket and smoking his clay pipe with an air of solid content. Oliver, lean and supple, his hands in his pockets, looked humorously down upon him.

"And you've got to stick to me for the future, like a roseate leech."

"Yes, Cap'en."

"You're going to ride a horse."

"A wot?" roared Chipmunk.

"A thing on four legs, that kicks like hell."

"Wotever for? I ain't never ridden no 'osses."

“You’re going to learn, you unmilitary-looking, worm-eaten scab. You’ve got to be a ruddy soldier.”

“Gorblime!” said Chipmunk, “that’s the first I ’eard of it. A ’oss soldier? You’re not kiddin’, are you, Cap’en?”

“Certainly not.”

“Gorblime! Who would ha’ thought it?” Then he spat lustily and sucked at his pipe.

“You’ve nothing to say against it, have you?”

“No, Cap’en.”

“All right. And look here, when we’re in the army you must chuck calling me Cap’en.”

“What shall I have to call yer? Gineral?” Chipmunk asked simply.

“Mate, Bill, Joe – any old name.”

“Ker-ist!” said Chipmunk.

“Do you know why we’re going to enlist?”

“Can’t say as ’ow I does, Cap’en.”

“You chuckle-headed swab! Don’t you know we’re at war?”

“I did ’ear some talk about it in a pub one night,” Chipmunk admitted. “Oo are we fighting? Dutchmen or Dagoes?”

“Dutchmen.”

Chipmunk spat in his horny hands, rubbed them together and smiled. As each individual hair on his face seemed to enter into the smile, the result was sinister.

“Do you remember that Dutchman at Samoa, Cap’en?”

Oliver smiled back. He remembered the hulking, truculent German merchant whom Chipmunk, having half strangled, threw into the sea. He also remembered the amount of accomplished lying he had to practise in order to save Chipmunk from the clutches of the law and get away with the schooner.

“We leave here to-morrow,” said Oliver. “In the meanwhile you’ll have to shave your ugly face.”

For the first time Chipmunk was really staggered. He gaped at Oliver’s retiring figure. Even his limited and time-worn vocabulary failed him. The desperate meaning of the war has flashed suddenly on millions of men in millions of different ways. This is the way in which it flashed on Chipmunk.

He sat on his bucket pondering over the awfulness of it and sucking his pipe long after it had been smoked out. The Dean’s car drove into the yard and the chauffeur, stripping off his coat, prepared to clean it down.

“Say, guv’nor,” said Chipmunk hoarsely, “what do you think of this ’ere war?”

“Same as most people,” replied the chauffeur tersely. He shared in the general disapproval of Chipmunk.

“But see ’ere. Cap’en he tells me I must shave me face and be a ’oss soldier. I never shaved me face in me life, and I dunno ’ow to do it, just as I dunno ’ow to ride a ’oss. I’m a sailorman, I am, and sailormen don’t shave their faces and ride ’osses. That’s why I arsked yer what yer thought of this ’ere war.”

The chauffeur struggled into his jeans and adjusted them before replying.

“If you’re a sailor, the place for you is the navy,” he remarked in a superior manner. “As for the cavalry, the Cap’en, as you call him, ought to have more sense – ”

Chipmunk rose and swung his long arms threateningly.

“Look ’ere, young feller, do you want to have your blinkin’ ’ead knocked orf? Where the Cap’en goes, I goes, and don’t you make any mistake about it!”

“I didn’t say anything,” the chauffeur expostulated.

“Then don’t say it. See? Keep your blinkin’ ’ead shut and mind your own business.”

And, scowling fiercely and thrusting his empty pipe into his trousers pocket, Chipmunk rolled away.

A few hours later Oliver, entering his room to dress for dinner, found him standing in the light of the window laboriously fitting studs into a shirt. The devoted fellow having gone to report to his master, had found Burford engaged in his accustomed task of laying out his master's evening clothes – Oliver during his stay in London had provided himself with these necessities. A jealous snarl had sent Burford flying. So intent was he on his work, that he did not hear Oliver enter. Oliver stood and watched him. Chipmunk was swearing wholesomely under his breath. Oliver saw him take up the tail of the shirt, spit on it and begin to rub something.

“Ker-ist!” said Chipmunk.

“What in the thundering blazes are you doing there?” cried Oliver.

Chipmunk turned.

“Oh, my God!” said Oliver.

Then he sank on a chair and laughed and laughed, and the more he looked at Chipmunk the more he laughed. And Chipmunk stood stolid, holding the shirt of the awful, wet, thumb-marked front. But it was not at the shirt that Oliver laughed.

“Good God!” he cried, “were you born like that?”

