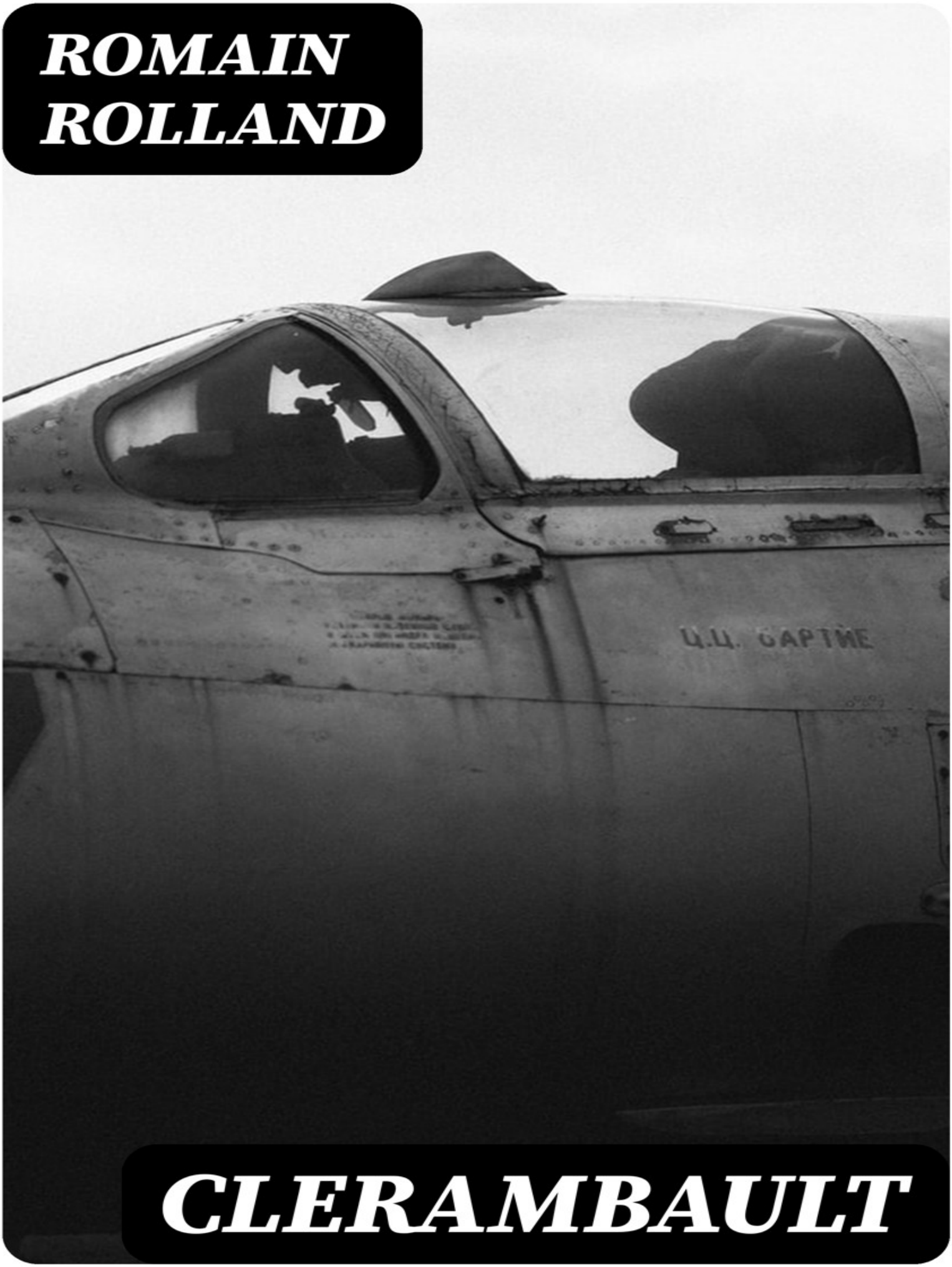
ROMAIN ROLLAND



CLERAMBAULT

Romain Rolland

Clerambault

The Story of an Independent Spirit During the War

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TRANSLATED BY

KATHERINE MILLER

1921

TO THE READER

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This book is not a novel, but rather the confession of a free spirit telling of its mistakes, its sufferings and its struggles from the midst of the tempest; and it is in no sense an autobiography either. Some day I may wish to write of myself, and I will then speak without any disguise or feigned name. Though it is true that I have lent some ideas to my hero, his individuality, his character and the circumstances of his life are all his own; and I have tried to give a picture of the inward labyrinth where a weak spirit wanders, feeling its way, uncertain, sensitive and impressionable, but sincere and ardent in the cause of truth.

