GOOD OLD ANNA

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

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By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

Author of
"The Chink in the Armour," "The Lodger,"
"The End of Her Honeymoon," etc., etc.

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GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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GOOD OLD ANNA

CHAPTER I

AND now," asked Miss Forsyth thoughtfully, "and now, my dear Mary, what, may I ask, are you going to do about your good old Anna?"

"Do about Anna?" repeated the other. "I don't quite understand what you mean."

In her heart Mrs. Otway thought she understood very well what her old friend, Miss Forsyth, meant by the question. For it was Wednesday, the 5th of August, 1914. England had just declared war on Germany, and Anna was Mrs. Otway's faithful, highly valued German servant.

Miss Forsyth was one of those rare people who always require an answer to a question, and who also (which is rarer still) seldom speak without having first thought out what they are about to say. It was this quality of mind, far more than the fact that she had been born, sixty years ago, in the Palace at Witanbury, which gave her the position she held in the society of the cathedral town.

But this time she herself went on speaking: "In your place I should think very seriously of sending Anna back to Germany." There was an unusual

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note of hesitation and of doubt in her voice. As a rule Miss Forsyth knew exactly what she thought about everything, and what she herself would be minded to do in any particular case.

But the other lady, incensed at what she considered uncalled-for, even rather impertinent advice, replied sharply, "I shouldn't think of doing anything so unkind and so unjust! Why, because the powers of evil have conquered—I mean by that the dreadful German military party—should I behave unjustly to a faithful old German woman who has been with me—let me see—why, who has been with me exactly eighteen years? With the exception of a married niece with whom she went and stayed in Berlin three autumns ago, my poor old Anna hasn't a relation left in Germany. Her whole life is centred in me—or perhaps I ought to say in Rose. She was the only nurse Rose ever had."

"And yet she has remained typically German," observed Miss Forsyth irrelevantly.

"Of course she has!" cried Mrs. Otway quickly. "And that is why we are both so much attached to her. Anna has all the virtues of the German woman; she is faithful, kindly, industrious, and thrifty."

"But, Mary, has it not occurred to you that you will find it very awkward sometimes?" Again without waiting for an answer, Miss Forsyth went on: "Our working people have long felt it very hard that there should be so many Germans in England, taking away their jobs."

"They have only themselves to thank for that," said Mrs. Otway, with more sharpness than was usual with an exceptionally kindly and amiable nature.

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"Germans are much more industrious than our people are, and they are content with less wages. Also you must forgive me if I say, dear Miss Forsyth, that I don't quite see what the jealousy of the average working-man, or, for the matter of that, of the average mechanic, has to do with my good old Anna, especially at such a time as this."

"Don't you really?" Miss Forsyth looked curiously into the other's flushed and still fair, delicately tinted face. She had always thought Mary Otway a rather foolish, if also a lovable, generous-hearted woman. But this was one of the few opinions Miss Forsyth always managed to keep to herself.

"I suppose you mean," said the other reluctantly, "that if I had not had Anna as a servant all these years I should have been compelled to have an Englishwoman?"

"Yes, Mary, that is exactly what I do mean! But of course I should never have spoken to you about the matter were it not for to-day's news. My maid, Pusey, you know, spoke to me about it this morning, and said that if you should be thinking of parting with her—if your good old Anna should be thinking, for instance, of going back to Germany—she knew some one who she thought would suit you admirably. It's a woman who was cook in a very good London place, and whose health has rather given way."

Miss Forsyth spoke with what was for her unusual animation.

As is always the way with your active, intelligent philanthropist, she was much given to vicarious deeds of charity. At the same time she never spared herself. Her own comfortable house always contained one or

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more of the odd-come-shorts whom she had not managed to place out in good situations.

Again a wave of resentment swept over Mrs. Otway. This was really too much!

"How would such a woman as you describe—a cook who has been in a good London place, and who has lost her health—work into our—mine and Rose's—ways? Why, we should both be afraid of such a woman! She would impose on us at every turn. If you only knew, dear Miss Forsyth, how often, in the last twenty years, I have thanked God—I say it in all reverence—for having sent me my good old Anna! Think what it has been to me"—she spoke with a good deal of emotion—"to have in my tiny household a woman so absolutely trustworthy that I could always go away and leave my child with her, happy in the knowledge that Rose was as safe with Anna as she was with me——"

Her voice broke, a lump came into her throat, but she hurried on: "Don't think that it has all been perfect—that I have lain entirely on a bed of roses! Anna has been very tiresome sometimes; and, as you know, her daughter, to whom I was really attached, and whom I regarded more or less as Rose's foster-sister, made that unfortunate marriage to a worthless London tradesman. That's the black spot in Anna's life—I don't mind telling you that it's been a blacker spot in mine than I've ever cared to admit, even to myself. The man's always getting into scrapes, and having to be got out of them! Why, *you* once helped me about him, didn't you? and since then James Hayley actually had to go to the police about the man."

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"Mr. Hayley will be busier than ever now."

"Yes, I suppose he will."

And then the two ladies, looking at one another, smiled one of those funny little smiles which may mean a great deal, or nothing at all.

James Hayley, the son of one of Mrs. Otway's first cousins, was in the Foreign Office; and if he had an inordinate opinion of himself and of his value to his country, he was still a very good, steady fellow. Lately he had fallen into the way of coming down to Witanbury exceedingly often; but when doing so he did not stay with the Otways, in their pretty house in the Close, as would have been nautral, and as would also naturally have made his visits rather less frequent; instead, he stayed in lodgings close to the gateway which divided the Close from the town, and thus was able to be at the Trellis House as much or as little as he liked. It was generally much. Mrs. Otway wondered whether the war would so far affect his work as to keep him away from Witanbury this summer. She rather hoped it would.

"I'm even more sorry than usual for Jervis Blake to-day!" and this time there was a note of real kindness in Miss Forsyth's voice. "I shouldn't be surprised if he enlisted."

"Oh, I hope he won't do *that!*" Mrs. Otway was shocked at the suggestion. Jervis Blake was a person for whom she had a good deal of tolerant affection. He was quite an ordinary young man, and he had had the quite ordinary bad luck of failing to pass successive Army examinations. The news that he had failed again had just become known to his friends, and unluckily it was his last chance, as he was now

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past the age limit. The exceptional feature in his very common case was that he happened to be the only son of a distinguished soldier.

"*I* should certainly enlist if I were he," continued Miss Forsyth thoughtfully. "He wouldn't have long to wait for promotion from the ranks."

"His father would never forgive him!"

"The England of to-day is a different England from the England of yesterday," observed Miss Forsyth drily; and as the other stared at her, genuinely astonished by the strange words, "Don't you agree that that is so, Mary?"

"No, I can't say that I do." Mrs. Otway spoke with greater decision than was her wont. Miss Forsyth was far too fond of setting the world to rights.

"Ah! well, I think it is. And I only wish I was a young man instead of an old woman! I'm sorry for every Englishman who is too old to take up arms in this just cause. What must be Major Guthrie's feelings to-day! How he must regret having left the Army to please his selfish old mother! It's the more hard on him as he always believed this war would come. He really *knows* Germany."

"Major Guthrie only knows *military* Germany," said Mrs. Otway slowly.

"It's only what you call military Germany which counts to-day," observed Miss Forsyth quickly; and then, seeing that her friend looked hurt, and even, what she so very seldom was, angry too, she held out her hand with the words: "And now I must be moving on, for before going to the cathedral I have to see Mrs. Haworth for a minute. By the way, I hear that the Dean intends to give a little address about

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the war." She added, in a different and a kindlier tone: "You must forgive me, Mary, for saying what I did about your good old Anna! But you know I'm really fond of you, and I'm even fonder of your sweet Rose than I am of you. I always feel that there is a great deal in Rose—more than in any other girl I know. And then—well, Mary, she is so very pretty! prettier than you even were, though you had a way of making every one think you lovely!"

Mrs. Otway laughed. She was quite mollified. "I know how fond you are of Rose," she said gratefully, "and, of course, I don't mind your having spoken to me about Anna. But as to parting with her—that would mean the end of the world to us, to your young friend Rose even more than to me. Why, it would be worse—far worse—than the war!"

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CHAPTER II

AS Mrs. Otway walked slowly on, she could not help telling herself that dear old Miss Forsyth had been more interfering and tiresome than she usually was this morning.

She felt ruffled by the little talk they two had just had—so ruffled and upset that, instead of turning into the gate of the house where she had been bound—for she, too, had meant to pay a call in the Close on her way to the cathedral—she walked slowly on the now deserted stretch of road running through and under the avenue of elm trees which are so beautiful and distinctive a feature of Witanbury Close.

Again a lump rose to her throat, and this time the tears started into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. In sheer astonishment at her own emotion, she stopped short, and taking out her handkerchief dabbed her eyes hurriedly. How strange that this interchange of words with one whose peculiarities she had known, and, yes, suffered under and smiled at for so many years, should make her feel so—so—so upset!

Mrs. Otway was a typical Englishwoman of her age, which was forty-three, and of her class, which was that from which are drawn most of the women from whom the clergy of the Established Church choose their wives. There are thousands such, living in serene girlhood, wifehood, or widowhood, to be found in the villages and country towns of dear old England. With but very few exceptions, they are kindly-natured,

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unimaginative, imbued with a shrinking dislike of any exaggerated display of emotion; in some ways amazingly broad-minded, in others curiously limited in their outlook on life. Such women, as a rule, present few points of interest to students of human nature, for they are almost invariably true to type, their virtues and their defects being cast in the same moulds.

But Mrs. Otway was much more original and more impulsive, thus far less "groovy," than the people among whom her lot was cast. There were even censorious folk in Witanbury who called her eccentric. She was generous-hearted, easily moved to enthusiasm, tenacious of her opinions and prejudices. She had remained young of heart, and her fair, curling hair, her slight, active figure, and delicately-tinted skin, gave her sometimes an almost girlish look. Those who met her for the first time were always surprised to find that Mrs. Otway had a grown-up daughter.

As a girl she had spent two very happy years in Germany, at Weimar, and she had kept from those far-off days a very warm and affectionate feeling towards the Fatherland, as also a rather exceptionally good knowledge both of the German language and of old-fashioned German literature. Then had come a short engagement, followed by five years of placid, happy marriage with a minor canon of Witanbury Cathedral. And then, at the end of those five years, which had slipped by so easily and so quickly, she had found herself alone, with one little daughter, and woefully restricted means. It had seemed, and indeed it had been, a godsend to come across, in Anna Bauer, a German widow who, for a miraculously

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low wage, had settled down into her little household, to become and to remain, not only an almost perfect servant, but as time went on a most valued and trusted friend.

The fact that Mrs. Otway had been left a legacy by a distant relation, while making her far more comfortable, had not caused her to alter very materially her way of life. She had raised Anna's modest wage, and she was no longer compelled to look quite so closely after every penny. Also, mother and daughter were now able to take delightful holidays together. They had planned one such for this very autumn to Germany—Germany, the country still so dear to Mrs. Otway, which she had always longed to show her daughter.

It was natural that the news which had burst upon England to-day should have unsealed the fountain of deep emotion in her nature. Mrs. Otway, like almost every one she knew, had not believed that there would or could be a great Continental war, and when that had become, with stunning suddenness, an accomplished fact, she had felt sure that her country would remain out of the awful maelstrom.

Send their good old Anna back to Germany? Why, the idea was unthinkable! What would she, Mary Otway, what would her daughter, Rose, do without Anna? Anna had become—Mrs. Otway realised it to-day as she had never realised it before—the corner-stone of their modest, happy House of Life.

Miss Forsyth had, however, said one thing which was unfortunately true. It is strange how often

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these positive, rather managing people hit the right nail on the head! The fact that England and Germany were now at war *would* sometimes make things a little awkward with regard to poor old Anna. Something of the kind had, indeed, happened on this very morning, less than two hours ago. And at the time it had been very painful, very disagreeable. . . .

Mrs. Otway and her daughter, each opening a newspaper before beginning breakfast, had looked up, and in awe-struck tones simultaneously exclaimed, "Why, we are at war!" and "War has been declared!" And then Mrs. Otway, as was her wont, had fallen into eager, impulsive talk. But she had to stop abruptly when the dining-room door opened —for it revealed the short, stumpy figure of Anna, smiling, indeed beaming even more than usual, as she brought in the coffee she made so well. Mother and daughter had looked at one another across the table, an unspoken question in each pair of kind eyes. That question was: *Did poor old Anna know?*

The answer came with dramatic swiftness, and in the negative. Anna approached her mistress, still with that curious look of beaming happiness in her round, fat, plain face, and after she had put down the coffee-jug she held out her work-worn hand. On it was a pink card, and in her excitement she broke into eager German.

"The child has come!" she exclaimed. "Look! This is what I have received, gracious lady," and she put the card on her mistress's plate.

What was written, or rather printed, on that fancy-looking card, ran, when Englished, as follows:

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THE JOYOUS BIRTH OF A LARGE-EYED SUNDAY MAIDEN IS ANNOUNCED, ULTRA-JUBILANTLY, BY WILHELM WARSHAUER, SUB-INSPECTOR OF POLICE IN BERLIN, AND WIFE MINNA, BORN BROCKMANN.

Of course they both congratulated their good old Anna very heartily on the birth of the little great-niece in Berlin—indeed Rose, jumping up from the table, had surprised her mother by giving her old nurse a hug. "I'm so glad, dear Anna! How happy they seem to be!"

But when Anna had returned to her kitchen the two ladies had gone on silently and rather sadly with their breakfasts and their papers; and after she had finished, Mrs. Otway, with a heavy heart, had walked across the hall, to her pretty kitchen, to tell Anna the great and tragic news.

The kitchen of the Trellis House was oddly situated just opposite Mrs. Otway's sitting-room and at right angles to the dining-room. Thus the two long Georgian windows of Anna's domain commanded the wide green of the Cathedral Close, and the kitchen door was immediately on your right as you walked through the front door into the arched hall of the house.

On this momentous morning Anna's mistress found the old German woman sitting at her large wooden table writing a letter. When Mrs. Otway came in, Anna looked up and smiled; but she did not rise, as an English servant would have done.

Mrs. Otway walked across to her, and very kindly she laid her hand on the older woman's shoulder.

"I have something sad to tell you," she said gently.

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"England, my poor Anna, is at war! England has declared war on Germany! But I have come to tell you, also, that the fact that our countries are at war will make no difference to you and to me, Anna—will it?"

Anna had looked up, and for a moment she had seemed bewildered, stunned by the news. Then all the colour had receded from her round face; it became discomposed, covered with red streaks. She broke into convulsive sobs as, shaking her head violently, she exclaimed, "Nein! Nein!"

If only poor old Anna had left it there! But she had gone on, amid her sobs, to speak wildly, disconnectedly, and yes—yes, rather arrogantly too, of the old war with France in 1870—of her father, and of her long-dead brother; how both of them had fought, how gloriously they had conquered!

Mrs. Otway had begun by listening in silence to this uncalled-for outburst. But at last, with a touch of impatience, she broke across these ill-timed reminiscences with the words, "But now, Anna? *Now* there is surely no one belonging to your family likely to fight? No one, I mean, likely to fight against England?"

The old woman stared at her stupidly, as if scarcely understanding the sense of what was being said to her; and Mrs. Otway, with a touch of decision in her voice, had gone on—"How fortunate it is that your Louisa married an Englishman!"

But on that Anna had again shaken her head violently. "No, no!" she cried. "Would that a German married she had—an honest, heart-good German, not a man like that bad, worthless George!"

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To this surely unnecessary remark Mrs. Otway had made no answer. It was unluckily true that Anna's English son-in-law lacked every virtue dear to a German heart. He was lazy, pleasure-loving, dishonest in small petty ways, and contemptuous of his thrifty wife's anxious efforts to save money. Still, though it was not perhaps wise to say so just now, it would certainly have been a terrible complication if "little Louisa," as they called her in that household, had married a German—a German who would have had to go back to the Fatherland to take up arms, perhaps, against his adopted country! Anna ought surely to see the truth of that to-day, however unpalatable that truth might be.

But, sad to say, good old Anna had been strangely lacking in her usual good sense, and sturdy good-humour, this morning. Not content with that uncalled-for remark concerning her English son-in-law, she had wailed out something about "Willi"—for so she always called Wilhelm Warshauer—the nephew by marriage to whom she had become devotedly attached during the pleasant holiday she had spent in Germany three years ago.