For Chipmunk, having gone to the barber's, was clean-shaven, and revealed himself as one of the most comically ugly of the sons of men.

“Never mind,” said Oliver, after a while, “you’ve made the sacrifice for your country.”

“And wot if I get the face-ache?”

“I’d get something that looked like a face before I’d talk of it,” grinned Oliver.

At the family dinner-table, Doggie being present, he announced his intentions. It was the duty of every able-bodied man to fight for the Empire. Had not half a million just been called for? We should want a jolly sight more than that before we got through with it. Anyway, he was off to-morrow.

“To-morrow?” echoed the Dean.

Burford, who was handing him potatoes, arched his eyebrows in alarm. He was fond of Oliver.

“With Chipmunk.”

Burford uttered an unheard sigh of relief.

“We’re going to enlist in King Edward’s Horse. They’re our kind. Overseas men. Lots of ’em what you dear good people would call bad eggs. There you make the mistake. Perhaps they mayn’t be fresh enough raw for a dainty palate – but for cooking, good hard cooking, by gosh! nothing can touch ’em.”

“You talk of enlisting, dear,” said Mrs. Conover. “Does that mean as a private soldier?”

“Yes – a trooper. Why not?”

“You’re a gentleman, dear. And gentlemen in the Army are officers.”

“Not now, my dear Sophia,” said the Dean. “Gentlemen are crowding into the ranks. They are setting a noble example.”

They argued it out in their gentle old-fashioned way. The Dean quoted examples of sons of family who had served as privates in the South African War.

“And that to this,” said he, “is but an eddy to a maelstrom.”

“Come and join us, James Marmaduke,” said Oliver across the table. “Chipmunk and me. Three ‘sworn brothers to France.’”

Doggie smiled easily. “I’m afraid I can’t undertake to swear a fraternal affection for Chipmunk. He and I would have neither habits nor ideals in common.”

Oliver turned to Peggy. “I wish,” said he, with rare restraint, “he wouldn’t talk like a book on deportment.”

“Marmaduke talks the language of civilization,” laughed Peggy. “He’s not a savage like you.”

“Don’t you jolly well wish he was!” said Oliver.

Peggy flushed. “No, I don’t!” she declared.

The Dean being called away on business immediately after dinner, the young men were left alone in the dining-room when the ladies had departed. Oliver poured himself out a glass of port and filled his pipe – an inelegant proceeding of which Doggie disapproved. A pipe alone was barbaric, a pipe with old port was criminal. He held his peace however.

“James Marmaduke,” said Oliver, after a while, “what are you going to do?” Much as Marmaduke disliked the name of “Doggie,” he winced under the irony of the new appellation.

“I don’t see that I’m called upon to do anything,” he replied.

Oliver smoked and sipped his port. “I don’t want to hurt your feelings any more,” said he gravely, “though sometimes I’d like to scrag you – I suppose because you’re so different from me. It was so when we were children together. Now I’ve grown very fond of Peggy. Put on the right track, she might turn into a very fine woman.”

“I don’t think we need discuss Peggy, Oliver,” said Marmaduke.

“I do. She is sticking to you very loyally.” Oliver was a bit of an idealist. “The time may come when she’ll be up the devil’s own tree. She’ll develop a patriotic conscience. If she sticks to you while you do nothing she’ll be miserable. If she chucks you, as she probably will, she’ll be no happier. It’s all up to you, James Doggie Marmaduke, old son. You’ll have to gird up your loins and take sword and buckler and march away like the rest. I don’t want Peggy to be unhappy. I want her to marry a man. That’s why I proposed to take you out with me to Huaheine and try to make you one. But that’s over. Now, here’s the real chance. Better take it sooner than later. You’ll have to be a soldier, Doggie.”

His pipe not drawing, he was preparing to dig it with the point of a dessert-knife, when Doggie interposed hurriedly.

“For goodness’ sake, don’t do that! It makes cold shivers run down my back!”

Oliver looked at him oddly, put the extinct pipe in his dinner-jacket pocket and rose.

“A flaw in the dainty and divine ordering of things makes you shiver now, old Doggie. What will you do when you see a fellow digging out another fellow’s intestines with the point of a bayonet? A bigger flaw there somehow!”

“Don’t talk like that. You make me sick,” said Doggie.