Some chapters of the book have a family likeness to the meditations of our old French moralists and the stoical essays of the end of the XVIth century. At a time resembling our own but even exceeding it in tragic horror, amid the convulsions of the League, the Chief-Magistrate Guillaume

Du Vair wrote his noble Dialogues, "De la Constance et Consolation ès Calamités Publiques," with a steadfast mind. While the siege of Paris was at its worst he talked in his garden with his friends, Linus the great traveller, Musée, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and the writer Orphée. Poor wretches lay dead of starvation in the streets, women cried out that pike-men were eating children near the Temple; but with their eyes filled with these horrible pictures these wise men sought to raise their unhappy thoughts to the heights where one can reach the mind of the ages and reckon up that which has survived the test. As I re-read these Dialogues during the war I more than once felt myself close to that true Frenchman who wrote: Man is born to see and know everything, and it is an injustice to limit him to one place on the earth. To the wise man the whole world is his country. God lends us the world to enjoy in common on one condition only, that we act uprightly.

R.R.

PARIS,

May, 1920

INTRODUCTION [1]

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[Footnote 1: This Introduction was published in the Swiss newspapers in December, 1917, with an episode of the novel and a note explaining the original title, *L'Un contre Tous*. "This somewhat ironical name was suggested—with a difference—by La Boëtie's *Le Contr' Un*; but it must not be supposed that the author entertained the extravagant idea of setting one man in opposition to all others; he only wishes to summon the personal conscience to the most urgent conflict of our time, the struggle against the herd-spirit."]

This book is not written about the war, though the shadow of the war lies over it. My theme is that the individual soul has been swallowed up and submerged in the soul of the multitude; and in my opinion such an event is of far greater importance to the future of the race than the passing supremacy of one nation.

I have left questions of policy in the background intentionally, as I think they should be reserved for special study. No matter what causes may be assigned as the origins of the war, no matter what theses support them, nothing in the world can excuse the abdication of individual judgment before general opinion.

The universal development of democracies, vitiated by a fossilized survival, the outrageous "reason of State," has led the mind of Europe to hold as an article of faith that there can be no higher ideal than to serve the community. This community is then defined as the State.

I venture to say that he who makes himself the servant of a blind or blinded nation,—and most of the states are in

this condition at the present day,—does not truly serve it but lowers both it and himself; for in general a few men, incapable of understanding the complexities of the people, force thoughts and acts upon them in harmony with their own passions and interests by means of the falsehoods of the press and the implacable machinery of a centralised government. He who would be useful to others must first be free himself; for love itself has no value coming from a slave.

Independent minds and firm characters are what the world needs most today. The death-like submission of the churches, the stifling intolerance of nations, the stupid unitarianism of socialists,—by all these different roads we are returning to the gregarious life. Man has slowly dragged himself out of the warm slime, but it seems as if the long effort has exhausted him; he is letting himself slip backward into the collective mind, and the choking breath of the pit already rises about him. You who do not believe that the cycle of man is accomplished, you must rouse yourselves and dare to separate yourselves from the herd in which you are dragged along. Every man worthy of the name should learn to stand alone, and do his own thinking, even in conflict with the whole world. Sincere thought, even if it does run counter to that of others, is still a service to mankind; for humanity demands that those who love her should oppose, or if necessary rebel against her. You will not serve her by flattery, by debasing your conscience and intelligence, but rather by defending their integrity from the abuse of power. For these are some of her voices, and if you betray yourself you betray her also.

R.R.

SIERRE, March, 1917.

PART ONE

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Agénor Clerambault sat under an arbour in his garden at St. Prix, reading to his wife and children an ode that he had just written, dedicated to Peace, ruler of men and things, "Ara Pacis Augustae." In it he wished to celebrate the near approach of universal brotherhood. It was a July evening; a last rosy light lay on the tree-tops, and through the luminous haze, like a veil over the slopes of the hillside and the grey plain of the distant city, the windows on Montmartre burned like sparks of gold. Dinner was just over. Clerambault leaned across the table where the dishes yet stood, and as he spoke his glance full of simple pleasure passed from one to the other of his three auditors, sure of meeting the reflection of his own happiness.