"I do not think Willi is in the least likely to go to the war and be killed," said Mrs. Otway at last, a little sharply. "Why, he is in the police—a sub-inspector! They would never dream of sending him away. And then—— Anna? I wish you would listen to me quietly for a moment——"

Anna fixed her glazed, china-blue eyes anxiously on her mistress.

"If you go on in this way you will make yourself quite ill; and that wouldn't do at all! I am quite

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sure that you will soon hear from your niece that Willi is quite safe, that he is remaining on in Berlin. England and Germany are civilised nations after all! There need not be any unreasonable bitterness between them. Only the soldiers and sailors, not our two nations, will be at war, Anna."

Yes, the recollection of what had happened this morning left an aftermath of bitterness in Mrs. Otway's kind heart. It was only too true that it would sometimes be awkward; in saying so downright Miss Forsyth had been right! She told herself, however, that after a few days they surely would all get accustomed to this strange, unpleasant, new state of things. Why, during the long Napoleonic wars Witanbury had always been on the *qui vive*, expecting a French landing on the coast—that beautiful coast which was as lonely now as it had been then, and which, thanks to motors and splendid roads, seemed much nearer now than then. England had gone on much as usual a hundred years ago. Mrs. Otway even reminded herself that Jane Austen, during those years of stress and danger, had been writing her delightful, her humorous, her placid studies of life as though there were no war!

And then, perhaps because of her invocation of that dear, shrewd mistress of the average British human heart, Mrs. Otway, feeling far more comfortable than she had yet felt since her talk with Miss Forsyth, began retracing her steps towards the cathedral.

She was glad to know that the Dean was going to give a little address this morning. It was sure to be kindly, wise, benignant—for he was himself all these

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three things. Many delightful German thinkers, theologians and professors, came and went to the Deanery, and Mrs. Otway was always asked to meet these distinguished folk, partly because of her excellent knowledge of German, and also because the Dean knew that, like himself, she loved Germany.

And now she turned sick at heart, as she suddenly realised that for a time, at any rate, these pleasant meetings would take place no more. But soon—or so she hoped with all her soul—this strange unnatural war would be over. Even now the bubble of Prussian militarism was pricked, for the German Army was not doing well at Liége. During the last two or three days she had read the news with increasing amazement and—but she hardly admitted it to herself—with dismay. She did not like to think of Germans breaking and running away! It had hurt her, made her angry, to hear the exultation with which some of her neighbours had spoken of the news. It was all very well to praise the gallant little Belgians, but why should that be done at the expense of the Germans?

Mrs. Otway suddenly told herself that she hoped Major Guthrie would not be at the cathedral this morning. Considering that they disagreed about almost everything, it was odd what friends he and she were! But about Germany they had never agreed; and that was the more strange inasmuch as Major Guthrie had spent quite a long time in Stuttgart. He thought the Germans of to-day entirely unlike the Germans of the past. He honestly believed them to be unprincipled, untrustworthy, and unscrupulous; and, strangest thing of all—or so Mrs. Otway had thought till within the

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last few days—he had long been convinced that they intended to conquer Europe by force of arms! So strong was this conviction of his that he had given time, and yes, money too, to the propaganda carried on by Lord Roberts in favour of National Service.

It was odd that a man whose suspicions of the country which was to her so dear almost amounted to a monomania, should have become her friend. But so it was. In fact, Major Guthrie was her only man friend. He advised her about all the things concerning which men are supposed to know more than women—such as investments, for instance. Of course she did not always take his advice, but it was often a comfort to talk things out with him, and she had come instinctively to turn to him when in any little trouble. Few days passed without Major Guthrie's calling, either by chance or in response to a special invitation, at the Trellis House.

Unfortunately, or was it fortunately? the handsome old mother, for whose sake Major Guthrie had left the Army three years ago, didn't care for clerical society. She only liked country people and Londoners. As far as Mrs. Otway could dislike any one, she disliked Mrs. Guthrie; but the two ladies seldom had occasion to meet—the Guthries lived in a pretty old house in Dorycote, a village two miles from Witanbury. Also Mrs. Guthrie was more or less chair-ridden, and Mrs. Otway had no carriage.

The bells of the cathedral suddenly broke across her troublesome, disconnected thoughts. Mrs. Otway never heard those chimes without a wave of remembrance, sometimes very slight, sometimes like to-day

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quite strong and insistent, of past joys and sorrows. Those bells were interwoven with the whole of her wifehood, motherhood, and widowhood; they had rung for her wedding, they had mustered the tiny congregation who had been present at Rose's christening; the great bell had tolled the day her husband had died, and again to bid the kindly folk of Witanbury to his simple funeral. Some day, perhaps, the bells would ring a joyful peal in honour of Rose's wedding.

As she walked up the path which leads from the road encircling the Close to the cathedral, she tried to compose and attune her mind to solemn, peaceful thoughts.

There was a small congregation, perhaps thirty in all, gathered together in the choir, but the atmosphere of that tiny gathering of people was slightly electric and charged with emotion. The wife of the Dean, a short, bustling lady, who had never been so popular in Witanbury and its neighbourhood as was her husband, came forward and beckoned to Mrs. Otway. "If no one else comes in," she whispered, "I think we might all come up a little nearer. The Dean is going to say a few words about the war."

And though a few more people did come in during the five minutes that followed, the whole of the little congregation finally collected in the stalls nearest the altar. And it was not from the ornate white stone pulpit, but from the steps of the altar, that the Dean, after the short service was over, delivered his address.

For what seemed a long time—it was really only a very few moments—Dr. Haworth stood there, looking thoughtfully at this little gathering of his fellow-countrymen and countrywomen. Then he began speak-

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ing. With great simplicity and directness he alluded to the awesome news which this morning had brought to them, to England. England's declaration of war against their great neighbour, Germany—their great neighbour, and they should never forget, the only other great European nation which shared with them the blessings, he was willing to admit the perhaps in some ways doubtful blessings, brought about by the Reformation.

On hearing these words, three or four of his hearers moved a little restlessly in their seats, but soon even they settled themselves down to take in, and to approve, what he had to say.

England was going to war, however, in a just cause, to make good her promise to a small and weak nation. She had often drawn her sword on behalf of the oppressed, and never more rightly than now. But it would be wrong indeed for England to allow her heart to be filled with bitterness. It was probable that even at this moment a large number of Germans were ashamed of what had happened last Monday—he alluded to the Invasion of Belgium. Frederick the Great had once said that God was always on the side of the big battalions; in so saying he had been wrong. Even in the last two or three days they had seen how wrong. Belgium was putting up a splendid defence, and the time might come—he, the speaker, hoped it would be very soon—when Germany would realise that Might is not Right, when she would confess, with the large-hearted chivalry possible to a great and powerful nation, that she had been wrong.

Meanwhile the Dean wished to impress on his hearers the need for a generous broad-mindedness in

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their attitude towards the foe. England was a great civilised nation, and so was Germany. The war would be fought in an honourable, straightforward manner, as between high-souled enemies. Christian charity enjoined on us to be especially kind and considerate to those Germans who happened to be caught by this sad state of things, in our midst. He had heard these people spoken of that morning as "alien enemies." For his part he would not care to describe by any such offensive terms those Germans who were settled in England in peaceful avocations. The war was not of their making, and those poor foreigners were caught up in a terrible web of tragic circumstance. He himself had many dear and valued friends in Germany, professors whose only aim in life was the spread of "Kultur," not perhaps quite the same thing as we meant by the word culture, for the German "Kultur" meant something with a wider, more universal significance. He hoped the time would come, sooner perhaps than many pessimists thought possible, when those friends would acknowledge that England had drawn her sword in a righteous cause and that Germany had been wrong to provoke her.

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CHAPTER III

WHILE Mrs. Otway had been thinking over the now rather painful problem of her good old Anna, the subject of her meditations, that is Anna herself, from behind the pretty muslin curtain which hid her kitchen from the passers-by, was peeping out anxiously on the lawn-like stretch of green grass, bordered on two sides by high elms, which is so pleasant a feature of Witanbury Close.

Her knitting was in her hands, for Anna's fingers were never idle, but just now the needles were still.

When your kitchen happens to be one of the best rooms on the ground floor, and one commanding not only the gate of your domain but the road beyond, it becomes important that it should not be quite like other people's kitchens. It was Mrs. Otway's pride, as well as Anna's, that at any moment of the day a visitor who, after walking into the hall, opened by mistake the kitchen door, would have found everything there in exquisite order. The shelves, indeed, were worth going some way to see, for each shelf was edged with a beautiful "Kante" or border of crochet-work almost as fine as point lace. In fact, the kitchen of the Trellis House was more like a stage kitchen than a kitchen in an ordinary house, and the way in which it was kept was the more meritorious inasmuch as Anna, even now, when she had become an old woman, would have nothing of what is in England called "help." She had no wish to see a charwoman

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in *her* kitchen. Fortunately for her, there lay, just off and behind the kitchen, a roomy scullery, where most of the dirty, and what may be called the smelly, work connected with cooking was done.

To the left of the low-ceilinged, spacious, rather dark scullery was Anna's own bedroom. Both the scullery and the servant's room were much older than the rest of the house, for the picturesque gabled bit of brown and red brick building which projected into the garden, at the back of the Trellis House, belonged to Tudor days, to those spacious times when the great cathedral just across the green was a new pride and joy to the good folk of Witanbury.

As Anna stood at one of the kitchen windows, peeping out at the quiet scene outside, but not drawing aside the curtain—for that she knew was forbidden to her, and Anna very seldom consciously did anything she knew to be forbidden—she felt far more unhappy and far more disturbed than did Mrs. Otway herself.

This morning's news had stirred poor old Anna—stirred her more profoundly than even her kind mistress guessed. Mrs. Otway would have been surprised indeed had it been revealed to her that ever since breakfast Anna had spent a very anxious time thinking over her own immediate future, wondering with painful indecision as to whether it were not her duty to go back to Germany. But whereas Mrs. Otway had the inestimable advantage of being quite sure that she knew what it was best for Anna to do, the old German woman herself was cruelly torn between what was due to her mistress, to her married daughter, and, yes, to herself.

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How unutterably amazed Mrs. Otway would have been this morning had she known that more than a month ago Anna had received a word of warning from Berlin. But so it was: her niece had written to her, "It is believed that war this summer there is to be. Willi has been warned that something shortly will happen."

And now, as Anna stood there anxiously peeping out at the figure of her mistress pacing up and down under the avenue of high elms across the green, she did not give more than a glancing thought to England's part in the conflict, for her whole heart was absorbed in the dread knowledge that Germany was at war with terrible, barbarous Russia, and with prosperous, perfidious France.

England, so Anna firmly believed, had no army to speak of—no *real* army. She remembered the day when France had declared war on Germany in 1870. How at once every street of the little town in which she had lived had become full of soldiers—splendid, lion-hearted soldiers going off to fight for their beloved Fatherland. Nothing of the sort had taken place here, though Witanbury was a garrison town. The usual tradesmen, strong, lusty young men, had called for orders that morning. They had laughed and joked as usual. Not one of them seemed aware his country was at war. The old German woman's lip curled disdainfully.

For the British, as a people, Anna Bauer cherished a tolerant affection and kindly contempt. It was true that, all unknowing to herself, she also had a great belief in British generosity and British justice. The idea that this war, or rather the joining in of England

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with France against Germany, could affect her own position or condition in England would have seemed to her absurd.

Germany and England? A contrast indeed! In Germany her son-in-law, that idle scamp George Pollit, would by now be marching on his way to the French or Russian frontier. But George, being English, was quite safe—unfortunately. The only difference the war would make to him would be that it would provide him with an excuse for trying to get at some of Anna's carefully-hoarded savings.

If good old Anna had a fault—and curiously enough it was one of which her mistress was quite unaware, though Rose had sometimes uncomfortably suspected the fact—it was a love of money.

Anna, in spite of her low wages, had saved far more than an English servant earning twice as much would have done. Her low wage? Yes, still low, though she had been raised four pounds a year when her mistress had come into a better income. Before then Anna had been content with sixteen pounds a year. She now received twenty pounds, but she was ruefully aware that she was worth half as much again. In fact thirty pounds a year had actually been offered to her, in a roundabout way, by a lady who had come as a visitor to a house in the Close. But the lady, like Anna herself, was a German; and, apart altogether from every other consideration, including Anna's passionate love of Miss Rose, nothing would have made her take service with a mistress of her own nationality.

"This Mrs. Hirsch me to save her money wants. Her kind I know," she observed to the emissary who

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had been sent to sound her. "You can say that Anna Bauer a good mistress has, and knows when she well suited is."

She had said nothing of the matter to Mrs. Otway, but even so she sometimes thought of that offer, and she often felt a little sore when she reflected on the wages some of the easy-going servants who formed part of the larger households in the Close received from their employers.

Yet, in this all-important matter of money a stroke of extraordinary good luck had befallen Anna—one of those things that very seldom come to pass in our work-a-day world. It had happened, or perhaps it would be truer to say it had begun—for, unlike most pieces of good fortune, it was continuous—just three years ago, in the autumn of 1911, shortly after her return from that glorious holiday at Berlin. This secret stroke of luck, for she kept it jealously to herself, though there was nothing about it at all to her discredit, had now lasted for over thirty months, and it had had the agreeable effect of greatly increasing her powers of saving. Of saving, that is, against the day when she would go back to Germany, and live with her niece.

Mrs. Otway would have been surprised indeed had she known that Anna not only meant to leave the Trellis House, but that, in a quiet, reflective kind of way, she actually looked forward to doing so. Miss Rose would surely marry, for a good many pleasant-mannered gentlemen came and went to the Trellis House (though none of them were as rich as Anna would have liked one of them to be), and she herself would get past her work. When that had come to

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pass she would go and live with her niece in Berlin. She had not told her daughter of this arrangement, and it had been spoken of by Willi and her niece more as a joke than anything else; still, Anna generally managed to carry through what she had made up her mind to accomplish.

But on this August morning, standing there by the kitchen window of the Trellis House, the future was far from good old Anna's mind. Her mind was fixed on the present. How tiresome, how foolish of England to have mixed up with a quarrel which did not concern her! How strange that she, Anna Bauer, in spite of that word of warning from Berlin, had suspected nothing!

As a matter of fact Mrs. Otway had said something to her about Servia and Austria—something, too, more in sorrow than in anger, of Germany "rattling her sword." But she, Anna, had only heard with half an ear. Politics were out of woman's province. But there! English ladies were like that.

Many a time had Anna laughed aloud over the antics of the Suffragettes. About a month ago the boy who brought the meat had given her a long account of a riot—it had been a very little one—provoked by one such lady madwoman in the market-place of Witanbury itself. In wise masculine Germany the lady's relatives (for, strange to say, the Suffragette in question had been a high-born lady) would have put her in the only proper place for her, an idiot asylum.

Anna had been genuinely shocked and distressed on learning that her beloved nursling, Miss Rose, secretly rather sympathised with this mad female wish for a

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vote. Why, in Germany only some of the *men* had votes, and yet Germany was the most glorious, prosperous, and much-to-be-feared nation in the world. "Church, Kitchen, and Children"—that should be, and in the Fatherland still was, every true woman's motto and province.

Anna's mind came back with a sudden jerk to this morning's surprising, almost incredible news. Since her two ladies had gone out, she had opened the newspapers on her kitchen table and read the words for herself—"England Declares War on Germany." But how could England do such a thing, when England had no Army? True, she had ships—but then so now had Germany!

During that blissful holiday in Berlin, Anna had been persuaded to join the German Navy League. She had not meant to keep up her subscription, small though it was, after her return to England, but rather to her disgust she had found that one of the few Germans she knew in Witanbury represented the League, and that her name had been sent to him as that of a new member. Twice he had called at the tradesmen's entrance to the Trellis House, and had demanded the sum of one shilling from her.

To-day Anna remembered with satisfaction those payments she had grudged. Thanks to her patriotism, and that of millions like her, Germany had now a splendid fleet with which to withstand her enemies. She wondered if that fleet (for which she had helped to pay) would ensure the safe delivery of parcels and letters. Probably yes.

With a relieved look on her face, the old woman

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dropped the curtains, and went back to the table and to her knitting.

Suddenly, with what seemed uncanny suddenness, the telephone bell rang in the hall.