CHAPTER VI

During the next few months there happened terrible and marvellous things, which are all set down in the myriad chronicles of the time; which shook the world and brought the unknown phenomenon of change into the Close of Durdlebury. Folks of strange habit and speech walked in it, and, gazing at the Gothic splendour of the place, saw through the mist of autumn and the mist of tears not Durdlebury but Louvain. More than one of those grey houses flanking the cathedral and sharing with it the continuity of its venerable life, was a house of mourning; not for loss in the inevitable and not unkindly way of human destiny as understood and accepted with long disciplined resignation – but for loss sudden, awful, devastating; for the gallant lad who had left it but a few weeks before, with a smile on his lips, and a new and dancing light of manhood in his eyes, now with those eyes unclosed and glazed staring at the pitiless Flanders sky. Not one of those houses but was linked with a battlefield. Beyond the memory of man the reader of the Litany had droned the accustomed invocation on behalf of the Sovereign and the Royal Family, the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, the Lords of the Council and all prisoners and captives, and the congregation had lumped them all together in their responses with an undifferentiating convention of fervour. What had prisoners and captives, any more than the Lords of the Council, to do with their lives, their hearts, their personal emotions? But now – Durdlebury men were known to be prisoners in German hands, and after “all prisoners and captives” there was a long and pregnant silence, in which was felt the reverberation of war against pier and vaulted arch and groined roof of the cathedral, which was broken too, now and then, by the stifled sob of a woman, before the choir came in with the response so new and significant in its appeal – “We beseech thee to hear us, O Lord!”

And in every home the knitting-needles of women clicked, as they did throughout the length and breadth of the land. And the young men left shop and trade and counting-house. And young parsons fretted, and some obtained the Bishop’s permission to become Army chaplains, and others, snapping their fingers (figuratively) under the Bishop’s nose, threw their cassocks to the nettles and put on the full (though in modern times not very splendiferous) panoply of war. And in course of time the brigade of artillery rolled away and new troops took their place; and Marmaduke Trevor, Esquire, of Denby Hall, was called upon to billet a couple of officers and twenty men.

Doggie was both patriotic and polite. Having a fragment of the British Army in his house, he did his best to make them comfortable. By January he had no doubt that the Empire was in peril, that it was every man’s duty to do his bit. He welcomed the new-comers with open arms, having unconsciously abandoned his attitude of superiority over mere brawn. Doggie saw the necessity of brawn. The more the better. It was every patriotic Englishman’s duty to encourage brawn. If the two officers had allowed him, he would have fed his billeted men every two hours on prime beefsteaks and burgundy. He threw himself heart and soul into the reorganization of his household. Officers and men found themselves in clover. The officers had champagne every night for dinner. They thought Doggie a capital fellow.

“My dear chap,” they would say, “you’re spoiling us. I don’t say we don’t like it and aren’t grateful. We jolly well are. But we’re supposed to rough it – to lead the simple life – what? You’re doing us too well.”

“Impossible!” Doggie would reply, filling up the speaker’s glass. “Don’t I know what we owe to you fellows? In what other way can a helpless, delicate crock like myself show his gratitude and in some sort of little way serve his country?”

When the sympathetic and wine-filled guest would ask what was the nature of his malady, he would tap his chest vaguely and reply:

“Constitutional. I’ve never been able to do things like other fellows. The least thing bowls me out.”

“Dam hard lines – especially just now.”

“Yes, isn’t it?” Doggie would answer. And once he found himself adding, “I’m fed up with doing nothing.”

Here can be noted a distinct stage in Doggie’s development. He realized the brutality of fact. When great German guns were yawning open-mouthed at you, it was no use saying, “Take the nasty, horrid things away, I don’t like them.” They wouldn’t go unless you took other big guns and fired at them. And more guns were required than could be manned by the peculiarly constituted fellows who made up the artillery of the original British Army. New fellows not at all warlike, peaceful citizens who had never killed a cat in anger, were being driven by patriotism and by conscience to man them. Against Blood and Iron now supreme, the superior, æsthetic and artistic being was of no avail. You might lament the fall in relative values of collections of wall-papers and little china dogs, as much as you liked; but you could not deny the fall; they had gone down with something of an ignoble “wallop.” Doggie began to set a high value on guns and rifles and such-like deadly engines, and to inquire petulantly why the Government were not providing them at greater numbers and at greater speed. On his periodic visits to London he wandered round by Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, to see for himself how the recruiting was going on. At the Deanery he joined in ardent discussions of the campaign in Flanders. On the walls of his peacock and ivory room were maps stuck all over with little pins. When he told the young officer that he was wearied of inaction, he spoke the truth. He began to feel mightily aggrieved against Providence for keeping him outside this tremendous national league of youth. He never questioned his physical incapacity. It was as real a fact as the German guns. He went about pitying himself and seeking pity.

The months passed. The regiment moved away from Durdlebury, and Doggie was left alone in Denby Hall.