His wife Pauline followed the flight of his thought with difficulty. After the third phrase anything read aloud made her feel drowsy, and the affairs of her household took on an absurd importance; one might say that the voice of the reader made them chirp like birds in a cage. It was in vain that she tried to follow on Clerambault's lips, and even to imitate with her own, the words whose meaning she no longer understood; her eye mechanically noted a hole in the

cloth, her fingers picked at the crumbs on the table, her mind flew back to a troublesome bill, till as her husband's eye seemed to catch her in the act, hastily snatching at the last words she had heard, she went into raptures over a fragment of verse,—for she could never quote poetry accurately. "What was that, Agénor? Do repeat that last line. How beautiful it is." Little Rose, her daughter, frowned, and Maxime, the grown son, was annoyed and said impatiently: "You are always interrupting, Mamma!"

Clerambault smiled and patted his wife's hand affectionately. He had married her for love when he was young, poor, and unknown, and together they had gone through years of hardship. She was not quite on his intellectual level and the difference did not diminish with advancing years, but Clerambault loved and respected his helpmate, and she strove, without much success, to keep step with her great man of whom she was so proud. He was extraordinarily indulgent to her. His was not a critical nature —which was a great help to him in life in spite of innumerable errors of judgment; but as these were always to the advantage of others, whom he saw at their best, people laughed but liked him. He did not interfere with their money hunt and his countrified simplicity was refreshing to the world-weary, like a wild-growing thicket in a city square.

Maxime was amused by all this, knowing what it was worth. He was a good-looking boy of nineteen with bright laughing eyes, and in the Parisian surroundings he had been quick to acquire the gift of rapid, humorous observation, dwelling on the outside view of men and things more than on ideas. Even in those he loved, nothing ridiculous escaped

him, but it was without ill-nature. Clerambault smiled at the youthful impertinence which did not diminish Maxime's admiration for his father but rather added to its flavour. A boy in Paris would tweak the Good Lord by the beard, by way of showing affection!

Rosine was silent according to her habit; it was not easy to know her thoughts as she listened, bent forward, her hands folded and her arms leaning on the table. Some natures seem made to receive, like the earth which opens itself silently to every seed. Many seeds fall and remain dormant; none can tell which will bring forth fruit. The soul of the young girl was of this kind; her face did not reflect the words of the reader as did Maxime's mobile features, but the slight flush on her cheek and the moist glance of her eyes under their drooping lids showed inward ardour and feeling. She looked like those Florentine pictures of the Virgin stirred by the magical salutation of the Archangel. Clerambault saw it all and as he glanced around his little circle his eye rested with special delight on the fair bending head which seemed to feel his look.

On this July evening these four people were united in a bond of affection and tranquil happiness of which the central point was the father, the idol of the family.

He knew that he was their idol, and by a rare exception this knowledge did not spoil him, for he had such joy in loving, so much affection to spread far and wide that it seemed only natural that he should be loved in return; he was really like an elderly child. After a life of ungilded

mediocrity he had but recently come to be known, and though the one experience had not given him pain, he delighted in the other. He was over fifty without seeming to be aware of it, for if there were some white threads in his big fair moustache,—like an ancient Gaul's,—his heart was as young as those of his children. Instead of going with the stream of his generation, he met each new wave; the best of life to him was the spring of youth constantly renewed, and he never troubled about the contradictions into which he was led by this spirit always in reaction against that which had preceded it. These inconsistencies were fused together in his mind, which was more enthusiastic than logical, and filled by the beauty which he saw all around him. Add to this the milk of human kindness, which did not mix well with his aesthetic pantheism, but which was natural to him.

He had made himself the exponent of noble human ideas, sympathising with advanced parties, the oppressed, the people—of whom he knew little, for he was thoroughly of the middle-class, full of vague, generous theories. He also adored crowds and loved to mingle with them, believing that in this way he joined himself to the All-Soul, according to the fashion at that time in intellectual circles. This fashion, as not infrequently happens, emphasised a general tendency of the day; humanity turning to the swarm-idea. The most sensitive among human insects,—artists and thinkers,—were the first to show these symptoms, which in them seemed a sort of pose, so that the general conditions of which they were a symptom were lost sight of.