Now Anna had never got used to the telephone. She had not opposed its introduction into the Trellis House, because it had been done by Miss Rose's wish, but once it was installed, Anna had bitterly regretted its being there. It was the one part of her work that she carried out badly, and she knew that this was so. Not only did she find it most difficult to understand what was said through the horrible instrument, but her mistress's friends found even more difficulty in hearing her, Anna. Sometimes—but she was very much ashamed of this—she actually allowed the telephone bell to go on ringing, and never answered it at all! She only did this, however, when her two ladies were away from Witanbury, and when, therefore, the message, whatever it might happen to be, could not possibly be delivered.

She waited now, hoping that the instrument would grow weary, and leave off ringing. But no; on it went, ping, ping, ping, ping—so at last very reluctantly Anna opened the kitchen door and went out into the hall.

Taking up the receiver, she said in a grumpy tone, "Ach! What is it? Yes?" And then her face cleared, and she even smiled into the telephone receiver.

To her great surprise—but the things that had happened to-day were so extraordinary that there was no real reason why she should be surprised at

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anything now—she had heard the voice of the one German in Witanbury—and there were a good many Germans in Witanbury—with whom she was on really friendly terms.

This was a certain Fritz Fröhling, a pleasant elderly man who, like herself, had been in England a long time—in fact in his case nearer forty than twenty years. He was a barber and hairdresser, and did a very flourishing business with the military gentlemen of the garrison. So Anglicised had he and his wife become that their son was in the British Army, where he had got on very well, and had been promoted to sergeant. Even among themselves, when Anna spent an evening with them, the Fröhlings generally talked English. Still, Fröhling was a German of the good old sort; that is, he had never become naturalised. But he was a Socialist; he did not share Anna's enthusiasm for the Kaiser, the Kaiserine, and their stalwart sons.

This was the first time he had ever telephoned to her. "Is it Frau Bauer that I am addressing?"

And Anna, slightly thrilled by the unusual appellation, answered, "Yes, yes—it is, Herr Fröhling."

"With you a talk I should like to have," said the friendly familiar voice. "Could I this afternoon you see?"

"Not this afternoon," answered Anna, "but this evening, I think yes. My mistress will I ask if I an evening free have can."

"Is it necessary her to ask?" The question was put doubtfully.

"Yes, yes! But mind she will not. To me she is

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goodness itself—never more good than this morning she was," shouted back Anna loyally.

"Fortunate you are," the voice became rather sharp and dry. "I notice already have to quit—told I must skip."

"Never!" cried Anna indignantly. "Who has that you told?"

"The police."

"A bad business," wailed Anna. She was shocked at what her old acquaintance told her. "I will Mrs. Otway ask you to help," she shouted back.

He muttered a word or two and then, "Unless before eight you communicate, Jane and I expect you this evening.

"Certainly, Herr Fröhling."

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CHAPTER IV

AS Mrs. Otway left the cathedral, certain remarks made to her by members of the little congregation jarred on her, and made her feel, almost for the first time in her life, thoroughly out of touch with her friends and neighbours.

Some one whom Mrs. Otway really liked and respected came up to her and exclaimed, "I couldn't help feeling sorry the Dean did not mention France and the French! Any one listening to him just now would have thought that only Germany and ourselves and Belgium were involved in this awful business." And then the speaker, seeing that her words were not very acceptable, added quietly, "But of course the Dean, with so many German friends, is in a difficult position just now." In fact, almost every one said something that hurt and annoyed her, and that though it was often only a word of satisfaction that at last England had gone in, as more than one of them put it, "on the right side."

Passing through the arch of the square gateway which separates the town from the Close, Mrs. Otway hurried down the pretty, quiet street which leads in a rather roundabout way, and past one of the most beautiful grey stone crosses in England, into the great market square which is one of the glories of the famous cathedral city. Once there, she crossed the wide space, part cobbled, part paved, and made her way into a large building of stucco and red brick which

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bore above its plate-glass windows the inscription in huge gilt letters, "THE WITANBURY STORES."

The Monday Bank Holiday had been prolonged, and so the Stores were only, so to speak, half open. But as Mrs. Otway stepped through into the shadowed shop, the owner of the Stores, Manfred Hegner by name, came forward to take her orders himself.

Manfred Hegner was quite a considerable person in Witanbury. Not only was he the biggest retail tradesman in the place, and an active member of the Witanbury City Council, but he was known to have all sorts of profitable irons in the fire. A man to keep in with, obviously, and one who was always willing to meet one half-way. Because of his German birth—he had been naturalised some years ago—and even more because of certain facial and hirsute peculiarities, he went by the nickname of "The Kaiser."

Mrs. Otway took out of her bag a piece of paper on which she had written down, at her old Anna's dictation, a list of groceries and other things needed at the Trellis House. And then she looked round, instinctively, towards the corner of the large shop where all that remained of what had once been the mainstay of Manfred Hegner's business was always temptingly set forth. This was a counter of *Delicatessen*. Glancing at the familiar corner, Mr. Hegner's customer told herself that her eyes must be playing her false. In the place of the familiar sausages, herrings, the pretty coloured basins of sauerkraut, and other savoury dainties, there now stood nothing but a row of large uninteresting Dutch cheeses!

The man who was waiting attentively by her side,

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a pencil and block of paper in his hand, saw the surprised, regretful look on his valued customer's face.

"I have had to put away all my nice, fresh *Delicatessen,*" he said in a low voice. "It seemed wiser to do so, gracious lady." He spoke in German, and it was in German that she answered.

"Did you really think it necessary to do such a thing? I think you are unfair on your adopted country, Mr. Hegner! English people are not so unreasonable as that."

He was about to answer, when an odd-looking man, rather like a sailor, came in, and Mr. Hegner, with a hurried "Please excuse me one minute, ma'am," in English, went off to attend to the new comer.

As Mr. Hegner went across his shop, Mrs. Otway was struck by his curious resemblance to the German Emperor; in spite of the fact that he was wearing a long white apron, he had quite a martial air. He certainly deserved his nickname. There were the same piercing, rather prominent eyes, the same look of energy and decision in his face; also the same peculiar turned-up moustache. But whereas the resemblance last week would have brought a smile, now it brought a furrow of pain to the English lady's kindly face.

Poor Manfred Hegner! What must he and thousands of others like him—excellent, industrious, civil-spoken Germans—feel all through England to-day? Mrs. Otway, who had always liked the man, and who enjoyed her little chats with him, knew perhaps rather more about this prosperous tradesman than most of the Witanbury people knew. She was aware that he had been something of a rolling stone; he had,

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for instance, been for quite a long time in America, and it was there that he had shed most of his Germanisms of language. He was older than he looked, and his son by a first marriage lived in Germany—where, however, the young man was buyer for a group of English firms who did a great deal of business in cheap German-made goods.

His conversation with the odd-looking stranger over, Mr. Hegner hurried back to where his valued customer was standing. "Every one on the City Council is being most kind," he said suavely. "And last night I had the honour of meeting the Dean. At his suggestion I am calling a little meeting this evening, here in my Stores, of the non-naturalised Germans of this town. There are a good many in Witanbury."

And then Mrs. Otway suddenly remembered that the man now standing opposite to her was a member of the City Council. She remembered that some time ago, three or four years back at least, some disagreeable person had expressed indignation that an ex-German, one only just naturalised, should be elected to such a body. She had thought the speaker narrow-minded and ill-natured. An infusion of German thoroughness and thrift would do the City Council good, and perhaps keep down the rates!

"But you, Mr. Hegner, have been naturalised quite a long time," she said sympathetically.

"Yes, indeed, gracious lady!" Mr. Hegner seemed surprised, perhaps a thought disturbed, by her natural remark. "I took out my certificate before I built the Stores, and just after I had married my excellent

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little English wife. Glad indeed am I now that I did so!"

"I am very glad too," said Mrs. Otway. And yet—and yet she felt a slight quiver of discomfort. The man standing there was so *very* German after all—German not only in his appearance, but in all his little ways! If nothing else had proved it, his rather absurd nickname was clear proof that so he was even now regarded in Witanbury.

"And how about your son, Mr. Hegner?" she asked. "I suppose he is in Germany now? You must feel rather anxious about him."

He hesitated oddly, and looked round him before he spoke. Then, vanquished, maybe, by the obvious sincerity and kindness of the speaker, he answered, in German, and almost in a whisper. "He is, I fear, by now on his way to the frontier. But may I ask a favour of the gracious lady? Do not speak of my son to the people of Witanbury."

"Then *he* was never naturalised?" Mrs. Otway also spoke in a low voice—a voice full of pity and concern.

"No, no," said Mr. Hegner hastily. "There was no necessity for him to be. His work was mostly, you see, over there."

"Still he was educated here, surely?"

"That is so, gracious lady. He talks English better even than I do. He and I did consider the question of his taking out a certificate. Then we decided that, as he would be so much in Germany, it was better he should remain German. But his wife is an English girl."

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"How sorry you must be now that he did not naturalise!" she exclaimed.

An odd look came over Manfred Hegner's face. "Yes, it is very regretful—the more so that it would do me harm if it were known in the town that I had a son in the German Army. But he will not fight against the English," he added hastily. "No one will do that but the German sailors—is not that so, madam?"

"I really don't know."

"If at any time the gracious lady should hear anything of the sort, I should be grateful—nay, far more than grateful if she will let me know it!" He had lapsed back into German, and Mrs. Otway smiled very kindly at him.

"Yes, I will certainly let you know anything I hear. I know how very anxious you must be about this sad state of things."

Mrs. Otway had left the shop, and she was already some way back across the Market Place, when there came the rather raucous sound of an urgent voice in her ear. Startled, she turned round. The owner of the Witanbury Stores stood by her side.

"Pardon, pardon!" he said breathlessly. "But would you, gracious lady, ask your servant" (he used the German word "Stütze") "if she could make it convenient to join our gathering this evening at nine o'clock? Frau Anna Bauer is so very highly respected among the Germans here that we should like her to be present."

"Certainly I will arrange for Anna to come," answered Mrs. Otway. "But you may not be aware, Mr. Hegner, that my cook has become to all intents and purposes quite English—without, of course," she

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hastily corrected herself, "giving up her love for the Fatherland. She has only one relation left in Germany, a married niece in Berlin. Her own daughter is the wife of an Englishman, a tradesman in London."

"That makes no difference," said Manfred Hegner; "she will be welcome, most heartily welcome, to-night! This is the moment, as the Reverend Mr. Dean so well put it to me, when all Germans should stick together, and consult as to the wisest and best thing to do in their own interests."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Hegner. I quite agree with the Dean. But do not do anything to upset my poor old Anna. She really is not involved in the question at all. She has lived with me nearly twenty years, and my daughter and I regard her far more as a friend than as a servant. The fact that she is German is an accident—the merest accident! Nothing in her life, thank God, will be changed for the worse. And, Mr. Hegner? I should like to say one more thing." She looked earnestly into his face, but even she could see that his eyes were wandering, and that there was a slight look of apprehension in the prominent eyes now fixed on a group of farmers who stood a few yards off staring at him and at Mrs. Otway.

"Yes, gracious lady," he said mechanically, "I am attending."

"Do not think that English people bear any ill-feeling to you and your great country! We feel that Germany, by breaking her word to Belgium, has put herself in the wrong. It is England's duty to fight, not her pleasure, Mr. Hegner. And we hope with all our hearts that the war will soon be over."

He murmured a word of respectful assent. And

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then, choosing a rather devious route, skirting the fine old Council House, which is the most distinctive feature of Witanbury Market Place, he hurried back to his big stores.

Mrs. Otway opened the wrought-iron gate of the Trellis House with a feeling of restful satisfaction; but there, in her own pretty, peaceful home, a not very pleasant surprise awaited her. Good old Anna, hurrying out into the black and white hall to meet her gracious lady, did not receive Mr. Hegner's kind invitation as her mistress had supposed she would do. A look of indecision and annoyance crossed her pink face.

"Ach, but to go to Mr. Fröhling promised have I," she muttered.

And then Mrs. Otway exclaimed, "But the Fröhlings are Germans! They will certainly be there themselves. Mr. Fröhling cannot have known of this meeting when he and his wife asked you to supper. I think, Anna, that it is your duty to attend this gathering. The Dean not only approves of it, but, from what I could make out, he actually suggested that it should take place. Of course I know it makes no real difference to you; but still, Anna," she spoke reprovingly, "you should not forget at such a time as this that you are German-born."

The old woman looked up quickly at her mistress. Forget she was German-born! Mrs. Otway was a most good lady, a most kind employer, but she was sometimes foolish, very very foolish, in what she said! She, Anna Bauer, had often noticed it. Still, averse as she was from the thought, the old German

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woman was ruefully aware that she would have to accept Mr. Hegner's invitation. When it came to a tussle of will between the two, herself and her mistress, Mrs. Otway generally won, partly because she was, after all, Anna's employer, and also because she always knew exactly what it was she wanted Anna to do. Anna was emotional, easily touched, highly excitable; she also generally knew what she wanted, but she did not find it easy to force her will on others, least of all on her beloved if not exactly admired mistress.

Grumbling under her breath, she retreated into her kitchen; while Mrs. Otway, feeling tired and rather dispirited, went upstairs.

The back-door bell rang, and Anna went and opened it. A boy stood there, bearing on a tray not only the various little things Mrs. Otway had ordered at the Witanbury Stores half an hour before, but also an envelope addressed to "Frau Bauer." Anna brought the things into the kitchen, then she opened with interest the envelope addressed to herself. It contained a card, elegantly headed:

"THE WITANBURY STORES.

Proprietor: MANFRED HEGNER."

Across it were written in German the words: "You are bidden to a meeting at the above address to-night at nine o'clock. There will be cakes and coffee served before the meeting begins. Entrance by Market Row."

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Anna read the words again and again. This was treating her at last as she ought always to have been treated! Anna did not like her erst fellow-countryman, and she considered that she had good reason for her dislike. Resentment against ingratitude is not confined to any one nationality.

When Manfred Hegner had first come to Witanbury, Anna had been delighted to make his acquaintance, and she had spent many happy half-hours chatting with him in the little *Delicatessen* shop he had established in Bridge Street, close to the Market Place.

Starting with only the goodwill of a bankrupt confectioner, he had very soon built up a wonderfully prosperous business. But his early success had been in a measure undoubtedly owing to Mrs. Otway and her German cook. Mrs. Otway had told all her friends of this amusing little German shop, and of the good things which were to be bought there. *Delicatessen* had become quite the fashion, not only among the good people of Witanbury itself, but among the county gentry who made the cathedral town their shopping headquarters, and who enjoyed motoring in there to spend an idly busy morning.

Then had come the erection of the big Stores. Over that matter quite a storm had arisen, and local feeling had been very mixed. A petition, originated by those who called themselves the Art Society of Witanbury, pointed out that a large modern building of the kind proposed would ruin the old-world, picturesque appearance of the Market Place. But the big local builder, the man who later promoted the election of Manfred Hegner on to the City Council,

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bore down all opposition, and a group of charming old gabled houses—houses that were little more than cottages, and therefore perhaps hardly in keeping with the Market Place of so prosperous a town as was Witanbury—had been pulled down, and the large Stores had risen on their site.

And then one day—which happened to be a day when Mrs. Otway and her daughter were away on a visit—Manfred Hegner himself walked along into the Close, and so to the Trellis House, in order to make Anna a proposal. It was a simple thing that he asked Anna to do—namely that she should persuade her mistress to remove her custom from the long-established tradesmen where she had always dealt, and transfer it entirely to his Stores. His things, so he said, were better as well as cheaper than those sold by the smaller people, also he would be pleased to pay Anna a handsome commission on every bill paid by her mistress.

Anna had willingly fallen in with this plan. It had taken some time and some trouble, but in the end Mrs. Otway found it very convenient to get everything at the same place. For a while all had gone well for Manfred Hegner—well for him and well for Anna. At the end of a year, however, he had arbitrarily halved Anna's commission, and that she felt to be (as indeed it was) most unfair, and not in the bond. She had no longer the power to retaliate, for her mistress had fallen into the way of going into the Stores herself. Mrs. Otway enjoyed rubbing up her German with Mr. Hegner, and the really intelligent zeal with which he always treated her, and her comparatively small orders, was very pleasant. Twice

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he had taken great trouble to procure for her a local Weimar delicacy which she remembered enjoying as a girl.