He felt solitary and restless. News came from Oliver that he had been offered and had accepted an infantry commission, and that Chipmunk, having none of the special qualities of a “oss soldier,” had, by certain skilful wire-pullings, been transferred to his regiment, and had once more become his devoted servant. “A month of this sort of thing,” he wrote, “would make our dear old Doggie sit up.” Doggie sighed. If only he had been blessed with Oliver’s constitution!

One morning Briggins, his chauffeur, announced that he could stick it no longer and was going to join up. Then Doggie remembered a talk he had had with one of the young officers who had expressed astonishment at his not being able to drive a car. “I shouldn’t have the nerve,” he had replied. “My nerves are all wrong – and I shouldn’t have the strength to change tyres and things.”... If his chauffeur went, he would find it very difficult to get another. Who would drive the Rolls-Royce?

“Why not learn to drive yourself, sir?” said Briggins. “Not the Rolls-Royce. I would put it up or get rid of it, if I were you. If you engage a second-rate man, as you’ll have to, who isn’t used to this make of car, he’ll do it in for you pretty quick. Get a smaller one in its place and drive it yourself. I’ll undertake to teach you enough before I go.”

So Doggie, following Briggins’ advice, took lessons and, to his amazement, found that he did not die of nervous collapse when a dog crossed the road in front of the car and that the fitting of detachable wheels did not require the strength of a Hercules. The first time he took Peggy out in the two-seater he swelled with pride.

“I’m so glad to see you can do something!” she said.

Although she was kind and as mildly affectionate as ever, he had noticed of late a curious reserve in her manner. Conversation did not flow easily. There seemed to be something at the back of her mind. She had fits of abstraction from which, when rallied, she roused herself with an effort.

“It’s the war,” she would declare. “It’s affecting everybody that way.”

Gradually Doggie began to realize that she spoke truly. Most people of his acquaintance, when he was by, seemed to be thus afflicted. The lack of interest they manifested in his delicacy of

constitution was almost impolite. At last he received an anonymous letter, "For little Doggie Trevor, from the girls of Durdlebury," enclosing a white feather.

The cruelty of it broke Doggie down. He sat in his peacock and ivory room and nearly wept. Then he plucked up courage and went to Peggy. She was rather white about the lips as she listened.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I expected something of the sort to happen."

"It's brutal and unjust."

"Yes, it's brutal," she admitted coldly.

"I thought you, at any rate, would sympathize with me," he cried.

She turned on him. "And what about me? Who sympathizes with me? Do you ever give a moment's thought to what I've had to go through the last few months?"

"I don't quite know what you mean," he stammered.

"I should have thought it was obvious. You can't be such an innocent babe as to suppose people don't talk about you. They don't talk to you because they don't like to be rude. They send you white feathers instead. But they talk to me. 'Why isn't Marmaduke in khaki?' 'Why isn't Doggie fighting?' 'I wonder how you can allow him to slack about like that!' – I've had a pretty rough time fighting your battles, I can tell you, and I deserve some credit. I want sympathy just as much as you do."

"My dear," said Doggie, feeling very much humiliated, "I never knew. I never thought. I do see now the unpleasant position you've been in. People are brutes. But," he added eagerly, "you told them the real reason?"

"What's that?" she asked, looking at him with cold eyes.

Then Doggie knew that the wide world was against him. "I'm not fit. I've no constitution. I'm an impossibility."

"You thought you had nerves until you learned to drive the car. Then you discovered that you hadn't. You fancy you've a weak heart. Perhaps if you learned to walk thirty miles a day you would discover you hadn't that either. And so with the rest of it."

"This is very painful," he said, going to the window and staring out. "Very painful. You are of the same opinion as the young women who sent me that abominable thing."

She had been on the strain for a long while and something inside her had snapped. At his woebegone attitude she relented however, and came up and touched his shoulder.

"A girl wants to feel some pride in the man she's going to marry. It's horrible to have to be always defending him – especially when she's not sure she's telling the truth in his defence."

He swung round horrified. "Do you think I'm shamming, so as to get out of serving in the Army?"

"Not consciously. Unconsciously, I think you are. What does your doctor say?"

Doggie was taken aback. He had no doctor. He had not consulted one for years, having no cause for medical advice. The old family physician who had attended his mother in her last illness and had prescribed Gregory powders for him as a child, had retired from Durdlebury long ago. There was only one person living familiar with his constitution, and that was himself. He made confession of the surprising fact. Peggy made a little gesture.

"That proves it. I don't believe you have anything wrong with you. The nerves business made me sceptical. This is straight talking. It's horrid, I know. But it's best to get through with it once and for all."