The democratic evolution of the last forty years had established popular government politically, but socially speaking had only brought about the rule of mediocrity. Artists of the higher class at first opposed this levelling down of intelligence,—but feeling themselves too weak to resist they had withdrawn to a distance, emphasising their disdain and their isolation. They preached a sort of art, acceptable only to the initiated. There is nothing finer than such a retreat when one brings to it wealth of consciousness, abundance of feeling and an outpouring soul, but the literary groups of the end of the XIXth century were far removed from those fertile hermitages where robust thoughts were concentrated. They cared much more to economise their little store of intelligence than to renew it. In order to purify it they had withdrawn it from circulation. The result was that it ceased to be perceived. The common life passed on its way without bothering its head further, leaving the artist caste to wither in a make-believe refinement. The violent storms at the time of the excitement about the Dreyfus Case did rouse some minds from this torpor, but when they came out of their orchid-house the fresh air turned their heads and they threw themselves into the great passing movement with the same exaggeration that their predecessors had shown in withdrawing from it. They believed that salvation was in the people, that in them was virtue, even all good, and though they were often thwarted in their efforts to get closer to them, they set flowing a current in the thought of Europe. They were proud to call themselves the exponents of the collective soul, but they were not victors but vanquished; the collective soul

made breaches in their ivory tower, the feeble personalities of these thinkers yielded, and to hide their abdication from themselves, they declared it voluntary. In the effort to convince themselves, philosophers and aesthetics forged theories to prove that the great directing principle was to abandon oneself to the stream of a united life instead of directing it, or more modestly following one's own little path in peace. It was a matter of pride to be no longer oneself, to be no longer free to reason, for freedom was an old story in these democracies. One gloried to be a bubble tossed on the flood,—some said of the race and others of the universal life. These fine theories, from which men of talent managed to extract receipts for art and thought, were in full flower in 1914. The heart of the simple Clerambault rejoiced in such visions, for nothing could have harmonised better with his warm heart and inaccurate mind. If one has but little self-possession it is easy to give oneself up to others, to the world, to that indefinable Providential Force on whose shoulders we can throw the burden of thought and will. The great current swept on and these indolent souls, instead of pursuing their way along the bank found it easier to let themselves be carried …Where? No one took the trouble to ask. Safe in their West, it never occurred to them that their civilisation could lose the advantages gained; the march of progress seemed as inevitable as the rotation of the earth. Firm in this conviction, one could fold one's arms and leave all to nature; who meanwhile was waiting for them at the bottom of the pit that she was digging.

As became a good idealist, Clerambault rarely looked where he was going, but that did not prevent him from

meddling in politics in a fumbling sort of way, as was the mania of men of letters in his day. He had his word to say, right or wrong, and was often entreated to speak by journalists in need of copy, and fell into their trap, taking himself seriously in his innocent way. On the whole he was a fair poet and a good man, intelligent, if rather a greenhorn, pure of heart and weak in character, sensitive to praise and blame, and to all the suggestions round him. He was incapable of a mean sentiment of envy or hatred, and unable also to attribute such thoughts to others. Amid the complexity of human feelings, he remained blind towards evil and an advocate of the good. This type of writer is born to please the public, for he does not see faults in men, and enhances their small merits, so that even those who see through him are grateful. If we cannot amount to much, a good appearance is a consolation, and we love to be reflected in eyes which lend beauty to our mediocrity.

This widespread sympathy, which delighted Clerambault, was not less sweet to the three who surrounded him at this moment. They were as proud of him as if they had made him, for what one admires does seem in a sense one's own creation, and when in addition one is of the same blood, a part of the object of our admiration, it is hard to tell if we spring from him, or he from us.

Agénor Clerambault's wife and his two children gazed at their great man with the tender satisfied expression of ownership; and he, tall and high-shouldered, towered over them with his glowing words and enjoyed it all; he knew very well that we really belong to the things that we fancy are our possessions.

