

and true, that he counted his own happiness as naught in the balance. "So it is all over. It was only a dream which happened in my brain. We have said good-bye and I have not told you. We have come to our last night; to-morrow I return to the Front, leaving you almost as much a stranger as when we met. And yet—yes, I am glad I said nothing. What right have I, who may be dead within a month, to speak to you of love? To have done so would have been the act of a coward." Then he sums up the case to himself, "so that I may act strongly." "If I had spoken and you had loved me in return, what would have resulted—only suffering. . . . You all the time would have been lonely. . . . Then I might have been maimed. I would not have held you to your bargain with a maimed man, for I might have to live to see you shudder. And then, I may die in this war. Who can tell? If I had married you, I should have stolen your happiness, and left you deserted. No, I am glad I did not speak of love."

He goes on to describe his first meeting with her in America:

"I looked into your eyes. What did I see there? Something haunting that I shall never forget. There you stood, a tall slim girl, like a rosebud on a stem with its petals unfolding. They said you were sailing for France with a unit that was going to take care of little children in the devastated district. I know devastated districts. I have helped to do the devastating. There are dead men mouldering in every shell-hole. I couldn't see you in that picture; you, with your delicate, fashionable sweetness."

Fate decreed that he should meet her again in Paris. Fate! He preferred to call it something else.

"Your footstep on the stairs. A gentle rustling. You were standing before me girlish and friendly, offering me the frailness of your hand. . . . The fun we had at the café where we went to lunch. Do you remember that? Our laughter at the curious people. And who were we that we should laugh at others. We two, who by such strange chances had found each other from all across the world. When we left, it was snowing; not hard, but in little puffy flakes, like jewels that settled on your hair and furs. . . . Since you will never read this, I will play a game. I will not send you what I write, but I will speak the truth to you on paper. If I live, perhaps some day when war is over, you will receive all your mail at once."

His last evening with her. "How the evening hurried. We were out in the Boulevard again" (after the opera). "Did you expect me to say anything in those last moments? I heard myself talking commonplaces in a voice which did not seem my own. I would speak. I would tell you. We talked. It was too late. 'Good-bye,' you said. 'Good-bye,' I repeated. 'You won't forget to write.'"

You withdrew your hand and nodded. Turning, you ran upstairs.

I wonder, will you write? When I asked you to do so, was that embarrassed nod of the head, a polite evasion of a refusal?

I can see you now, as you ran upstairs. You didn't look back. Had you stayed a moment longer I might have spoken the words which were better left unsaid. I think you knew that."

She does write to him, but not so soon as his heart cries out for; but it comes at last. "Such a jolly letter. So full of yourself. . . ."

"Military discipline has given me a purpose—to live bravely, dare cheerfully, and, if need be, to die gratefully. So you see how meeting you has upset my plans. You can't love a woman and not gaze into the future. You can't feel the need of her and be resigned to die. . . . I dreamed of you last night. It was the first time this has happened. We were in a garden full of sunshine and roses. You were leaning on my arm. We must have been married a long time, for there was no strangeness in our being together.

"You were intensely mine while the dream lasted, and then I awoke to find myself without you. . . . My dearest, I want to hold you and say nothing. I want—"

Here the letters end abruptly.

We feel that we are treading on holy ground as we read, almost as though we were desecrating some sacred place.

Will his "little American" recognise this message from "her man"? Will it seem to her the "wild, wild talk" he feared it might? Will the agony of the "might have been," or the joy of possessing for ever this chivalrous love outweigh in the balance? "Those who have felt no pain have known no joy." Her lover has gone down into the silence which cannot be broken, but he has left her a record of tender chivalry which any woman would be proud to possess.

And yet—and yet—may she not echo his yearning words: "What I want is to feel your arms about me and your lips against my ears, whispering 'Mon petit.'" H. H.

#### COMING EVENTS.

October 5th.—Irish Nurses' Association. Meeting Executive Committee. 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. 8 p.m.

October 8th, 9th and 10th.—National Council of Women. Meeting in Harrogate. The Report of Committee on the Revision of the Constitution will be submitted. Conference.

October 12th.—Queen Alexandra will open the Cavell Memorial Home and unveil a statue at Norwich on the anniversary of Edith Cavell's execution.

#### OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

##### QUESTIONS.

October 12th.—What is rabies? How is it treated and nursed?

October 19th.—Give instructions for making Antivermin Underclothing for the troops; also for disinfecting soldiers' clothing at the Front.

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