But when Anna, following her mistress's example, walked along to the Stores to enjoy a little chat in her native language, Mr. Hegner would be short with her, very short indeed! In fact it was now a long time since the old woman had cared to set foot there. For another thing she did not like Mrs. Hegner, the pretty English girl Manfred Hegner had married five years before; she thought her a very frivolous, silly little woman, not at all what the wife of a big commercial man should be. Anna's Louisa would have been a perfect helpmate for Manfred Hegner, and there had been a time, a certain three months, when Anna had thought the already prosperous widower was considering Louisa. His marriage to pretty Polly Brown had been a disappointment.

But now this politely-worded card of invitation certainly made a difference. Old Anna, who was not lacking in a certain simple shrewdness, had not expected Manfred Hegner to show any kindness to his ex-compatriots. She was touched to find him a better man than she expected. Most certainly would she attend this meeting!

As soon as her mistress had gone out to lunch, Anna telephoned to Mr. Fröhling and explained why she could not come to him that evening.

"We too asked to Hegner's have been. As you are going, we your example will follow," shouted the barber.

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CHAPTER V

ROSE OTWAY sat in the garden of the Trellis House, under the wide-branched cedar of Lebanon which was, to the thinking of most people in the Close, that garden's only beauty. For it was just a wide lawn, surrounded on three sides by a very high old brick wall, under which ran an herbaceous border to which Rose devoted some thought and a good deal of time.

The great cedar rose majestically far above its surroundings; and when you stood at one of the windows of the Trellis House, and saw how wide the branches of the tree spread, you realised that the garden was a good deal bigger than it appeared at first sight.

Rose sat near a low wicker table on which in an hour or so Anna would come out and place the tea-tray. Spread out across the girl's knee was a square of canvas, a section of a bed-spread, on which was traced an intricate and beautiful Jacobean design. Rose had already been working at it for six months, and she hoped to have finished it by the 14th of December, her mother's birthday. She enjoyed doing this beautiful work, of which the pattern had been lent to her by a country neighbour who collected such things.

How surprised Rose would have been on this early August afternoon could she have foreseen that this cherished piece of work, on which she had already

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lavished so many hours of close and pleasant toil, would soon be put away for an indefinite stretch of time; and that knitting, which she had always disliked doing, would take its place!

But no such thought, no such vision of the future, came into her mind as she bent her pretty head over her work.

She felt rather excited, a thought more restless than usual. England at war, and with Germany! Dear old Anna's Fatherland—the great country to which Rose had always been taught by her mother to look with peculiar affection, as well as respect and admiration.

Rose and Mrs. Otway had hoped to go to Germany this very autumn. They had saved up their pennies —as Mrs. Otway would have put it—for a considerable time, in order that they might enjoy in comfort, and even in luxury, what promised to be a delightful tour. Rose could hardly realise even yet that their journey, so carefully planned out, so often discussed, would now have to be postponed. They were first to have gone to Weimar, where Mrs. Otway had spent such a happy year in her girlhood, and then to Munich, to Dresden, to Nuremberg—to all those dear old towns with whose names Rose had always been familiar. It seemed such a pity that now they would have to wait till after the war to go to Germany.

After the war? Fortunately the people she had seen that day—and there had been a good deal of coming and going in the Close—all seemed to think that the war would be over very soon, and this pleasant view had been confirmed in a rather odd way.

Rose's cousin, James Hayley, had rung her up on

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the telephone from London. She had been very much surprised, for a telephone message from London to Witanbury costs one-and-threepence, and James was careful about such things. When he did telephone, which was very seldom, he always waited to do so till the evening, when the fee was halved. But to-day James had rung up just before luncheon, and she had heard his voice almost as though he were standing by her side.

"Who's there? Oh, it's you, is it, Rose? I just wanted to say that I shall probably be down Saturday night. I shan't be able to be away more than one night, worse luck. I suppose you've heard what's happened?"

And then, as she had laughed—she had really not been able to help it (how very odd James was! He evidently thought Witanbury *quite* out of the world), he had gone on, "It's a great bore, for it upsets everything horribly. The one good point about it is that it won't last long."

"How long?" she had called out.

And he had answered rather quickly, "You needn't speak so loud. I hear you perfectly. How long? Oh, I think it'll be over by October—may be a little before, but I should say October."

"Mother thinks there'll be a sort of Trafalgar!"

And then he had answered, speaking a little impatiently, for he was very overworked just then, "Nothing of the sort! The people who will win this war, and will win it quickly, are the Russians. We have information that they will mobilise quickly—much more quickly than most people think. You see, my dear Rose,"—he was generally rather old-fash-

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ioned in his phraseology—"the Russians are like a steam roller"; she always remembered that she had heard that phrase from him first. "We have reason to believe that they can put ten million men into their fighting line every year for fifty years!"

Rose, in answer, said the first silly thing she had said that day: "Oh, I do *hope* the war won't last as long as that!"

And then she had heard, uttered in a strange voice, the words, "Another three minutes, sir?" and the hasty answer at the other end, "No, certainly not! I've quite done." And she had hung up the receiver with a smile.

And yet Rose, if well aware of his little foibles, liked her cousin well enough to be generally glad of his company. During the last three months he had spent almost every week-end at Witanbury. And though it was true, as her mother often observed, that James was both narrow-minded and self-opinionated, yet even so he brought with him a breath of larger air, and he often told the ladies at the Trellis House interesting things.

While Rose Otway sat musing over her beautiful work in the garden, good old Anna came and went in her kitchen. She too still felt restless and anxious, she too wondered how long this unexpected war would last. But whereas Rose couldn't have told why she was restless and anxious, her one-time nurse knew quite well what ailed herself this afternoon.

Anna had a very good reason for feeling worried and depressed, but it was one she preferred to keep to herself. For the last two days she had been ex-

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pecting some money from Germany, and since this morning she had been wondering, with keen anxiety, whether that money would be stopped in the post.

What made this possibility very real to her was the fact that an uncle of Anna's, just forty-four years ago, that is, in the August of 1870, had been ruined owing to the very simple fact that a sum of money owing him from France had not been able to get through! It was true that she, Anna, would not be ruined if the sum due to her, which in English money came to fifty shillings exactly, were not to arrive. Still, it would be very disagreeable, and the more disagreeable because she had foolishly given her son-in-law five pounds a month ago. She knew it would have to be a gift, though he had pretended at the time that it was only a loan.

Anna wondered how she could find out whether money orders were still likely to come through from Germany. She did not like to ask at the Post Office, for her Berlin nephew, who transmitted the money to her half-yearly, always had the order made out to some neighbouring town or village, not to Witanbury. In vain Anna had pointed out that this was quite unnecessary, and indeed very inconvenient; and that when she had said she did not wish her mistress to know, she had not meant *that*. In spite of her protests Willi had persisted in so sending it.

Suddenly her face brightened. How easy it would be to find out all that sort of thing at the meeting to-night! Such a man as Manfred Hegner would be sure to know.

There came a ring at the front door of the Trellis House, and Anna got up reluctantly from her easy

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chair and laid down her crochet. She was beginning to feel old, so she often told herself regretfully—older than the Englishwomen of her own age seemed to be. But none of them had worked as hard as she had always worked. Englishwomen, especially English servants, were lazy good-for-nothings!

Poor old Anna; she did not feel happy or placid to-day, and she hated the thought of opening the door to some one who, maybe, would condole with her on to-day's news. All Mrs. Otway's friends knew Anna, and treated her as a highly respected institution. Those who knew a little German were fond of trying it on her.

It was rather curious, considering how long Anna had been in England, that she still kept certain little habits acquired in the far-off days when she had been the young cook of a Herr Privy Councillor. Thus never did she open the front door with a cheerful, pleasant manner. Also, unless they were very intimately known to her and to her mistress, she always kept visitors waiting in the hall. She would forget, that is, to show them straight into the pretty sitting-room which lay just opposite her kitchen. She often found herself regretting that the heavy old mahogany door of the Trellis House lacked the tiny aperture which in Berlin is so well named a "stare-hole," and which enables the person inside the front door to command, as it were, the position outside.

But to-day, when she saw who it was who stood on the threshold, her face cleared a little, for she was well acquainted with the tall young man who was looking at her with so pleasant a smile. His name was Jervis Blake, and he came very often to the

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Trellis House. For two years he had been at "Robey's," the Army coaching establishment which was, in a minor degree, one of the glories of Witanbury, and which consisted of a group of beautiful old Georgian houses spreading across the whole of one of the wide corners of the Close.

Some of the inhabitants of the Close resented the fact of "Robey's." But Mr. Robey was the son of a former Bishop of Witanbury, the Bishop who had followed Miss Forsyth's father.

Bishop Robey had had twin sons, who, unlike most twins, were very different. The elder, whom some of the oldest inhabitants remembered as an ugly, eccentric little boy, with a taste for cutting up dead animals, had insisted on becoming a surgeon. To the surprise of his father's old friends, he had made a considerable reputation, which had been, so to speak, officially certified with a knighthood. The professional life of a great surgeon is limited, and Sir Jacques Robey, though not much over fifty and still a bachelor, had now retired.

The younger twin, Orlando, was the Army coach. He had been, even as a little boy, a great contrast to his brother, being both good-looking and anything but eccentric. The brothers were only alike in the success they had achieved in their several professions, but they had for one another in full measure that curiously understanding sympathy and affection which seem to be the special privilege of twins.

Mr. Robey was popular and respected, and those dwellers in the Close who had daughters were pleased with the life and animation which the presence of so many young men gave to the place. The more

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thoughtful were also glad to think that the shadow of their beloved cathedral rested benignantly over the temporary home of those future officers and administrators of the Empire. And of all those who had been coached at "Robey's" during the last two years, there was none better liked, though there had been many more popular, than the young man who now stood smiling at old Anna.

During the first three months of his sojourn in the Close, Jervis Blake had counted very little, for it had naturally been supposed that he would soon go off to Sandhurst or Woolwich. Then he had failed to pass the Army Entrance Examination, not once, as so many did, but again and again, and the good folk of Witanbury, both gentle and simple, had grown accustomed to see him coming and going in their midst.

Unfortunately for Jervis Blake, his father, though a distinguished soldier, was a very peculiar man, one who had owed nothing in his hard laborious youth to influence; and he had early determined that his only son should tread the path he had himself trod.

And now poor young Blake had reached the age limit, and failed for the last time. Every one had been sorry, but no one had been surprised in Witanbury Close, when the result of the May Army Exam. had been published in July.

One person, Mr. Robey himself, had been deeply concerned. Indeed, the famous coach muttered to one or two of his old friends, "It's a pity, you know! Although I make my living by it, I often think there's a good deal to be said against a system which passes in—well, some boys whose names I could give you,

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and which keeps out of the Army a lad like Jervis Blake! He'd make a splendid company officer—conscientious, honest, unselfish, keen about his work, and brave—well, brave as only a man——"

And one of those to whom he said it, seeing him hesitate, had broken in, with a slight smile, "Brave as only a man totally lacking in imagination can be, eh, Robey?"

"No, no, I won't have you say that! Even an idiot has enough imagination to be afraid of danger! There's something fine about poor Jervis."

They'd gradually all got to call young Blake "Jervis" in that household. Perhaps Mrs. Robey alone of them all knew how much they would miss him. He was such a thoroughly good fellow, he was so useful to her husband in keeping order among the wilder spirits, and that without having about him a touch of the prig!

Rose looked up and smiled as the tall young man came forward and shook hands with her, saying as he did so, "I hope I'm not too early? The truth is, I've a good many calls to pay this afternoon. I've come to say good-bye."

"I'm sorry. I thought you weren't going away till Saturday." Rose really did feel sorry—in fact, she was herself surprised at her rather keen sensation of regret. She had always liked Jervis Blake very much—liked him from the first day she had seen him. He had a certain claim on the kindness of the ladies of the Trellis House, for his mother had been a girl friend of Mrs. Otway's.

Most people, as Rose was well aware, found his

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conversation boring. But it always interested her. In fact Rose Otway was the one person in Witanbury who listened with real pleasure to what Jervis Blake had to say. Oddly enough, his talk almost always ran on military matters. Most soldiers—and Rose knew a good many officers, for Witanbury is a garrison town—would discuss, before the Great War, every kind of topic except those connected with what they would have described as "shop." But Jervis Blake, who, owing to his bad luck, seemed fated never to be a soldier, thought and talked of nothing else. It was thanks to him that Rose knew so much about the great Napoleonic campaigns, and was so well "up" in the Indian Mutiny.

And now, on this 4th of August, 1914, Jervis Blake sat down by Rose Otway, and began tracing imaginary patterns on the grass with his stick.

"I'm not going to tell any one else, but there's something I want to tell you." He spoke in a rather hard, set voice, and he did not look up, as he spoke, at the girl by his side.

"Yes," she said. "Yes, Jervis? What is it?" There was something very kind, truly sympathetic, in her accents.

"I'm going to enlist."

Rose Otway was startled—startled and sorry.

"Oh, no, you mustn't do that!"

"I've always thought I should *like* to do it, if—if I failed this last time. But of course I knew it was out of the question—because of my father. But now—everything's different! Even father will see that I have no other course open to me."

"I—I don't understand what you mean," she an-

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swered, and to her surprise there came a queer lump in her throat. "Why is everything different now?"

He looked round at her with an air of genuine surprise, and, yes, of indignation, in his steady grey eyes. And under that surprised and indignant look, so unlike anything there had ever been before from him to her, the colour flushed all over her face.

"You mean," she faltered, "you mean because—because England is at war?"

He nodded.

"But I thought—of course I don't know anything about it, Jervis, and I daresay you'll think me very ignorant—but from what the Dean said this morning I thought that only our fleet is to fight the Germans."

"The Dean is an old——" and then they both laughed. Jervis Blake went on: "If we don't go to the help of the French and the Belgians, then England's disgraced. But of course we're going to fight!"

Rose Otway was thinking—thinking hard. She knew a good deal about Jervis, and his relations with the father he both loved and feared.

"Look here," she said earnestly. "We've always been friends, you and I, haven't we, Jervis?"

And again he simply nodded in answer to the question.

"Well, I want you to promise me something!"

"I can't promise you I won't enlist."

"I don't want you to promise me that. I only want you to promise me to wait just a few days—say a week. Of course I don't know anything about how one becomes a soldier, but you'd be rather sold, wouldn't you, if you enlisted and then if your regi-

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ment took no part in the fighting—if there's really going to be fighting?"

Rose Otway stopped short. She felt a most curious sensation of fatigue; it was as though she had been speaking an hour instead of a few moments. But she had put her whole heart, her whole soul, into those few simple words.

There was a long, long pause, and her eyes filled with tears. Those who knew her would have told you that Rose Otway was quite singularly self-possessed and unemotional. In fact she could not remember when she had cried last, it was so long ago. But now there came over her a childish, irresistible desire to have her way—to save poor, poor Jervis from himself. And suddenly the face of the young man looking at her became transfigured.

"Rose," he cried—"Rose, do you really care, a little, what happens to me? Oh, if you only knew what a difference that would make!"

And then she pulled herself together. Jervis mustn't become what she in her own mind called "silly." Young men, ay, and older men too, had a way of becoming "silly" about Rose Otway. And up to now she had disliked it very much. But this afternoon she was touched rather than displeased.

"I care very much," she said quietly. She knew the battle was won, and it was very collectedly that she added the words, "Now, I have your promise, Jervis? You're not to do anything foolish——" Then she saw she had made a mistake. "No, no!" she cried hastily; "I don't mean that—I don't mean that a man who becomes a soldier in time of war is doing anything foolish! But I do think that you

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ought to wait just a few days. Everything is different now." For the first time she felt that everything was indeed different in England—in this new strange England which was at war. It was odd that Jervis Blake should have brought that knowledge home to her.

"Very well," he said slowly. "I'll wait. I can't wait a whole week, but I'll wait till after Sunday."

"The Robeys are going to the seaside on Monday, aren't they?" She was speaking now quite composedly, quite like herself.

"Yes, and they kindly asked me to stay on till then."

He got up. "Well," he said, looking down at her—and she couldn't help telling herself what a big, manly fellow he looked, and what a fine soldier he would make—"well, Rose, so it isn't good-bye, after all?"

"No, I'm glad to say it isn't." She gave him a frank, kindly smile. "Surely you'll stay and have some tea?"