Some men would have taken deep offence and, consigning Peggy to the devil, have walked out of the room. But Doggie, a conscientious, even though a futile human being, was gnawed for the first time by the suspicion that Peggy might possibly be right. He desired to act honourably.

"I'll do," said he, "whatever you think proper."

Peggy was swift to smite the malleable iron. To use the conventional phrase might give an incorrect impression of red-hot martial ardour on the part of Doggie.

“Good,” she said, with the first smile of the day. “I’ll hold you to it. But it will be an honourable bargain. Get Dr. Murdoch to overhaul you thoroughly, with a view to the Army. If he passes you, take a commission. Dad says he can easily get you one through his old friend General Gadsby at the War Office. If he doesn’t, and you’re unfit, I’ll stick to you through thick and thin, and make the young women of Durdlebury wish they’d never been born.”

She put out her hand. Doggie took it.

“Very well,” said he, “I agree.”

She laughed, and ran to the door.

“Where are you going?”

“To the telephone – to ring up Dr. Murdoch for an appointment.”

“You’re flabby,” said Dr. Murdoch the next morning to an anxious Doggie in pink pyjamas; “but that’s merely a matter of unused muscles. Physical training will set it right in no time. Otherwise, my dear Trevor, you’re in splendid health. I was afraid your family history might be against you – the child of elderly parents, and so forth. But nothing of the sort. Not only are you a first-class life for an insurance company, but you’re a first-class life for the Army – and that’s saying a good deal. There’s not a flaw in your whole constitution.”

He put away his stethoscope and smiled at Doggie, who regarded him blankly as the pronouncer of a doom. He went on to prescribe a course of physical exercises, so many miles a day walking, such and such back-breaking and contortional performances in his bathroom; if possible, a skilfully graduated career in a gymnasium, but his words fell on the ears of a Doggie in a dream; and when he had ended, Doggie said:

“I’m afraid, Doctor, you’ll have to write all that out for me.”

“With pleasure,” smiled the doctor, and gripped him by the hand. And seeing Doggie wince, he said heartily: “Ah! I’ll soon set that right for you. I’ll get you something – an india-rubber contrivance to practise with for half an hour a day, and you’ll develop a hand like a gorilla’s.”

Dr. Murdoch grinned his way, in his little car, to his next patient. Here was this young slacker, coddled from birth, absolutely horse-strong and utterly confounded at being told so. He grinned and chuckled so much that he nearly killed his most valuable old lady patient, who was crossing the High Street.

But Doggie crept out of bed and put on a violet dressing-gown that clashed horribly with his pink pyjamas, and wandered like a man in a nightmare to his breakfast. But he could not eat. He swallowed a cup of coffee and sought refuge in his own room. He was frightened. Horribly frightened, caught in a net from which there was no escape – not the tiniest break of a mesh. He had given his word – and in justice to Doggie, be it said that he held his word sacred – he had given his word to join the Army if he should be passed by Murdoch. He had been passed – more than passed. He would have to join. He would have to fight. He would have to live in a muddy trench, sleep in mud, eat in mud, plough through mud, in the midst of falling shells and other instruments of death. And he would be an officer, with all kinds of strange and vulgar men under him, men like Chipmunk, for instance, whom he would never understand. He was almost physically sick with apprehension. He realized that he had never commanded a man in his life. He had been mortally afraid of Briggins, his late chauffeur. He had heard that men at the front lived on some solid horror called bully-beef dug out of tins, and some liquid horror called cocoa, also drunk out of tins; that men kept on their clothes, even their boots, for weeks at a time; that rats ran over them while they tried to sleep; that lice, hitherto associated in his mind with the most revolting type of tramp, out there made no distinction of persons. They were the common lot of the lowest Tommy and the finest gentleman. And then the fighting. The noise of the horrid guns. The disgusting sights of men shattered to bloody bits. The horrible stench. The terror of having one’s face shot half away and being an object of revolt and horror to all beholders for the rest of life. Death. Feverishly he ruffled his comely hair. Death. He was surprised that the contemplation of it did not freeze the blood in his veins. Yes. He put it clearly before him. He had given his word to

Peggy that he would go and expose himself to Death. Death. What did it mean? He had been brought up in orthodox Church of England Christianity. His flaccid mind had never questioned the truth of its dogmas. He believed, in a general sort of way, that good people went to Heaven and bad people went to Hell. His conscience was clear. He had never done any harm to anybody. As far as he knew, he had broken none of the Ten Commandments. In a technical sense he was a miserable sinner, and so proclaimed himself once a week. But though, perhaps, he had done nothing in his life to merit eternal bliss in Paradise, yet, on the other hand, he had committed no action which would justify a kindly and just Creator in consigning him to the eternal flames of Hell. Somehow the thought of Death did not worry him. It faded from his mind, being far less terrible than life under prospective conditions. Discomfort, hunger, thirst, cold, fatigue, pain; above all the terror of his fellows – these were the soul-racking anticipations of this new life into which it was a matter of honour for him to plunge. And to an essential gentleman like Doggie a matter of honour was a matter of life. And so, dressed in his pink pyjamas and violet dressing-gown, amid the peacock-blue and ivory hangings of his boudoir room, and stared at by the countless unsympathetic eyes of his little china dogs, Doggie Trevor passed through his first Gethsemane.