Clerambault had just finished with a Schilleresque vision of the fraternal joys promised in the future. Maxime, carried away by his enthusiasm in spite of his sense of humour, had given the orator a round of applause all by himself. Pauline noisily asked if Agénor had not heated himself in speaking, and amid the excitement Rosine silently pressed her lips to her father's hand.

The servant brought in the mail and the evening papers, but no one was in a hurry to read them. The news of the day seemed behind the times compared with the dazzling future. Maxime however took up the popular middle-class sheet, and threw his eye over the columns. He started at the latest items and exclaimed; "Hullo! War is declared." No one listened to him: Clerambault was dreaming over the last vibrations of his verses; Rosine lost in a calm ecstasy; the mother alone, who could not fix her mind on anything, buzzing about like a fly, chanced to catch the last word, —"Maxime, how can you be so silly?" she cried, but Maxime protested, showing his paper with the declaration of war between Austria and Servia.

"War with whom?"—"With Servia?"—"Is that all?" said the good woman, as if it were a question of something in the moon.

Maxime however persisted,—*doctus cum libro*,—arguing that from one thing to another, this shock no matter how distant, might bring about a general explosion; but Clerambault, who was beginning to come out of his pleasant trance, smiled calmly, and said that nothing would happen.

"It is only a bluff," he declared, "like so many we have had for the last thirty years; we get them regularly every

spring and summer; just bullying and sabre-rattling." People did not believe in war, no one wanted it; war had been proved to be impossible,—it was a bugbear that must be got out of the heads of free democracies … and he enlarged on this theme. The night was calm and sweet; all around familiar sounds and sights; the chirp of crickets in the fields, a glow-worm shining in the grass,—delicious perfume of honey-suckle. Far away the noise of a distant train; the little fountain tinkled, and in the moonless sky revolved the luminous track of the light on the Eiffel Tower.

The two women went into the house, and Maxime, tired of sitting down, ran about the garden with his little dog, while through the open windows floated out an air of Schumann's, which Rosine, full of timid emotion, was playing on the piano. Clerambault left alone, threw himself back in his wicker chair, glad to be a man, to be alive, breathing in the balm of this summer night with a thankful heart.

Six days later … Clerambault had spent the afternoon in the woods, and like the monk in the legend, lying under an oak tree, drinking in the song of a lark, a hundred years might have gone by him like a day. He could not tear himself away till night-fall. Maxime met him in the vestibule; he came forward smiling but rather pale, and said: "Well, Papa, we are in for it this time!" and he told him the news. The Russian mobilisation, the state of war in Germany;—Clerambault stared at him unable to comprehend, his thoughts were so far removed from these dark follies. He

tried to dispute the facts, but the news was explicit, and so they went to the table, where Clerambault could eat but little.

He sought for reasons why these two crimes should lead to nothing. Common-sense, public opinion, the prudence of governments, the repeated assurances of the socialists, Jaurès' firm stand;—Maxime let him talk, he was thinking of other things,—like his dog with his ears pricked up for the sounds of the night ...Such a pure lovely night! Those who recall the last evenings of July, 1914, and the even more beautiful evening of the first day of August, must keep in their minds the wonderful splendour of Nature, as with a smile of pity she stretched out her arms to the degraded, self-devouring human race.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Clerambault ceased to talk, for no one had answered him. They sat then in silence with heavy hearts, listlessly occupied or seeming to be, the women with their work, Clerambault with his eyes, but not his mind, on a book. Maxime went out on the porch and smoked, leaning on the railing and looking down on the sleeping garden and the fairy-like play of the light and shadows on the path.

The telephone bell made them start. Someone was calling Clerambault, who went slowly to answer, half-asleep and absent so that at first he did not understand; "Hullo! is that you, old man?" as he recognised the voice of a brother-author in Paris, telephoning him from a newspaper office. Still he could not seem to understand; "I don't hear,—Jaurès? What about Jaurès?...Oh, my God!" Maxime full of a secret apprehension had listened from a distance; he ran

and caught the receiver from his father's hand, as Clerambault let it drop with a despairing gesture. "Hullo, Hullo! What do you say? Jaurès assassinated!..." As exclamations of pain and anger crossed each other on the wire, Maxime made out the details, which he repeated to his family in a trembling voice. Rosine had led Clerambault back to the table, where he sat down completely crushed. Like the classic Fate, the shadow of a terrible misfortune settled over the house. It was not only the loss of his friend that chilled his heart,—the kind gay face, the cordial hand, the voice which drove away the clouds,—but the loss of the last hope of the threatened people. With a touching, child-like confidence he felt Jaurès to be the only man who could avert the gathering storm, and he fallen, like Atlas, the sky would crumble.