"No, thank you. Jack Robey is feeling a little above himself to-day. You see it's the fourth day of the holidays. I think I'll just go straight back, and take him out for a walk. I rather want to think over things."

As he made his way across the lawn and through the house, feeling somehow that the whole world had changed for the better, though he could not have told you exactly why, Jervis Blake met Mrs. Otway.

"Won't you stay and have some tea?" she asked, but she said it in a very different voice from that Rose had used—Rose had meant what she said.

"Thanks very much, but I've got to get back. I

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promised Mrs. Robey I'd be in to tea; the boys are back from school, you know."

"Oh, yes, of course! I suppose they are. Well, you must come in some other day before you leave Witanbury."

She hurried through into the garden.

"I hope Jervis Blake hasn't been here very long, darling," she said fondly. "Of course I know he's your friend, and that you've always liked him. But I'm afraid he would rather jar on one to-day. He's always *so* disliked the Germans! Poor fellow, how he must feel out of it, now that the war he's always been talking about has actually come!"

"Well, mother, Jervis was right after all. The Germans *were* preparing for war."

But Mrs. Otway went on as if she had not heard the interruption. It was a way she had, and sometimes both Rose and old Anna found it rather trying. "This morning Miss Forsyth was saying she thought young Blake would enlist—that she'd enlist if she were in his place! It's odd what nonsense she sometimes talks."

Rose remained silent and her mother continued. "I've so many things to tell you I hardly know where to begin. It was a very interesting committee, more lively than usual. There seemed a notion among some of the people there that there will be war work of some kind for us to do. Lady Bethune thought so—though I can't see how the war can affect any of *us*, here, in Witanbury. But just as we were breaking up, Lady Bethune told us some interesting things. There are, she says, two parties in the Government—one party wants us to send out troops to help Belgium,

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the other party thinks we ought to be content with letting the fleet help the French. I must say I agree with the Blue Water school."

"I don't," said Rose rather decidedly. "If we really owe so much to Belgium that we have gone to war for her sake, then it seems to me we ought to send soldiers to help her."

But then we have such a small army," objected Mrs. Otway.

"It may grow bigger," observed her daughter quietly, "especially if people like Jervis Blake think of enlisting."

"But it wasn't Jervis Blake, darling child—it was Miss Forsyth who said that to me."

"So it was! How stupid I am!" Rose turned a little pink. She did not wish to deceive her mother. But Mrs. Otway was so confiding, so sure that every one was as honourable as herself, that she could not always be trusted to keep secrets.

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CHAPTER VI

MR. and Mrs. Hegner stood together in their brilliantly lighted but now empty front shop. In a few minutes their guests would begin to arrive. Mrs. Hegner looked tired, and rather cross, for the shop had not been transformed into its present state without a good deal of hard work on the part of all of them, her husband, their German assistants, and herself—their English shopman had been told that to-night his services would not be required. But Mrs. Hegner, though her pretty face was tired and peevish-looking, yet looked far pleasanter than she had done half an hour ago, for her husband had just presented her with a long gold chain.

In a very, very quiet way, quite under the rose, so to speak, Mr. Hegner sometimes went in for small money-lending transactions. He would give loans on jewellery, and even on "curios" and good furniture; always, however, in connection with an account which had, maybe, run a little too long—never as a separate transaction. The old-fashioned chain of 18-carat gold, which he had just hung with a joking word round his pretty wife's slender neck, had been the outcome of one of these minor activities.

It was now a quarter to nine; and suddenly there came the sound of loud, rather impatient knocking on the locked and barred front door of the shop. A frown gathered over Mr. Hegner's face; it trans-

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formed his good-looking, generally genial, countenance into something which was, for the moment, very disagreeable.

"What can that be?" he said to his wife. "Did you not put plainly on every card 'Entrance by Market Row,' Polly?"

"Yes," she said, a little frightened by his look. "It was most carefully put in every case, Manfred."

The knocking had stopped now, as if the person outside expected the door to open. Husband and wife went forward.

"Who can it be?" said Mrs. Hegner uneasily.

And then her question was answered.

The voice was clear and silvery. "It's Miss Haworth! Can I come in and speak to you a moment, Mr. Hegner, or has the meeting already begun?"

"Why, it's the young lady from the Deanery!" exclaimed Manfred Hegner in a relieved voice; and both he and his wife began hastily unlocking and unbarring the great plate-glass doors.

The unbidden, unexpected visitor stepped forward into the shop, and Mrs. Hegner eagerly noted the cut and shape of the prettily draped pale blue silk evening coat, and tried to gain some notion of the evening gown beneath.

"I'm so glad to be in time—I mean before your meeting has begun. How very nice it all looks!" The speaker cast an approving glance on the rout chairs, on the table at the top of the room, on the counter where steamed, even now, the fragrant coffee. "The Dean has asked me to bring a message—of course quite an informal message, Mr. Hegner.

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He wants you to tell everybody that he is quite at their service if they want anything done."

"That is very, very good of Mr. Dean. Polly, d'you hear that? Is not the Reverend gentleman truly good?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Hegner, a trifle mechanically.

She felt a touch of sharp envy as she looked at the beautiful girl standing there. Though Edith Haworth knew very little of Mrs. Hegner, except that Mrs. Hegner's sister was her maid, Mrs. Hegner knew a great deal about Miss Haworth. How she had gone up to London just for one month of the season, and how during that one month she had become engaged to a rich young gentleman, a baronet. He was in the Army, too, but he couldn't be much of a soldier, for he seemed to be a great deal in Witanbury—at least he had been here a great deal during the last three weeks. The two often walked about the town together; once they had stood for quite a long time just opposite the open doors of the Stores, and Mrs. Hegner on that occasion had looked at the handsome couple with sympathetic interest and excitement.

But now, to-night, nothing but sharp envy filled her soul. It was her fate, poor, pretty Polly's fate, to sit behind that horrid glass partition over there, taking money, paying out endless small change, compelled always to look pleasant, or Manfred, if he caught her looking anything else, even when giving a farthing change out of a penny, would soon know the reason why! The young lady who stood smiling just within the door was not half as "fetching" as

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she, Polly, had been in her maiden days—and yet she was going to have everything the heart of woman could desire, a rich, handsome, young husband, and plenty of money!

As her eyes strayed out to the moonlit space outside where stood waiting, under the quaint little leafy mall which gives the Market Square of Witanbury such a foreign look, a gentleman in evening dress, Mrs. Hegner repeated mechanically, "Very kind, I'm sure, miss. They'll appreciate it—that they will."

"Well, that was all I came to say—only that my father will be very glad indeed to do anything he can. Oh, I did forget one more thing——" She lowered her voice a little. "The Dean thinks it probable, Mr. Hegner, that after to-day no German of military age will be allowed to leave England. You ought to tell everybody that this evening, otherwise some of them, without knowing it, might get into trouble."

And then Mrs. Hegner, perhaps because she had become nervously aware that her husband had looked at her rather crossly a moment ago, blurted out, "There's no fear of that, miss. We sent off a lot this morning to Harwich. I expect they'll have been able to get a boat there all right——" She stopped suddenly, for her husband had just made a terrible face at her—a face full of indignation and wrath.

But Miss Haworth did not seem to have noticed anything.

"Oh, well," she said, "perhaps it was a mistake to do that, but I don't suppose it matters much, one way or the other. I must go now. The meeting is due to begin, isn't it? And—and Sir Hugh is leav-

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ing to-night. He expects to find his marching orders when he gets back to town." A little colour came into her charming face; she sighed, but not very heavily. "War is an awful thing!" she said; "but every soldier, of course, wants to see *something* of the fighting. I expect the feeling is just as strong in France and Germany as it is here."

She shook hands warmly with Mr. and Mrs. Hegner, then she turned and tripped out into the dimly lighted and solitary Market Square. They watched her cross the road and take her lover's arm.

"Fool!" said Mr. Hegner harshly. "Pretty, silly fool!" He mimicked what he thought to be her mincing accents. "Wants to see something of war, does he? I can tell him he will be satisfied before he has done!" There was a scowl on his face. "And you"—he turned on his wife furiously—"what business had you to say that about those young German men? I was waiting—yes, with curiosity—to hear what else you were going to tell her—whether you would tell her that I had paid their fares!"

"Oh, no, Manfred. You know I would never have done that after what you said to me yesterday."

"Take it from me now, once for all," he said fiercely, "that you say nothing—*nothing*, mark you—about this cursed, blasted war—this war which, if we are not very careful, is going to make us poor, to bring us to the gutter, to the workhouse, you and I!"

And then Hegner's brow cleared as if by enchantment, for the first of their visitors were coming through from the back of the shop.

It was the manager of a big boot factory and his wife. They were both German-born, and the man

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had obtained his present excellent position owing to the good offices of Mr. Hegner. Taking his friend's wise advice, he had become naturalised a year ago. But a nephew, who had joined him in business, had not followed his example, and he had been one of the young men who had been speeded off to Harwich, through Mr. Hegner's exertions, early that morning.

While Mrs. Hegner tried to make herself pleasant to Mrs. Liebert, Mr. Hegner took Mr. Liebert aside.

"I have just learnt," he said, in a quick whisper, "that the military gentlemen here *are* expecting marching orders to the Continent—I presume to Belgium."

"That is bad," muttered the other.

But Mr. Hegner smiled. "No, no," he said, "not bad! It might have been disagreeable if they could have been got there last week. But by the time the fifty thousand, even the hundred thousand, English soldiers are in Belgium, there will be a million of our fellows there to meet them."

"What are you going to say at this meeting?" asked the other curiously; he used the English word, though they still spoke German.

Mr. Hegner shrugged his shoulders. "This is not going to be a meeting," he said laughingly. "It's going to be a Kaffeeklatch! Those people to whom I have to say a word I shall see by myself, in our little parlour. I trust to you, friend Max, to make everything go well and lively. As to measures, it is far too early to think of any measures. So far all goes very well with me. I have had many tokens of sympathy and of friendship this morning. Just two

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or three, perhaps, would have liked to be disagreeable, but they did not dare."

He hurried away, for his guests were arriving thick and fast.

It was a strange and, or so Mrs. Otway would have thought, a rather pathetic little company of men and women, who gathered together at Manfred Hegner's Stores at nine o'clock on that fine August night. The blinds had been drawn down, and behind the blinds the shutters had been put up.

As to the people there, they all looked prosperous and respectable, but each one wore a slight air of apprehension and discomfort. Strange to say, not one of the Germans present really liked or trusted their host, and that was odd, for Manfred Hegner, apart from certain outstanding exceptions, had managed to make himself quite popular among the English inhabitants of Witanbury.

The men and the women had instinctively parted into two companies, but Mrs. Hegner went to and fro among both sets, pressing hospitably on all her guests the coffee, the creamy milk, and the many cakes, to say nothing of the large sandwiches she had been ordered to make that afternoon.

She felt oppressed and rather bewildered, for the people about her were all talking German, and she had never taken the trouble to learn even half a dozen words of her husband's difficult nasal language. She kept wondering when the meeting would begin. Time was going on. They always got up very early in the morning, and already she was tired, very, very

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tired in fact, for it had been a long and rather an exciting day.

She had never before seen her husband quite so pleasant and jovial, and as she moved about she heard continually his loud, hearty laugh. He was cheering up the people round him—so much was clear. All of them had looked gloomy, preoccupied, and troubled when they came in, but now they seemed quite merry and bright.

There was one exception. Poor Mr. Fröhling looked very miserable. Mrs. Hegner felt very sorry for Mr. and Mrs. Fröhling. When her husband had heard of what had befallen the unfortunate barber, and how he had been ordered to pack up and leave his shop within a few hours, he had said roughly: "Fröhling is a fool! I told him to take out his certificate. He refused to do it, so now of course he will have to go. Witanbury has no use for that man!"

And now Mr. and Mrs. Fröhling, alone of the company there, sat together apart, with lowering brows.

Mrs. Hegner went up to them, rather timidly. "I want to tell you how sorry I am, Mr. Fröhling," she said conciliatingly. Polly had a kind heart, if a pettish manner. "What a pity you didn't take out your certificate when Manfred advised you to do so!"

Mr. Fröhling remained silent. But his wife said wistfully, "Ach, yes, Mrs. Hegner. It is a pity now; but still, the officers they have been kind to us, really very kind. One of them even said it would not have made much difference——"

Her husband interrupted her. "He nothing, Jane, said of the kind! That it *ought* not any difference

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to have made was what say he did. I, who have in England lived since the year 1874; I, who England love; I, whose son will soon for England be fighting!"

"My husband said," began Mrs. Hegner—— And again Mr. Fröhling interrupted rather rudely: "You need not tell me what your husband say," he remarked. "I know for myself exactly what Mr. Hegner say. If everything could be foreseen in this life we should all be very wise. Mr. Hegner, he does foresee more than most people, and wise he is."

Mrs. Fröhling drew her hostess a little aside. "Don't mind him," she whispered. "He is so unhappy. And yet we should be thankful, for the gentlemen officers are getting up a little testimonial fund for poor Fröhling."

"I suppose you've saved a good bit, too?" said Mrs. Hegner with curiosity.

"Not much—not much! Only lately have we turned the corner——" Mrs. Fröhling sighed. Then her face brightened, and Mrs. Hegner looking round saw that Anna Bauer, Mrs. Otway's servant, was pushing her way through the crowd towards them.

Now pretty Polly disliked the old woman. Frau Bauer was not a person of any account, yet Manfred had ordered that she should be treated this evening with special consideration, and so Mrs. Hegner walked forward and stiffly shook hands with her latest guest.

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CHAPTER VII

"SIT down, Fröhling, sit down!"

The old barber, rather to his surprise, had been invited to follow his host into the Hegners' private parlour, a little square room situated behind the big front shop.

The floor of the parlour was covered with a large-patterned oilcloth. There was a round mahogany pedestal table, too large for the room, and four substantial cane-backed armchairs. Till to-day there had always hung over the piano a large engraving of the German Emperor, and on the opposite wall a smaller oleograph picture of Queen Victoria with her little great-grandson, the Prince of Wales, at her knee. The German Emperor had now been taken down, and there was a patch of clean paper marking where the frame had hung.

As answer to Mr. Hegner's invitation, the older man sat down heavily in a chair near the table.

Both men remained silent for a moment, and a student of Germany, one who really knew and understood that amazing country, might well, had he seen the two sitting there, have regarded the one as epitomising the old Germany, and the other—naturalised Englishman though he now was—epitomising the new. Manfred Hegner was slim, active, and prosperous-looking; he appeared years younger than his age. Ludwig Fröhling was stout and rather stumpy; he seemed older than he really was, and although he

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was a barber, his hair was long and untidy. He looked intelligent and thoughtful, but it was the intelligence and the thoughtfulness of the student and of the dreamer, not of the man of action.

"Well, Mr. Fröhling, the International haven't done much the last few days, eh? I'm afraid you must have been disappointed." He of course spoke in German.

"Yes, I *have* been disappointed," said the other stoutly, "very much disappointed indeed! But still, from this great crime good may come, even now. It has occurred to me that, owing to this war made by the great rulers, the people in Russia, as well as in my beloved Fatherland, may arise and cut their bonds."

A light came into the speaker's eyes, and Manfred Hegner looked at him in mingled pity and contempt. It was not his intention, however, to waste much time this evening listening to a foolish old man. In fact, he had hesitated as to whether he should include the Fröhlings in his invitations—then he had thought that if he omitted to do so the fact might possibly come to the ears of the Dean. Fröhling and the Dean had long been pleasantly acquainted. Then, again, it was just possible—not likely, but possible—that he might be able to get out of the ex-barber of the Witanbury garrison some interesting and just now valuable information.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked. "Have you made any plans yet?"

"We are thinking of going to London, and of making a fresh start there. We have friends in Red Lion Square." Fröhling spoke as if the words were

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being dragged out of him. He longed to tell the other man to mind his own business.

"You haven't a chance of being allowed to do that! Why, already, on the very first day, every German barber is suspected." The speaker gave a short, unpleasant laugh.

"I am not suspected. So!" exclaimed Fröhling heatedly. "Not one single person has spoken as if he suspected me in this town! On the contrary, England is not harsh, Mr. Hegner. English people are too sensible and broad-minded to suspect harm where there is none. Indeed, they are not suspecting enough."