His decision was greeted with joy at the Deanery. Peggy threw her arms round his neck and gave him the very first real kiss he had ever received. It revived him considerably. His Aunt Sophia also embraced him. The Dean shook him warmly by the hand, and talked eloquent patriotism. Doggie already felt a hero. He left the house in a glow, but the drive home in the two-seater was cold and the pitch-dark night presaged other nights of mercilessness in the future; and when Doggie sat alone by his fire, sipping the hot milk which Peddle presented him on a silver tray, the doubts and fears of the morning racked him again. An ignoble possibility occurred to him. Murdoch might be wrong. Murdoch might be prejudiced by local gossip. Would it not be better to go up to London and obtain the opinion of a first-class man to whom he was unknown? There was also another alternative. Flight. He might go to America, and do nothing. To the South of France, and help in some sort of way with hospitals for French wounded. He caught himself up short as these thoughts passed through his mind, and he shuddered. He took up the glass of hot milk and put it down again. Milk? He needed something stronger. A glance in a mirror showed him his sleek hair tousled into an upstanding wig. In a kind of horror of himself he went to the dining-room and for the first time in his life drank a stiff whisky and soda for the sake of the stimulant. Reaction came. He felt a man once more. Rather suicide at once than such damnable dishonour. According to the directions which the Dean, a man of affairs, had given him, he sat down and wrote his application to the War Office for a commission. Then – unique adventure! – he stole out of the barred and bolted house, without thought of hat and overcoat (let the traducers of alcohol mark it well), ran down the drive and posted the letter in the box some few yards beyond his entrance gates.

The Dean had already posted his letter to his old friend General Gadsby at the War Office.

So the die was cast. The Rubicon was crossed. The bridges were burnt. The irrevocable step was taken. Dr. Murdoch turned up the next morning with his prescription for physical training. And then Doggie trained assiduously, monotonously, wearily. He grew appalled by the senselessness of this apparently unnecessary exertion. Now and then Peggy accompanied him on his prescribed walks; but the charm of her company was discounted by the glaring superiority of her powers of endurance. While he ached with fatigue, she pressed along as fresh as Atalanta at the beginning of her race. When they parted by the Deanery door, she would stand flushed, radiant in her youth and health, and say:

“We’ve had a topping walk, old dear. Now isn’t it a glorious thing to feel oneself alive?”

But poor Doggie of the flabby muscles felt half dead.

The fateful letter burdening Doggie with the King’s commission arrived a few weeks later: a second lieutenancy in a Fusilier battalion of the New Army. Dates and instructions were given. The impress of the Royal Arms at the head of the paper, with its grotesque perky lion and unicorn, conveyed to Doggie a sense of the grip of some uncanny power. The typewritten words scarcely

mattered. The impress fascinated him. There was no getting away from it. Those two pawing beasts held him in their clutch. They headed a Death Warrant, from which there was no appeal.

Doggie put his house in order, dismissed with bounty those of his servants who would be no longer needed, and kept the Peddles, husband and wife, to look after his interests. On his last night at home he went wistfully through the familiar place, the drawing-room sacred to his mother's memory, the dining-room so solid in its half-century of comfort, his own peacock and ivory room so intensely himself, so expressive of his every taste, every mood, every emotion. Those strange old-world musical instruments – he could play them all with the touch or breath of a master and a lover. The old Italian theorbo. He took it up. How few to-day knew its melodious secret! He looked around. All these daintinesses and prettinesses had a meaning. They signified the magical little beauties of life – things which asserted a range of spiritual truths, none the less real and consolatory because vice and crime and ugliness and misery and war co-existed in ghastly fact on other facets of the planet Earth. The sweetness here expressed was as essential to the world's spiritual life as the sweet elements of foodstuffs to its physical life. To the getting together of all these articles of beauty he had devoted the years of his youth... And – another point of view – was he not the guardian by inheritance – in other words, by Divine Providence – of this beautiful English home, the trustee of English comfort, of the sacred traditions of sweet English life that had made England the only country, the only country, he thought, that could call itself a Country and not a Compromise, in the world?