Maxime rushed off to the station to get the news in Paris, promising to come back later in the evening, but Clerambault stayed in the isolated house, from which in the distance could be seen the far-off phosphorescence of the city. He had not stirred from the seat where he had fallen stupified. This time he could no longer doubt, the catastrophe was coming, was upon them already. Madame Clerambault begged him to go to bed, but he would not listen to her. His thought was in ruins; he could distinguish nothing steady or constant, could not see any order, or follow an idea, for the walls of his inward dwelling had fallen in, and through the dust which rose, it was impossible to see what remained intact. He feared there was nothing left but a mass of suffering, at which he looked with dull eyes,

unconscious of his falling tears. Maxime did not come home, carried away by the excitement at Paris.

Madame Clerambault had gone to bed, but about one o'clock she came and persuaded him to come up to their room, where he lay down; but when Pauline had fallen asleep—anxiety made her sleepy—he got up and went into the next room. He groaned, unable to breathe; his pain was so close and oppressive, that he had no room to draw his breath. With the prophetic hyper-sensitiveness of the artist, who often lives in tomorrow with more intensity than in the present moment, his agonised eyes and heart foresaw all that was to be. This inevitable war between the greatest nations of the world, seemed to him the failure of civilisation, the ruin of the most sacred hopes for human brotherhood. He was filled with horror at the vision of a maddened humanity, sacrificing its most precious treasures, strength, and genius, its highest virtues, to the bestial idol of war. It was to him a moral agony, a heart-rending communion with these unhappy millions. To what end? And of what use had been all the efforts of the ages? His heart seemed gripped by the void; he felt he could no longer live if his faith in the reason of men and their mutual love was destroyed, if he was forced to acknowledge that the Credo of his life and art rested on a mistake, that a dark pessimism was the answer to the riddle of the world.

He turned his eyes away in terror, he was afraid to look it in the face, this monster who was there, whose hot breath he felt upon him. Clerambault implored,—he did not know who or what—that this might not be, that it might not be. Anything rather than this should be true! But the devouring

fact stood just behind the opening door.... Through the whole night he strove to close that door ...

At last towards morning, an animal instinct began to wake, coming from he did not know where, which turned his despair towards the secret need of finding a definite and concrete cause, to fasten the blame on a man, or a group of men, and angrily hold them responsible for the misery of the world. It was as yet but a brief apparition, the first faint sign of a strange obscure, imperious soul, ready to break forth, the soul of the multitude ... It began to take shape when Maxime came home, for after the night in the streets of Paris, he fairly sweated with it; his very clothes, the hairs of his head, were impregnated. Worn out, excited, he could not sit down; his only thought was to go back again. The decree of mobilisation was to come out that day, war was certain, it was necessary, beneficial; some things must be put an end to, the future of humanity was at stake, the freedom of the world was threatened. "They" had counted on Jaurès' murder to sow dissension and raise riots in the country they meant to attack, but the entire nation had risen to rally round its leaders, the sublime days of the great Revolution were re-born ...Clerambault did not discuss these statements, he merely asked: "Do you think so? Are you quite sure?" It was a sort of hidden appeal. He wanted Maxime to state, to redouble his assertions. The news Maxime had brought added to the chaos, raised it to a climax, but at the same time it began to direct the distracted forces of his mind towards a fixed point, as the first bark of the shepherd's dog drives the sheep together.

Clerambault had but one wish left, to rejoin the flock, rub himself against the human animals, his brothers, feel with them, act with them…. Though exhausted by sleeplessness, he started, in spite of his wife, to take the train for Paris with Maxime. They had to wait a long time at the station, and also in the train, for the tracks were blocked, and the cars crowded; but in the common agitation Clerambault found calm. He questioned and listened, everybody fraternised, and not being sure yet what they thought, everyone felt that they thought alike. The same questions, the same trials menaced them, but each man was no longer alone to stand or fall, and the warmth of this contact was reassuring. Class distinctions were gone; no more workmen or gentlemen, no one looked at your clothes or your hands; they only looked at your eyes where they saw the same flame of life, wavering before the same impending death. All these people were so visibly strangers to the causes of the fatality, of this catastrophe, that their innocence led them like children to look elsewhere for the guilty. It comforted and quieted their conscience. Clerambault breathed more easily when he got to Paris. A stoical and virile melancholy had succeeded to the agony of the night. He was however only at the first stage.