Strange to say, old Fröhling's last sentence found an agreeable, even a comforting, echo in Mr. Hegner's heart. He looked up, and for the first time the expression on his face was really cordial. "Maybe you are right, Mr. Fröhling. Most heartily do I desire it may be so! And yet—well, one cannot say people would be altogether wrong in suspecting barbers, for barbers hear a great deal of interesting conversation, is it not so?"

"That depends on their customers," said the other coldly. "I cannot say that I ever found the conversation of the young English officers here in Witanbury very illuminating."

"Not exactly illuminating," said the other cautiously. "But take the last few days? You must have heard a good deal of information as to coming plans."

"Not one word did I hear," said the other man quickly—"not one word, Mr. Hegner! Far more from my own intelligent, level-headed German as-

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sistant. He knew and guessed what none of these young gentlemen did—to what all the wicked intrigues of Berlin, Petersburg and Vienna, of the last ten days were tending."

"I have heard to-night—in fact it was the daughter of the Dean who mentioned it—that the British Army is going to Belgium," said Mr. Hegner casually. "Is your son going to Belgium, Mr. Fröhling?"

"Not that I know of," said the other. But a troubled look came over his face. He opened his mouth as if to add something, and then tightly shut it again.

Mr. Hegner had the immediate impression that old Fröhling could have told him something worth hearing had he been willing to do so.

"Well, that is all," said the host with a dismissory air, as he got up from his seat. "I have many to see, many to advise to-night. One thing I *do* tell you, Mr. Fröhling. You may take it from me that if you wish to leave this place you should clear out quickly. They will be making very tiresome regulations soon—but not now, not for a few days. Fortunately for you, and for all those who have not taken out their certificates, there is no organisation in this country. As for thoroughness, they do not know the meaning of the word."

"I have sometimes wondered," observed Mr. Fröhling mildly, "why you, who dislike England so much, should have taken out your certificate, Mr. Hegner. In your place I should have gone back to America."

"You have no right, no business, to say that I dislike England!" cried his host vehemently. "It is

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a wicked thing to say to me on such a day as this! It is a thing that might do me great harm in this city of which I am a Councillor."

"It is not a thing that I should say to any one but you," returned the old man. "But nevertheless it is true. We have not very often met—but every time we have met you have spoken in a disagreeable, a derogatory, a jeering way of what is now your country."

"And you," said Mr. Hegner, his eyes flashing, "have often spoken to me in a derogatory, a jeering, a disagreeable way of Germany—of the country where we were each born, of our *real* Fatherland."

"It is not of Germany that I speak ill," said the older man wearily; "it is of what a few people have made of my beloved country. To-day we see the outcome of their evil doings. But all that is transitory. I am an old man, and yet I hope to see a free Germany rise up."

He walked through into the shop, and beckoned to his wife. Then they both turned towards the door through which they had gained admittance earlier in the evening.

Mr. Hegner smoothed out his brow, and a mechanical smile came to his lips. He was glad the old Socialist had cleared out early. It is not too much to say that Manfred Hegner hated Fröhling. He wondered who would get the German barber's job. He knew a man, a sharp, clever fellow, who like himself had lived for a long time in America—who was, in fact, an American citizen, though he had been born in Hamburg—who would be the very man for it. Perhaps now was scarcely the moment

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to try and get yet another foreigner, even if only this time an American, into the neighbourhood of the barracks.

The owner of the Witanbury Stores went over to the place where Anna Bauer was sitting talking to the mother of one of Mr. Hegner's German employés. To call that young man German is, however, wrong, for some six weeks ago he had become naturalised. Well for him that he had done so, otherwise he would have had now to go back to the Fatherland and fight. His mother was the one really happy person in the gathering to-night, for the poor woman kept thanking God and Mr. Hegner in her heart for having saved her son from an awful fate. Treating the mother of his shopman as if she had not been there, Mr. Hegner bent towards the other woman.

"Frau Bauer," he said graciously, "come into our parlour for a few moments. I should like a little chat with you."

Anna got up and followed him through the crowd. What was it Mr. Hegner wanted to say to her? She felt slightly apprehensive. Surely he was going to tell her that now, owing to the war, he would have to stop the half-commission he was still giving her on Mrs. Otway's modest orders? Her heart rose in revolt. An Englishman belonging to the type and class of Anna Bauer would have determined "to have it out" with him, but she knew well that she would not have the courage to say anything at all if he did this mean thing.

To her great surprise, after she had followed him

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into the parlour, Mr. Hegner turned the key in the lock.

"I have but a very little to say," he exclaimed jovially, "but, while I say it, I do not care to be interrupted! It is more cosy so. Sit down, Frau Bauer, sit down!"

Still surprised, and still believing that her host was going to "best" her in some way, Anna did sit down. She fixed her light-blue, short-sighted eyes watchfully on his face. What a pity it was that he so greatly resembled her adored Kaiser!

"You are very kind," she said mechanically.

"I believe that last Sunday, August 1st, there was owing to you this sum." So saying, he pushed towards her across the table five half-sovereigns.

Anna Bauer uttered an exclamation of profound astonishment. She stared down at the money lying now close to her fat red hand.

"Is not that so?" he said, looking at her fixedly.

And at last she stammered out, "Yes, that is so. But—but—— do you then know Willi, Mr. Hegner?"

The man sitting opposite to her remained silent for a moment. He hadn't the slightest idea who "Willi" was. "Ach, yes! It is from him that you generally receive this money every six months—I had forgotten that! Willi is a good fellow. Have you known him long?" He wisely waited for a reply, for on his tongue had been the words, "I suppose he lives in London?"

"I have only known him three years," said Anna, "and that though he married my niece seven years ago. Yes, Willi is indeed an excellent fellow!"

And then she suddenly bethought herself of what

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Mrs. Otway had said that very morning. Mr. Hegner would certainly be able to tell her the truth—he was the sort of man who knew everything of a practical, business nature. "Perhaps you will be able to tell me," she asked eagerly, "if my nephew will have to fight—to go to the frontier. Mrs. Otway, she says that the police are always the last to be called out—is that true, Mr. Hegner?"

"Yes, I think I may assure you, Frau Bauer, that it is a fact." He looked at her curiously. "You are very fond, then, of your niece's husband, of the excellent Willi?"

"I am indeed," she said eagerly, "and grateful to him too, for this money he sends me is very welcome, Mr. Hegner. I was so afraid it might not come this time."

"And you were right to be afraid! It will become more and more difficult to get money from Germany to England," said her host, and there was a touch of grimness in his voice. "Still, there are ways of getting over every difficulty. Should the war last as long, I will certainly see that you, Frau Bauer, receive what is your due on the 1st of next January. But many strange things may happen before then. Long before Christmas you may no longer be earning this money."

"Oh! I hope that will not be the case!" She looked very much disturbed. £5 a year was about a fifth of good old Anna's total income.

"Well, we shall see. I will do my best for you, Frau Bauer."

"Thank you, thank you! I am very grateful to you, Mr. Hegner."

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Indeed old Anna's feelings towards the man who sat there, playing with a pen in his hand, had undergone an extraordinary transformation. She had come into the room disliking him, fearing him, feeling sure that he was going to take some advantage of her. Now she stared at his moody, rather flushed face, full of wondering gratitude.

How strange that he had never taken the trouble to tell her that he knew Willi! She was sorry to remember how often she had dissuaded her mistress from getting something at the Stores that could be got elsewhere, some little thing on which the tiny commission she received would have been practically nil, or, worse still, overlooked. Her commission had been often overlooked of late unless she kept a very sharp look-out on the bills, which Mrs. Otway had a tiresome habit of locking away when receipted.

She took the five precious gold pieces off the table, and moved, as if to rise from her chair.

But Mr. Hegner waved his hand. "Sit down, sit down, Frau Bauer," he said. "There is no hurry. I enjoy the thought of a little chat with you." He waited a moment. "And are you thinking of staying on in your present position? You are—let me see—with Mrs. Otway?"

"Oh yes," she said, brightening. "I shall certainly stay where I am. I am very happy there. They are very kind to me, Mr. Hegner. I love my young lady as much as I do my own child."

"It is a quiet house," he went on, "a quiet house, with very little coming and going, Frau Bauer. Is not that so?"

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"There is a good deal of visiting," she said quickly. "It is a hospitable house."

"Not often gentlemen of the garrison, I suppose?"

"Indeed, yes," cried Anna eagerly. "You know how it is in England? It is not like in our country. Here everybody is much more associated. In some ways it is pleasanter."

"Very true. And had any of these officers who came and called on your two ladies reason to suppose that the war was coming?"

Anna stared at him, surprised. "No, indeed!" she cried. "English officers never talk of warlike subjects. I have never even seen one of them wearing his uniform."

"It looks to me as if I shall have to add a new line of officers' kit to the Stores," said Mr. Hegner thoughtfully. "And any information you give me about officers just now might be very useful in my business. I know, Frau Bauer, that you were annoyed, disappointed about that little matter of the commission being halved."

"Oh no," murmured Anna, rather confusedly.

"Yes, and I understand your point of view. Well, from to-day, Frau Bauer, I restore the old scale! And if at any time you can say anything about the Stores to the visitors who come to see your ladies—anything, you understand, that may lead to an order—I will be generous, I will recognise your help in the widest sense."

Anna got up again, and so did her host. "Well, we have had a pleasant gossip," he said. "And one word more, Frau Bauer. You have not told *any one*, not even your daughter, of—of——" he hesitated,

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for he did not wish to put in plain words the question he wished to convey—"of that other matter—of that in which your nephew is concerned?"

"I gave my solemn promise to Willi to say nothing," said Anna, "and I am not one who ever breaks my word, Mr. Hegner."

"That I am sure you are not! And Frau Bauer? Do not attempt to write to the Fatherland henceforth. Your letters would be opened, your business all spied out, and then the letters destroyed! I am at your disposal for any information you require. Come in and see us sometimes," he said cordially. "Let me see—to-day is Wednesday. How about Sunday? Come in on Sunday night, if you can do so, and have a little supper. You may have news of interest to my business to give me, and in any case it is pleasant to chat among friends."

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CHAPTER VIII

IT was now the morning of Friday, the third day of war, and Mrs. Otway allowed the newspaper she had been holding in her hands to slip on to the floor at her feet with an impatient sigh.

From where she sat, close to the window in her charming sitting-room, her eyes straying down to the ground read in huge characters at the top of one of the newspaper columns the words:

"THE FLEET MOBILISED."

"MOTOR RUSH FOR VOLUNTEERS."

"HOW THE NAVAL RESERVE RECEIVED THEIR NOTICES."

"OUR SAILORS' GOOD-BYE."

Then, at the top of another column, in rather smaller characters, as though that news was after all not really so important as the home news:

"DEFEAT OF THE GERMANS AT LIÉGE."

"COMPLETE ROUT."

"GERMANS REPULSED AT ALL POINTS."

Finally, in considerably smaller characters:

"ALLEGED GERMAN CRUELTIES IN BELGIUM."

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She raised her eyes and looked out, over the Close, to where the Cathedral rose like a diamond set in emeralds. What a beautiful day—and how quiet, how much more quiet than usual, was the dear, familiar, peaceful scene! All this week, thanks in a great measure to the prolonged Bank Holiday, Witanbury had been bathed in a sabbatical calm.

Oddly enough, this had not been as pleasant as it ought to have been. In fact, it had been rather unpleasant to find nearly all the shops shut day after day, and it had become really awkward and annoying not to be able to get money as one required it. At this very moment Rose was out in the town, trying to cash a cheque, for they were quite out of petty cash.

During the last three days Major Guthrie, who so seldom allowed more than a day and a half to slip by without coming to the Trellis House, had not called, neither had he written. Mrs. Otway was surprised, and rather annoyed with herself, to find how much she missed him. She realised that it was the more unreasonable of her, as at first, say all last Wednesday, she had shrunk from the thought of seeing him, the one person among her acquaintances, with the insignificant exception of young Jervis Blake, who had believed in the possibility of an Anglo-German conflict. But when the whole of that long day, the first day of war, had gone by, and the next day also, without bringing with it even the note which, during his infrequent absences, she had grown accustomed to receive from Major Guthrie, she felt hurt and injured.

Major Guthrie was one of those rather inarticulate

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Englishmen who can express themselves better in writing than in speech. When he and Mrs. Otway were together, she could always, and generally did, out-talk him; but often, after some discussion of theirs, he would go home and write her quite a good letter. And then, after reading it, and perhaps smiling over it a little, she would tear it up and put the pieces in the waste-paper basket.

Yes, her rather odd, unconventional friendship with Major Guthrie was a pleasant feature of her placid, agreeably busy life, and it was strange that he had neither come, nor written and explained what kept him away.

And while Mrs. Otway sat there, waiting she knew not quite for what, old Anna sat knitting in her kitchen on the other side of the hall, also restlessly longing for something, anything, to happen, which would give her news of what was really going on in the Fatherland. All her heart, during these last three days, had been with Minna and Willi in far-off Berlin.

A few moments ago a picture paper had been spread out on the table before Anna. She always enjoyed herself over that paper. It was Miss Rose's daily gift to her old nurse, and was paid for out of her small allowance. The two morning papers read by her ladies were in due course used to light the fires; but Anna kept her own *Daily Pictorials* most carefully, and there was an ever-growing neat pile of them in a corner of the scullery.

But to-day's *Daily Pictorial* lay in a crumpled heap, tossed to one side on the floor of the kitchen, for poor old Anna had just read out the words:

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"FRENCH FRONTIER SUCCESSES."

"GERMAN DRAGOON REGIMENT ANNIHILATED."

"ONE THOUSAND GERMAN PRISONERS IN ALSACE."

Up to this strange, sinister week, Anna had contented herself with looking at the pictures. She had hardly ever glanced at the rest of the paper. She did not like the look of English print, and she read English with difficulty. But this morning the boy who had brought the fish had said, not disagreeably, but as if he was giving her a rather amusing bit of information, "Your friends have been catching it hot, Mrs. Bauer; and from what I can make out, they deserves it!" She had not quite understood what he meant, but it had made her uneasy; and after she had cleared away breakfast, and washed up, she had sat down with her paper spread before her.

She had looked long at a touching picture of a big sailor saying good-bye to the tiny baby in his arms. He was kissing the child, and Anna had contemplated him with a good deal of sympathy. That big bearded British sailor would soon be face to face with the German Navy. Thus he was surely doomed. His babe would soon be fatherless. Kind old Anna wiped her eyes at the thought.

And then? And then she had slowly spelled out the incredible, the dreadful news about the German Dragoon Regiment. Her father, forty-four years ago, had been a non-commissioned officer in a Dragoon Regiment.

Yes, both mistress and maid felt wretched on this,

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the third day of the war, which no one, in England at least, yet thought of as the Great War.

Mrs. Otway was restless, quite unlike herself. She wondered, uneasily, why she felt so depressed. Friday was the day when she always paid her few household books, but to-day, as it was still Bank Holiday, the books had not come in. Instead, she had had three letters, marked in each case "Private," from humble folk in the town, asking her most urgently to pay at once the small sum she owed to each of them. In every case the writer expressed the intention of calling in person for the money. It was partly to try and get the cash with which to pay these accounts that Rose had gone out with a cheque. It was so odd, so disagreeable, to find oneself without the power of getting any ready money. Such a thing had never happened to Mrs. Otway before! It would be really very disagreeable if Rose, after all, failed to cash that cheque.

Then it suddenly occurred to her that James Hayley might bring her down some money to-morrow. Nothing would be easier, or so she supposed, than for *him* to get it. She went over to her writing-table by the window and hurriedly wrote a note. Then she made out a cheque for twenty pounds.

Oh yes, it would be quite easy for James, who was in a Government office, to get her the money!

Mrs. Otway, like most English people, had a limitless belief in the powers of any one connected with the Government. Twenty pounds? It was a good deal of money. She had never had so much cash in the house before. But what was happening now had taught her a lesson. The Dean had said that all

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the banks would be open again on Monday. But the Dean was not quite infallible. How often had he and she agreed that Germany would never, *never* dream of going to war with any of her peaceful neighbours!

She read over the letter she had written:

"DEAR JAMES,—I enclose a cheque for twenty pounds. Would you kindly get it cashed for me, and would you bring down the money to-morrow when you come? Of course I should like the money, if possible, in gold, but still it will do if you can get me two five-pound notes and the rest in gold and silver. I find that several people to whom I owe small amounts are anxious to be paid, and they do not seem to care about taking cheques. What strange times we live in! Both Rose and I long to see you and hear all the news.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"MARY OTWAY."