And he was going to leave it all. All that it meant in beauty and dignity and ease of life. For what?

For horror and filthiness and ugliness, for everything against which his beautiful peacock and ivory room protested. Doggie's last night at Denby Hall was a troubled one.

Aunt Sophia and Peggy accompanied him to London and stayed with him at his stuffy little hotel off Bond Street, while Doggie got his kit together. They bought everything in every West End shop that any salesman assured them was essential for active service. Swords, revolvers, field-glasses, pocket-knives (for gigantic pockets), compasses, mess-tins, cooking-batteries, sleeping-bags, waterproofs, boots innumerable, toilet accessories, drinking-cups, thermos flasks, field stationery cases, periscopes, tinted glasses, Gieve waistcoats, cholera belts, portable medicine cases, earplugs, tin-openers, corkscrews, notebooks, pencils, luminous watches, electric torches, pins, housewives, patent seat walking-sticks – everything that the man of commercial instincts had devised for the prosecution of the war.

The amount of warlike equipment with which Doggie, with the aid of his Aunt Sophia and Peggy, encumbered the narrow little passages of Sturrocks's Hotel, must have weighed about a ton.

At last Doggie's uniforms – several suits – came home. He had devoted enormous care to their fit. Attired in one he looked beautiful. Peggy decreed a dinner at the Carlton. She and Doggie alone. Her mother could get some stuffy old relation to spend the evening with her at Sturrocks's. She wanted Doggie all to herself, so as to realize the dream of many disgusting and humiliating months. And as she swept through the palm court and up the broad stairs and wound through the crowded tables of the restaurant with the khaki-clad Doggie by her side, she felt proud and uplifted. Here was her soldier whom she had made. Her very own man in khaki.

"Dear old thing," she whispered, pressing his arm as they trekked to their table. "Don't you feel glorious? Don't you feel as if you could face the universe?"

Peggy drank one glass of the quart of champagne. Doggie drank the rest.

On getting into bed he wondered why this unprecedented quantity of wine had not affected his sobriety. Its only effect had been to stifle thought. He went to bed and slept happily, for Peggy's parting kiss had been such as would conduce to any young man's felicity.

The next morning Aunt Sophia and Peggy saw him off to his depot, with his ton of luggage. He leaned out of the carriage window and exchanged hand kisses with Peggy until the curve of the line cut her off. Then he settled down in his corner with the *Morning Post*. But he could not concentrate

his attention on the morning news. This strange costume in which he was clothed seemed unreal, monstrous; no longer the natty dress in which he had been proud to prink the night before, but a nightmare, Nessus-like investiture, signifying some abominable burning doom.

The train swept him into a world that was upside down.

CHAPTER VII

Those were proud days for Peggy. She went about Durdlebury with her head in the air, and her step was as martial as though she herself wore the King's uniform, and she regarded the other girls of the town with a defiant eye. If only she could discover, she thought, the sender of the abominable feather! In Timpany's drapery establishment she raked the girls at the counter with a searching glance. At the cathedral services she studied the demure faces of her contemporaries. Now that Doggie was a soldier she held the anonymous exploit to be cowardly and brutal. What did people know of the thousand and one reasons that kept eligible young men out of the Army? What had they known of Marmaduke? As soon as the illusion of his life had been dispelled, he had marched away with as gallant a tread as anybody; and though Doggie had kept to himself his shrinkings and his terrors, she knew that what to the average hardily bred young man was a gay adventure, was to him an ordeal of considerable difficulty. She longed for his first leave, so that she could parade him before the town, in the event of there being a lurking sceptic who still refused to believe that he had joined the Army.

Conspicuous in the drawing-room, framed in silver, stood a large full-length photograph of Doggie in his new uniform.

She wrote to him daily, chronicling the little doings of the town, at times reviling it for its dullness. Dad, on numberless committees, was scarcely ever in the house, except for hurried meals. Most of the pleasant young clergy had gone. Many of the girls had gone too: Dorothy Bruce to be a probationer in a V.A.D. hospital. If Durdlebury were not such a rotten out-of-the-world place, the infirmary would be full of wounded soldiers, and she could do her turn at nursing. As things were, she could only knit socks for Tommies and a silk khaki tie for her own boy. But when everybody was doing their bit, these occupations were not enough to prevent her feeling a little slacker. He would have to do the patriotic work for both of them, tell her all about himself, and let her share everything with him in imagination. She also expressed her affection for him in shy and slangy terms.