The order for general mobilisation had just been affixed to the doors of the *Mairies*. People read and re-read them in silence, then went away without a word. After the anxious waiting of the preceding days, with crowds around the newspaper booths, people sitting on the sidewalk, watching

for the news, and when the paper was issued gathering in groups to read it, this was certainty. It was also a relief. An obscure danger, that one feels approaching without knowing when or from where, makes you feverish, but when it is there you can take breath, look it in the face, and roll up your sleeves. There had been some hours of deep thought while Paris made ready and doubled up her fists. Then that which swelled in all hearts spread itself abroad, the houses were emptied and there rolled through the streets a human flood of which every drop sought to melt into another.

Clerambault fell into the midst and was swallowed up. All at once. He had scarcely left the station, or set his foot on the pavement. Nothing happened; there were no words or gestures, but the serene exaltation of the flood flowed into him. The people were as yet pure from violence; they knew and believed themselves innocent, and in these first hours when the war was virgin, millions of hearts burned with a solemn and sacred enthusiasm. Into this proud, calm intoxication there entered a feeling of the injustice done to them, a legitimate pride in their strength, in the sacrifices that they were ready to make, and pity for others, now parts of themselves, their brothers, their children, their loved ones. All were flesh of their flesh, closely drawn together in a superhuman embrace, conscious of the gigantic body formed by their union, and of the apparition above their heads of the phantom which incarnated this union, the Country. Half-beast, half-god, like the Egyptian Sphinx, or the Assyrian Bull; but then men saw only the shining eyes, the feet were hid. She was the divine monster in whom each of the living found himself multiplied, the devouring

Immortality where those about to die wished to believe they would find life, super-life, crowned with glory. Her invisible presence flowed through the air like wine; each man brought something to the vintage, his basket, his bunch of grapes;—his ideas, passions, devotions, interests. There was many a nasty worm among the grapes, much filth under the trampling feet, but the wine was of rubies and set the heart aflame;—Clerambault gulped it down greedily.

Nevertheless he was not entirely metamorphosed, for his soul was not altered, it was only forgotten; as soon as he was alone he could hear it moaning, and for this reason he avoided solitude. He persisted in not returning to St. Prix, where the family usually stayed in summer, and reinstalled himself in his apartment at Paris, on the fifth floor in the Rue d'Assas. He would not wait a week, or go back to help in the moving. He craved the friendly warmth that rose up from Paris, and poured in at his windows; any excuse was enough to plunge into it, to go down into the streets, join the groups, follow the processions, buy all the newspapers,—which he despised as a rule. He would come back more and more demoralised, anaesthetised as to what passed within him, the habit of his conscience broken, a stranger in his house, in himself;—and that is why he felt more at home out of doors than in.

Madame Clerambault came back to Paris with her daughter, and the first evening after their arrival Clerambault carried Rosine off to the Boulevards. The solemn fervour of the first days had passed. War had begun,

and truth was imprisoned. The press, the arch-liar, poured into the open mouth of the world the poisonous liquor of its stories of victories without retribution; Paris was decked as for a holiday; the houses streamed with the tricolour from top to bottom, and in the poorer quarters each garret window had its little penny flag, like a flower in the hair.

On the corner of the Faubourg Montmartre they met a strange procession. At the head marched a tall old man carrying a flag. He walked with long strides, free and supple as if he were going to leap or dance, and the skirts of his overcoat flapped in the wind. Behind came an indistinct, compact, howling mass, gentle and simple, arm in arm,—a child carried on a shoulder, a girl's red mop of hair between a chauffeur's cap and the helmet of a soldier. Chests out, chins raised, mouths open like black holes, shouting the Marseillaise. To right and left of the ranks, a double line of jail-bird faces, along the curbstone, ready to insult any absent-minded passer-by who failed to salute the colours. Rosine was startled to see her father fall into step at the end of the line, bare-headed, singing and talking aloud. He drew his daughter along by the arm, without noticing the nervous fingers that tried to hold him back.