James Hayley always called her "Aunt Mary," though as a matter of fact he was the child of a first cousin.

She got up from her table, and began folding up the sheets of newspaper lying on the floor. She did not want poor old Anna to see the great staring headlines telling of the defeat of the Germans. Having folded the paper, and put it away in an unobtrusive corner, she went upstairs for her hat. She felt that it would do her good to go out into the air, and post the letter herself.

And then, as she came downstairs, she heard the gate of the Trellis House open and swing to. Rose

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coming back, no doubt. But no, it was not Rose, for instead of the handle of the door turning, there was a ring and a knock.

It was a ring and a knock which sounded pleasantly familiar. Mrs. Otway smiled as she turned into her sitting-room. It was the first time she had smiled that day.

Major Guthrie at last! It was half-past eleven now; they could have a good long, comfortable talk, and perhaps he would stop to lunch. Of course she would have to eat humble pie about the war, but he was the last man to say "I told you so!"

There were so many things she wanted to know, which now she could ask him, secure of a sensible, true answer. Major Guthrie, whatever his prejudices, was a professional soldier. He really did know something of military matters. He was not like the people who lived in the Close, and who were already talking such nonsense about the war. Mrs. Otway was too intelligent not to realise the fact that they, whatever their boasts, knew nothing which could throw real light on the great adventure which was beginning, only beginning, to fill all her thoughts.

Suddenly the door opened, and Anna announced, in a grumpy tone, "Major Guthrie."

"I thought I was never going to see you again!"

There was an eagerness, a warmth of welcome in Mrs. Otway's manner of which she was unconscious, but which gave a sudden shock of pleasure, aye, and perhaps even more than pleasure, to her visitor. He had expected to find her anxious, depressed, troubled —above all, deeply saddened by the dreadful thing

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having come to pass which she had so often vehemently declared would never, never happen.

They shook hands, but before she could go on to utter one of the many questions which were on her lips, Major Guthrie spoke. "I've come to say good-bye," he said abruptly. "I've had my marching orders!" There was a strange light in the dark blue eyes which were the one beautiful feature he had acquired from his very handsome mother.

"I—I don't understand——" And she really didn't.

What could he mean? His marching orders? But he had left the Army four or five years ago. Besides, the Dean had told her only that morning that no portion of the British Army was going to the Continent—that on England's part this was only going to be a naval war. The Dean had heard this fact from a friend in London, a distinguished German professor of Natural Theology, who was a very frequent visitor to the Deanery.

Major Guthrie slightly lowered his voice: "I had the telegram an hour ago," he explained. "I thought you knew that I was in the Reserve, that I form part of what is called the Expeditionary Force."

"The Expeditionary Force?" she repeated in a bewildered tone. "I didn't know there was such a thing! You never told me about it."

"Well, you've never been interested in such matters." Major Guthrie smiled at her indulgently, and suddenly she realised that when they were together she generally talked of her own concerns, very, very seldom of his.

But what was this he was now saying? "Besides, it's by way of being a secret. That's the real reason

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I haven't been out the last few days. I didn't feel I could leave home for even five minutes. I've been on tenterhooks—in fact it will take me two or three days to get fit again. You see, I couldn't say anything to anybody! And one heard such absurd rumours—rumours that the Government didn't mean to send any troops to the Continent—that they had been caught napping—that the transport arrangements had broken down, and so on. However, it's all right now! I report myself to-night; rejoin my old regiment to-morrow; and—well, in three or four days, please God, I shall be in France, and in a week at latest in Belgium."

Mrs. Otway looked at him silently. She was too much surprised to speak. She felt moved, oppressed, excited. A British Army going to France—to Belgium? It seemed incredible!

And Major Guthrie also felt moved and excited, but *he* was not oppressed—he was triumphant, overjoyed. "I thought you'd understand," he said, and there was a little break in his voice. "It's made me feel a young man again—that's what it's done!"

"How does your mother take it?" asked Mrs. Otway slowly.

And then for the first time a troubled look came over his kind, honest face. "I haven't told my mother," he answered. "I've thought a good deal about it; and I don't mean to say good-bye to her—I shall simply write her a note saying I've had to go up to town on business. She'll have it when I'm gone. Then, when the news is allowed to be made public, I'll write and tell her the truth. She felt my going to South Africa so much. You see, the man

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to whom she was engaged as a girl was killed in the Crimea."

There was a moment's silence between them, and then he asked, "And Miss Rose?—I should like to say good-bye to her. Is she at home?"

"No, she's out in the town, doing some business for me—or rather trying to do it! Have *you* found any difficulty in getting cheques changed the last few days, Major Guthrie?"

"No; for I've always kept money in the house," he said quickly. "And glad I am now that I did. It used to annoy my mother—it used to make her afraid that we should be burgled. But of course I never told any one else." He looked at her rather oddly. "I've quite a lot of money here, with me now."

"I wonder if you would be so kind as to cash me a cheque?" She grew a little pink. She was not used to asking even small favours from her friends. Impulsive, easy-going as she seemed, there was yet a very proud and reticent streak in Mary Otway's nature.

"Of course I will. In fact——" and then he stopped abruptly, for she had gone up to her table, and was opening the letter she had just written to James Hayley.

"Could you really conveniently let me have as much as twenty pounds?" and she held him out the cheque.

"Certainly. Then you're not expecting Miss Rose back for a minute or two?"

"Oh, no! She only went out twenty minutes ago."

He was still standing, and Mrs. Otway suddenly felt herself to be inhospitable.

"Do sit down," she said hurriedly. Somehow in

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the last few minutes her point of view, her attitude to her friend, her kind, considerate, courteous friend, had altered. She no longer looked at him with indulgent half-contempt as an idle man, a man who, though he was very good to his mother, and sometimes very useful to herself, had always led, excepting during the South African War (and that was a long time ago), an idle, useless kind of life. He was going now to face real danger, perchance—but her mind shrank from *that* thought, from that dread possibility—death itself. Somehow the fact that Major Guthrie was going with his regiment to France brought the War perceptibly nearer to Mrs. Otway, and made it for the first time real.

He quietly took the easy chair she had motioned him to take, and she sat down too.

"Well, I have to confess that you were right and I wrong! You always thought we should fight the Germans." She tried to speak playfully, but there was a certain pain in the admission, for she had always scorned his quiet prophecies and declared him to be, in this one matter, prejudiced and unfair.

"Yes," he said, "that's quite true! But, Mrs. Otway? I'm very, very sorry to have been proved right. And I fear that you must feel it very much, as you have so many German friends."

"I haven't many German friends now," she said quickly. "I had as a girl, and of course I've kept up with two or three of them, as you know. But it's true that the whole thing is a great shock and—and a great pain to me. Unlike you, I've always thought very well of Germans."

He said quietly, "So have I."

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"Ah, but not in my sense!" She could not help smiling a little ruefully. "You know I never thought of them in your sense at all—I mean not as soldiers."

There was a pause, a long and rather painful pause, between them.

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CHAPTER IX

MAJOR GUTHRIE looked at Mrs. Otway meditatively.

Apart from his instinctive attraction for her—an attraction which had sprung into being the very first time they had met, at a dinner party at the Deanery—he had always regarded her as an exceptionally clever woman. She was able to do so much more than most of the ladies he had known. To his simple soldier mind there was something interesting and, well, yes, rather extraordinary, in a woman who sat on committees, who could hold her own so well in argument, and who yet remained very feminine, sometimes—so he secretly thought—quite delightfully absurd and inconsequent, with it all.

Major Guthrie had always been sorry that Mrs. Otway and his mother didn't exactly hit it off. His mother had once been a beauty, and was now a rather shrewish, sharp-tongued old lady, who had outlived most of the people and most of the things she had cared for in life. Mrs. Otway irritated Mrs. Guthrie. The old lady despised the still pretty widow's eager, interested, enthusiastic outlook on life.

Suddenly Major Guthrie took a large pocket-book out of his right breast pocket. He opened it, and Mrs. Otway saw that it contained a packet of bank-notes held together by an india-rubber band. There was also an empty white envelope in the pocket-book. Slipping off the band, he began counting the notes.

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When he had counted four, she called out, "Stop! Stop! I am only giving you a twenty-pound cheque." And then she saw that they were not five-pound notes, as she had supposed, but ten-pound notes.

He went on counting, and mechanically, hardly knowing that she was doing so, she counted with him up to ten. He then took the envelope he had brought with him, put the ten notes inside, and getting up from his chair he laid the envelope on Mrs. Otway's writing-table by the window.

"I want you to keep this by you in case of need. I know you will forgive me if I say that I shall go away feeling much happier if you will oblige me by doing what I ask in this matter." Under the tan his face had got very red, and there was a deprecating expression in his dark blue eyes.

"I don't understand," she said, and the colour also rushed into her face.

"I beg of you not to be angry with me——" Major Guthrie stood up and looked down at her so humbly, so wistfully, that she felt touched instead of angry. "You see, I don't like the thought of your being caught, as you've been caught this week apparently, without any money in the house."

But if Mrs. Otway felt touched by the kind thought which had prompted the offer of this uncalled-for loan, she also felt just a little vexed. Major Guthrie was treating her just like a child!

"I'm not in the least likely to be short of money," she cried, "once the banks are open again. The Dean says that everything will be as usual by Monday, and I have quite a lot of money coming in towards the end of this month. In fact, as we can't now go

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abroad, I shall be even richer than usual. Still, please don't think I'm not grateful!"

She got up too, and looked at him frankly. The colour had now gone from his face, and he looked tired and grey. She told herself that it *had* been very kind of him to have thought of this—the act of a true friend. And so, a little shyly, she put out her hand for a moment, naturally supposing that he would grasp it in friendship. But he did nothing of the sort, so she quietly let her hand fall again by her side, and feeling rather foolish sat down again by her writing-table.

"With regard to the money you are expecting at the end of this month—do you mean the dividends due on the amount you put in that Six Per Cent. Hamburg Loan?" he asked, quietly going back to his armchair.

"Yes, it is six per cent. on four thousand pounds—quite a lot of money!" She spoke in a playful tone, but she was beginning to feel embarrassed and awkward. It was, after all, an odd thing for Major Guthrie to have done—to bring her the considerable sum of a hundred pounds in bank-notes without even first asking her permission to do so.

The envelope containing the notes was still lying there, close to her elbow.

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Otway, that you're not likely to have those dividends paid you this August. All money payments from Germany to England, or from England to Germany, have of course stopped since Wednesday."

And then, when he saw the look of utter dismay deepening into horrified surprise come over her face, he added hastily, "Of course we must hope that these

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moneys will be kept intact till the end of the war. Still, I doubt very much whether your bankers would allow you to draw on that probability, even if you were willing to pay a high rate of interest. German credit is likely to suffer greatly before this war is over."

"But Major Guthrie? I don't suppose you know what this means to me and to Rose. Why, more than half of everything we have in the world is invested in Germany!"

"I know that," he said feelingly. "In fact, that was among the first things, Mrs. Otway, which occurred to me when I learnt that war had been declared. I expected to find you very much upset about it."

"I never gave it a thought; I didn't know a war could affect that sort of thing. What a fool I've been! Oh, if only I'd followed your advice—I mean two years ago!" She spoke with a great deal of painful agitation, and Major Guthrie felt very much distressed indeed. It was hard that he should have had to be the bearer of such ill tidings.

"I blame myself very, very much," he said sombrely, "for not having insisted on your putting that money into English or Colonial securities."

"Oh, but you did insist!" Even now, in the midst of her keen distress, the woman's native honesty and generosity of nature asserted itself. "You couldn't have said more! Don't you remember that we nearly quarrelled over it? Short of forging my name and stealing my money and investing it properly for me, you couldn't have done anything more than you did do, Major Guthrie."

"That you should say that is a great comfort to

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me," he said in a low voice. "But even so, I don't feel as if I'd really done enough. You see, I was as sure—as sure as ever man was of anything—that this war was going to come either this year or next! As a matter of fact I thought it would be next year—I thought the Germans would wish to be even more ready than they are."

"But do you really think they are ready?" she said doubtfully. "Look how badly they've been doing at Liége." It was strange how Mrs. Otway's mind had veered round in the last few minutes. She now wanted the Germans to be beaten, and beaten quickly.

He shook his head impatiently. "Wait till they get into their stride!" And then, in a different, a more diffident voice, "Then you'll consent to relieve my mind by keeping the contents of that envelope—I mean of course by spending them? As a matter of fact I've a confession to make to you." He looked at her deprecatingly. "I've just arranged with my London banker to make up those Hamburg dividends. He'll send you the money in notes. He understands——" and then he got rather red. "He understands that I'm practically your trustee, Mrs. Otway."

"But, Major Guthrie—it isn't *true!* How could you say such a thing?"

She felt confused, unhappy, surprised, awkward, grateful. Of course she couldn't take this man's money! He was a friend, in some ways a very close friend of hers, but she hadn't known him more than four years. If she *should* run short of money, why there must be a dozen people or more on whose friendship she had a greater claim, and who could, and would, help her.

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And then Mary Otway suddenly ran over in secret review her large circle of old friends and acquaintances, and she realised, with a shock of pain and astonishment, that there was not one of them to whom she would wish to go for help in that kind of trouble. Of her wide circle—and like most people of her class she had a very wide circle—there was only one person, and that was the man who was now sitting looking at her with so much concern in his eyes, to whom it would even have occurred to her to confess that her income had failed through her foolish belief in the stability, and the peaceful intentions, of Germany.

Far, far quicker than it would have taken for her to utter her thoughts aloud, these painful thoughts and realisations flashed through her brain. If she had been content to put into this Hamburg Loan only the amount of the legacy she had inherited three years ago! But she had done more than that—she had sold out sound English railway stock after that interview she had had with a pleasant-speaking German business man in the big London Hamburg Loan office. He had said to her, "Madam, this is the opportunity of a lifetime!" And she had believed him. The kind German friend who had written to her about the matter had certainly acted in good faith. Of that she could rest assured. But this was very small consolation now.

"So you see, Mrs. Otway, that it's all settled—been settled over your head, as it were. And you'll oblige me, you'll make me feel that you're really treating me as a friend, if you say nothing more about it."

And then, as she still remained silent, and as Major Guthrie could see by the expression of her face that

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she meant to refuse what he so generously and delicately offered her, he went on:

"I feel now that I ought to tell you something which I had meant to keep to myself." He cleared his throat—and hum'd and hum'd a little. "I'm sure you'll understand that every sensible man, when going on active service, makes a fresh will. I've already written out my instructions to my solicitor, and he will prepare a will for me to sign to-morrow." He waited a moment, and then added, as lightly as he could: "I've left you a thousand pounds, which I've arranged you should receive immediately on my death. You see, I'm a lonely man, and all my relations are well off. I think you know, without my telling out, that I've become very much attached to you—to you and to Miss Rose."

And still Mrs. Otway was too much surprised, and yes, too much moved, to speak. Major Guthrie was indeed proving himself a true friend.

"Under ordinary circumstances," he went on slowly, "this clause in my will would be of very little practical interest to you, for I am a healthy man. But we're up against a very big thing, Mrs. Otway——" He did not like to add that it was quite possible she would receive his legacy before she had had time to dip very far into the money he was leaving with her.

She looked at him with a troubled look. And yet? And yet, though it was not perhaps very reasonable that it should be so, somehow she did feel that the fact that Major Guthrie was leaving her—and Rose—the legacy of which he spoke, made a difference. It would make it easier, that is, to accept the money that lay there on her table. Though Major Guthrie was

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not, in the technical sense, a clever man, he had a far more intimate knowledge of human character than had his friend.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said at last.

He answered rather sharply, "I don't want you to thank me. And Mrs. Otway? I can say now what I've never had the opportunity of saying, that is, how much I've felt honoured by your friendship—what a lot it's meant to me."

He said the words in a rather hard, formal voice, and she answered, with far more emotion than he had betrayed, "And it's been a very, very great thing for me, too, Major Guthrie. Do please believe that!"

He bowed his head gravely. "Well, I must be going now," he said, a little heavily and sadly. "Oh, and one thing more—I should be very grateful if you'd go and see my mother sometimes. During the last few days hardly a soul's been near her. Of course I know how different you are the one from the other, but all the same——" he hesitated a moment. "My mother has fine qualities, once you get under that—well, shall I call it that London veneer? She saw a great deal of the world after she became a widow, while she was keeping house for a brother—when I was in India. She'd like to see Rose, too"—unconsciously he dropped the "Miss." "She likes young people, especially pretty girls."