Doggie wrote regularly. His letters were as shy and conveyed less information. The work was hard, the hours long, his accommodation Spartan. They were in huts on Salisbury Plain. Sometimes he confessed himself too tired to write more than a few lines. He had a bad cold in the head. He was better. They had inoculated him against typhoid and had allowed him two or three slack days. The first time he had unaccountably fainted; but he had seen some of the men do the same, and the doctor had assured him that it had nothing to do with cowardice. He had gone for a route march and had returned a dusty lump of fatigue. But after having shaken the dust out of his moustache – Doggie had a playful turn of phrase now and then – and drunk a quart of shandy-gaff, he had felt refreshed. Then it rained hard, and they were all but washed out of the huts. It was a very strange life – one which he never dreamed could have existed. "Fancy me," he wrote, "glad to sleep on a drenched bed!" There was the riding-school. Why hadn't he learned to ride as a boy? He had been told that the horse was a noble animal and the friend of man. He was afraid he would return to his dear Peggy with many of his young illusions shattered. The horse was the most ignoble, malevolent beast that ever walked, except the sergeant-major in the riding-school. Peggy was filled with admiration for his philosophic endurance of hardships. It was real courage. His letters contained simple statements of fact, but not a word of complaint. On the other hand, they were not ebullient with joy; but then, Peggy reflected, there was not much to be joyous about in a ramshackle hut on Salisbury Plain. "Dear old thing," she would write, "although you don't grouse, I know you must be having a pretty thin time. But you're bucking up splendidly, and when you get your leave I'll do a girl's very d – dest (don't be shocked; but I'm sure you're learning far worse language in the Army) to make it up to you." Her heart was very full of him.

Then there came a time when his letters grew rarer and shorter. At last they ceased altogether. After a week's waiting she sent an anxious telegram. The answer came back. "Quite well. Will write

soon.” She waited. He did not write. One evening an unstamped envelope, addressed to her in a feminine hand, which she recognized as that of Marmaduke’s anonymous correspondent, was found in the Deanery letter-box. The envelope enclosed a copy of a cutting from the “Gazette” of the morning paper, and a sentence was underlined and adorned with exclamation marks at the sides.

“R. Fusiliers. Tempy. 2nd Lieutenant J. Trevor resigns his commission.”

The Colonel dealt with him as gently as he could in that final interview. He put his hand in a fatherly way on Doggie’s shoulder and bade him not take it too much to heart. He had done his best; but he was not cut out for an officer. These were merciless times. In matters of life and death we could not afford weak links in the chain. Soldiers in high command, with great reputations, had already been scrapped. In Doggie’s case there was no personal discredit. He had always conducted himself like a gentleman and a man of honour, but he had not the qualities necessary for the commanding of men. He must send in his resignation.

“But what can I do, sir?” asked Doggie in a choking voice. “I am disgraced for ever.”

The Colonel reflected for a moment. He knew that Doggie’s life had been a little hell on earth from the first day he had joined. He was very sorry for the poor little toy Pom in his pack of hounds. It was scarcely the toy Pom’s fault that he had failed. But the Great Hunt could have no use for toy Poms. At last he took a sheet of regimental notepaper and wrote:

“Dear Trevor, —

“I am full of admiration for the plucky way in which you have striven to overcome your physical disabilities, and I am only too sorry that they should have compelled the resignation of your commission and your severance from the regiment.

“Yours sincerely,

“L. G. Caird,

“Lt-Col.”

He handed it to Doggie.

“That’s all I can do for you, my poor boy,” said he.

“Thank you, sir,” said Doggie.

Doggie took a room at the Savoy Hotel, and sat there most of the day, the pulp of a man. He had gone to the Savoy, not daring to show his face at the familiar Sturrocks’s. At the Savoy he was but a number unknown, unquestioned. He wore civilian clothes. Such of his uniforms and martial paraphernalia as he had been allowed to retain in camp – for one can’t house a ton of kit in a hut – he had given to his batman. His one desire now was to escape from the eyes of his fellow-men. He felt that he bore upon him the stigma of his disgrace, obvious to any casual glance. He was the man who had been turned out of the army as a hopeless incompetent. Even worse than the slacker – for the slacker might have latent the qualities that he lacked. Even at the best and brightest, he could only be mistaken for a slacker, once more the likely recipient of white feathers from any damsel patriotically indiscreet. The Colonel’s letter brought him little consolation. It is true that he carried it about with him in his pocket-book; but the gibing eyes of observers had not the X-ray power to read it there. And he could not pin it on his hat. Besides, he knew that the kindly Colonel had stretched a point of veracity. No longer could he take refuge in his cherished delicacy of constitution. It would be a lie.

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