"Of course I'll go and see her, and so will Rose! You know I've always liked Mrs. Guthrie better than she liked me. I'm not 'smart' enough for her." Mrs. Otway laughed without a trace of bitterness. And then with sudden seriousness she asked him a

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curious question: "How long d'you think you'll be away?"

"D'you mean how long do I think the War will last?"

Somehow she had not thought of her question quite in that sense. "Yes: I suppose that is what I do mean."

"I think it will be a long war. It will certainly last a year—perhaps a good deal longer."

He walked over to the window nearest the door. Standing there, he told himself that he was looking perhaps for the last time on the dear, familiar scene before him: on the green across which high elms now flung their short morning shadows; on the encompassing houses, some of exceeding stateliness and beauty, others of a simpler, less distinguished character, yet each instinct with a dignity and seemliness which exquisitely harmonised it with its finer fellows; and finally on the slender Gothic loveliness of the Cathedral.

"I'm trying to learn this view by heart," said Major Guthrie, in a queer, muffled voice. "I've always thought it the most beautiful view in England—the one that stands for all a man cares for, all he would fight for."

Mrs. Otway was touched—touched and pleased too. She knew that her friend was baring to her a very secret chamber of his heart.

"It *is* a beautiful, peaceful outlook," she said quietly. "I was thinking so not long before you came in—when I was sitting here, reading the strange, dreadful news in to-day's paper."

He turned away from the window and looked at

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her. She saw in the shadow that his face looked grey and strained. "Major Guthrie?" she began, a little shyly.

"Yes?" he said rather quickly. "Yes, Mrs. Otway?"

"I only want to ask if you would like me to write to you regularly with news of Mrs. Guthrie?"

"Will you really? How good of you; I didn't like to ask you to do that! I know how busy you always are." But he still lingered, as if loth to go away. Perhaps he was waiting on in the hope that Rose would come in.

"Do you know where you will land in France?" she asked, more to say something than for any real reason, for she knew very little of France.

"I am not sure," he answered hesitatingly. And then, "Still, I have a very shrewd idea of where they are going to fix the British base. I think it will be Boulogne. But, Mrs. Otway? Perhaps I ought to tell you again that all I've told you to-day is private. I may count on your discretion, may I not?" He looked at her a little anxiously.

"Of course I won't tell any one," she said quickly. "You really do mean not any one—not even the Dean?"

"Yes," he said. "I really do mean not any one. In fact I should prefer your not telling even Miss Rose."

"Oh, let me tell Rose," she said eagerly. "I always tell her everything. She is far more discreet than I am!" And this was true.

"Well, tell Miss Rose and no one else," he said. "I

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don't even know myself when I am going, where I am going, or how I am going."

They were now standing in the hall.

"Then you don't expect to be long in London?" she said.

"No. I should think I shall only be there two or three days. Of course I've got to get my kit, and to see people at the War Office, and so on." He added in a low voice, "There's not going to be any repetition of the things that went on at the time of the Boer War—no leave-takings, no regiments marching through the streets. It's our object, so I understand, to take the Germans by surprise. Everything is going to be done to keep the fact that the Expeditionary Force is going to France a secret for the present. I had that news by the second post; an old friend of mine at the War Office wrote to me."

He gripped her hand in so tight a clasp that it hurt. Then he turned the handle of the front door, opened it, and was gone.

Mrs. Otway felt a sudden longing for sympathy. She went straight into the kitchen. "Anna!" she exclaimed, "Major Guthrie is going back into the Army! England is sending troops over to the Continent to help the Belgians!"

"Ach!" exclaimed Anna. "To Ostend?" She had once spent a summer at Ostend in a boarding-house, where she had been hard-worked and starved. Since then she had always hated the Belgians.

"No, no," said Mrs. Otway quickly. "Not to Ostend. To Boulogne, in France."

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CHAPTER X

IN the early morning sunshine—for it was only a quarter-past seven—Rose Otway stood just within the wrought-iron gate of the Trellis House.

It was Saturday in the first week of war. She had got up very early, almost as early as old Anna herself, for, waking at five, she had found it impossible to go to sleep again.

For the first time almost in her life, Rose felt heavy-hearted. The sudden, mysterious departure of Major Guthrie had brought the War very near; and so, in quite another way, had done Lord Kitchener's sudden, trumpet-like call, for a hundred thousand men. She knew that, in response to that call, Jervis Blake would certainly enlist, if not with the approval, at any rate with the reluctant consent, of his father; and Rose believed that this would mean the passing of Jervis out of her life.

To Rose Otway's mind there was something slightly disgraceful in any young man's enlistment in the British Army. The poorer mothers of Witanbury, those among whom the girl and her kind mother did a good deal of visiting and helping during the winter months, were apt to remain silent concerning the son who was a soldier. She could not help knowing that it was too often the bad boy of the family, the ne'er-do-weel, who enlisted. There were, of course, certain exceptions—such, for instance, as when a lad came of a fighting family, with father, uncles, and brothers all

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in the Army. As for the gentleman ranker, he was *always* a scapegrace.

Lord Kitchener's Hundred Thousand would probably be drawn from a different class, for they were being directly asked to defend their country. But even so, at the thought of Jervis Blake becoming a private, Rose Otway's heart contracted with pain, and, yes, with vicarious shame. Still, she made up her mind, there and then, that she would not give him up, that she would write to him regularly, and that as far as was possible they would remain friends.

How comforted she would have been could an angel have come and told her with what eyes England was henceforth to regard her "common soldiers."

Rose Otway was very young, and, like most young things, very ignorant of life. But there was, as Miss Forsyth had shrewdly said, a great deal in the girl. Even now she faced life steadily, unhelped by the many pleasant illusions cherished by her mother. Rose was as naturally reserved as her mother was naturally confiding, and Mrs. Otway was therefore far more popular in their little world than her daughter.

Rose, however, was very pretty, with a finished, delicately fresh and aloof type of beauty which was singularly attractive to the intelligent and fastidious. And so there had already appeared, striking across the current of their placid lives, more than one acute observer who, divining certain hidden depths of feeling in the girl's nature, longed to probe and rouse them. But so far such attempts, generally undertaken by men who were a good deal older than Rose Otway, had failed to inspire anything but shrinking repugnance in their object.

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But Jervis Blake was different. Jervis she had known more or less always, owing to that early girlish friendship between his mother and her mother. When he had come to "Robey's" to be coached, Mrs. Otway had made him free of her house, and though she herself, not unnaturally, did not find him an interesting companion, he soon had become part of the warp and woof of Rose's young life. Like most only children, she had always longed for a brother or a sister; and Jervis was the nearest possession of the kind to which she had ever attained.

Yes, the War was coming very near to Rose Otway, and for more than one reason. As soon as she got up she sat down and wrote a long letter to a girl friend who was engaged to a naval officer. She had suddenly realised with a pang that this girl, of whom she was really fond, must now be feeling very miserable and very anxious. Every one seemed to think there would soon be a tremendous battle between the British and the German fleets. And the Dean, who had been to Kiel last year, believed that the German sailors would give a very good account of themselves.

The daily papers were delivered very early in Witanbury Close. And after she had helped old Anna as far as Anna would allow herself to be helped in the light housework with which she began each day, Rose went out and stood by the gate. She longed to know what news, if any, there was.

But the moments went slowly by, and with the exception of a milk cart which clattered gaily along, the Close remained deserted. Half-past seven in the morning, even on a fine August day, saw a good many

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people still in bed in an English country town. To-day Rose Otway, having herself risen so early, was inclined to agree with Anna that English people are very lazy, and lose some of the best part of each morning.

And then, as she stood out there in the sunshine, her mind reverted to Major Guthrie and to his sudden disappearance. Rose liked Major Guthrie, and she was sorry she had missed him yesterday morning, when out on her fruitless quest for money.

Rose had been surprised at the way her mother had spoken of Major Guthrie's departure. Mrs. Otway had declared the fact to be a secret—a secret that must at all costs be kept. As a matter of fact the girl had already heard the news from Anna, and she had observed, smiling, "But, mother, you seem to have told Anna all about it?" And Mrs. Otway, her gentle temper for once ruffled, had answered sharply, "I don't count Anna! Major Guthrie particularly mentioned the Dean. He did not wish the Dean to know. He said his going was to be kept secret. So I beg you, Rose, to do as I ask."

Anna came out of the front door, and began polishing the brass knob. "Ach!" she exclaimed. "Come in, child—do! You a chill will take. If it is the postman you want, he gone by already has."

Rose smiled. Dear old Anna had never acquired the British love of fresh air. "I'm waiting for the papers," she said. "I can't think why the man doesn't begin with us, instead of going all round the other way first! But I'm going to catch him this morning."

And Anna, grumbling, went back into the house again.

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All at once Rose heard the sound of quick footsteps to her right, on the path outside. She moved back into the paved court in front of the Trellis House, and stood, a charming vision of youth and freshness, in her pale mauve cotton frock, by a huge stone jar filled with pink geraniums.

And then, a moment later, the tall figure of Jervis Blake suddenly swung into view. He was very pale, and there was an eager, absorbed, strained look on his face. In his hand was a white telegraph form.

Rose ran forward, and once more opened the gate. "Jervis!" she cried. "What is it? What's the matter? Have you had bad news from home?"

He shook his head, and she saw that he was trying to smile. But there was still that on his face which she had never seen before—a rapt, transfigured look which made her feel—and she both disliked and resented the feeling—as if he were, for the moment, remote from herself. But he stayed his steps, and came through the gate.

For a moment he stood opposite to her without speaking. Then he took out of his breast pocket a large sheet of notepaper folded in four. He opened it, and held it out to her. It was headed "War Office, Whitehall, London," and in it Jervis Blake, Esquire, was curtly informed that, if he still desired to enter the Army, he was at liberty to apply for a commission. But in that case he was asked to report himself as soon as possible.

Rose read the cold, formal sentences again and again, and a lump rose to her throat. How glad she was! How very, very glad! Indeed, her gladness, her joy in Jervis's joy, surprised herself.

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"And it's all owing to you," he exclaimed in a low voice, "that I didn't go and make an ass of myself on Wednesday. If it hadn't been for you, Rose, I should have enlisted. This would have come too late. It *is* luck to have seen you now, like this. You're the very first I've told." He was wringing her hand, his face now as flushed as it had been pale.

And as they stood there together, Rose suddenly became aware that Anna, at the kitchen window, was looking out at them both with a rather peculiar expression on her emotional German face.

A feeling of annoyance swept over the girl; she knew that to her old nurse every young man who ever came to the Trellis House was a potential lover. But even Anna might have left Jervis Blake out of the category. There was nothing silly or—or sentimental, in the real, deep friendship they two felt for one another.

And then Rose did something which surprised herself. Withdrawing her hand from his, she exclaimed, "I'll walk with you to the corner"—and led the way out, through the gate, and so along the empty roadway.

They walked along in silence for a few moments. The Close was still deserted. Across the green, to their right, rose the noble grey mass of the Cathedral. In many of the houses the blinds were even now only beginning to be pulled up.

"I rather expected yesterday that you would come in and tell me that you were going off to be one of the hundred thousand men Lord Kitchener has asked for," she said at last.

"Of course I meant to be, but Mr. Robey thought

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I ought to communicate with my father before actually joining," he answered. "In fact, I had already written home. That's one reason why I'm going to get this wire off so early."

"I suppose you'll be at Sandhurst this time next week?"

And he frowned, for the first time that morning.

"Oh no, I hope not! Mr. Robey heard last night from one of our fellows—one of those who passed last time—and he said he was being drafted at once into a regiment! You mustn't forget how long I was in the O.T.C. It seems they're sending all those who were in the O.T.C. straight into regiments."

"Then by next week you'll be second lieutenant in the Wessex Light Infantry!" she exclaimed. She knew that it was in that famous regiment that General Blake had won his early spurs, and that it had been settled, in the days when no one had doubted Jervis Blake's ability to pass the Army Exam., that he would join his father's old regiment, now commanded by one of that father's very few intimates.

"Yes, I suppose I shall," he said, flushing. "Oh, Rose, I can't believe in my luck. It's so much—much too good to be true!"

They had come to the corner, to the parting of their ways. To the left, through the grey stone gateway, was the street leading into the town; on the right, within a few moments' walk, the Cathedral.

Rose suddenly felt very much moved, carried out of her reserved self. A lump rose to her throat. She knew that this was their real parting, and that she was not likely to see him again, save in the presence of her mother for a few minutes.

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"I wonder," said Jervis Blake hoarsely, "I wonder, Rose, if you would do me a great kindness? Would you go on into the Cathedral with me, just for three or four minutes? I should like to go there for the last time with you."

"Yes," she said; "of course I will." Rose had inherited something of her mother's generosity of nature. If she gave at all, she gave freely and gladly. "I do hope the door will be open," she said, trying to regain her usual staid composure. She was surprised and disturbed by the pain which seemed to be rising, brimming over, in her heart.

They walked on in silence. Jervis Blake was looking straight before him, his face set and grim. He was telling himself that a fellow would be a cur to take advantage of such a moment to say anything, and that especially was that the case with one who might so soon be exposed to something much worse than death —such as the being blinded, the being maimed, for life. War was a very real thing to Jervis, more real certainly than to any other one of the young men who had been his comrades at Robey's during the last two years.

But the most insidious of all tempters, Nature herself, whispered in his ear, "Why not simply tell her that you love her? No woman minds being told that she is loved! It can do no harm, and it will make her think of you kindly when you are far away. This strange, secret meeting is yet another piece of good fortune to-day—this glorious day—has brought you! Do not throw away your chance. Look again down into her face. See her dear eyes full of tears. She

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has never been moved as she is moved to-day, and it is you who have moved her."

And then another, sterner voice spoke: "*You* have not moved her—presumptuous fool! Nay, it is the thought of England, of her country, of all you stand for to-day, that has moved her. And the next few minutes will show the stuff of which you are made—if you have the discipline, the self-restraint, essential to the man who has to lead others, or if—if you only have the other thing. You are being given now what you could never have hoped for, a quiet, intimate time with her alone; you might have had to say good-bye to her in her mother's presence—that mother who has never really liked you, and whom you have never really liked."

He held open the little wicket gate for her to pass through. They walked up the stone path to the wide, hospitable-looking porch which is the only part of Witanbury Cathedral that has remained much as it was in pre-Reformation days.

To Jervis Blake, suffused with poignant emotion, every perception sharpened by mingling triumph and pain, the "faire Doore" of Witanbury Cathedral had never seemed so lovely as on this still August morning. As they stepped through the exquisite outer doorway, with its deep mouldings, both dog-toothed and foliated, marking the transition from Norman to Gothic, a deep, intense joy in their dual solitude suddenly rose up in his heart like a white flame.

The interior of the porch was little larger than an ordinary room, but it was wonderfully perfect in the harmony of its proportions; and even Rose, less perceptive than her companion, and troubled and dis-

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turbed, rather than uplifted, by an emotion to which she had no clue, was moved by the delicate, shadowed beauty of the grey walls and vaulted roof now encompassing her.

For a moment they both lingered there, irresolute; and then Jervis, stepping forward, lifted the great iron handle of the black oak, nail-studded door. But the door remained shut, and he turned round with the words, "It's still closed. We shan't be able to get in. I'm sorry." He looked indeed so disappointed that there came over Rose the eager determination that he should not go away baulked of his wish.

"I'm sure it opens at eight," she exclaimed; "and it can't be very far from eight now. Let's wait here the few minutes! I'm in no hurry, if you can spare the time?" Rose spoke rather quickly and breathlessly. She was trying hard to behave as if this little adventure of theirs was a very conventional, commonplace happening.

He said something—she was not sure whether it was "All right" or "Very well."

On each side of the porch ran a low and deep stone bench, from which sprang the slender columns which seemed to climb eagerly upwards to the carved ribs of the vaulted roof. But they both went on standing close to one another, companioned only by the strange sculptured creatures which grinned down from the spandrels of the arches above.

And then, after waiting for what seemed an eternity —it was really hardly more than a minute—in the deep, brooding silence which seemed to enwrap the Close, the Cathedral, and their own two selves in a mantle of stillness, Rose Otway, bursting into sobs,

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