When they came in Clerambault was still talkative and excited. He kept on for hours, while the two women listened to him patiently. Madame Clerambault heard little as usual, and played chorus. Rosine did not say a word, but she stealthily threw a glance at her father, and her look was like freezing water.

Clerambault was exciting himself; he was not yet at the bottom, but he was conscientiously trying to reach it.

Nevertheless there remained to him enough lucidity to alarm him at his own progress. An artist yields more through his sensibility to waves of emotion which reach him from without, but to resist them he has also weapons which others have not. For the least reflective, he who abandons himself to his lyrical impulses, has in some degree the faculty of introspection which it rests with him to utilise. If he does not do this, he lacks good-will more than power; he is afraid to look too clearly at himself for fear of seeing an unflattering picture. Those however who, like Clerambault, have the virtue of sincerity without psychological gifts, are sufficiently well-equipped to exercise some control over their excitability.

One day as he was walking alone, he saw a crowd on the other side of the street, he crossed over calmly and found himself on the opposite sidewalk in the midst of a confused agitation circling about an invisible point. With some difficulty he worked his way forward, and scarcely was he within this human mill-wheel, than he felt himself a part of the rim, his brain seemed turning round. At the centre of the wheel he saw a struggling man, and even before he grasped the reason for the popular fury, he felt that he shared it. He did not know if a spy was in question, or if it was some imprudent speaker who had braved the passions of the mob, but as cries rose around him, he realised that he, yes he, Clerambault, had shrieked out: … "Kill him." …

A movement of the crowd threw him out from the sidewalk, a carriage separated him from it, and when the way was clear the mob surged on after its prey. Clerambault

followed it with his eyes; the sound of his own voice was still in his ears,—he did not feel proud of himself….

From that day on he went out less; he distrusted himself, but he continued to stimulate his intoxication at home, where he felt himself safe, little knowing the virulence of the plague. The infection came in through the cracks of the doors, at the windows, on the printed page, in every contact. The most sensitive breathe it in on first entering the city, before they have seen or read anything; with others a passing touch is enough, the disease will develop afterwards alone. Clerambault, withdrawn from the crowd, had caught the contagion from it, and the evil announced itself by the usual premonitory symptoms. This affectionate tender-hearted man hated, loved to hate. His intelligence, which had always been thoroughly straightforward, tried now to trick itself secretly, to justify its instincts of hatred by inverted reasoning. He learned to be passionately unjust and false, for he wanted to persuade himself that he could accept the fact of war, and participate in it, without renouncing his pacifism of yesterday, his humanitarianism of the day before, and his constant optimism. It was not plain sailing, but there is nothing that the brain cannot attain to. When its master thinks it absolutely necessary to get rid for a time of principles which are in his way, it finds in these same principles the exception which violates them while confirming the rule. Clerambault began to construct a thesis, an ideal—absurd enough—in which these contradictions could be reconciled: War against War, War for Peace, for eternal Peace.

The enthusiasm of his son was a great help to him. Maxime had enlisted. His generation was carried away on a wave of heroic joy; they had waited so long—they had not dared to expect an opportunity for action and sacrifice.

Older men who had never tried to understand them, stood amazed; they remembered their own commonplace, bungling youth, full of petty egotisms, small ambitions, and mean pleasures. As they could not recognise themselves in their children they attributed to the war this flowering of virtues which had been growing up for twenty years around their indifference and which the war was about to reap. Even near a father as large-minded as Clerambault, Maxime was blighted. Clerambault was interested in spreading his own overflowing diffuse nature, too much so to see clearly and aid those whom he loved: he brought to them the warm shadow of his thought, but he stood between them and the sun.

These young people sought employment for their strength which really embarrassed them, but they did not find it in the ideals of the noblest among their elders; the humanitarianism of a Clerambault was too vague, it contented itself with pleasant hopes, without risk or vigour, which the quietude of a generation grown old in the talkative peace of Parliaments and Academies, alone could have permitted. Except as an oratorical exercise it had never tried to foresee the perils of the future, still less had it thought to determine its attitude in the day when the danger should be near. It had not the strength to make a choice between widely differing courses of action. One might be a patriot as well as an internationalist or build in

imagination peace palaces or super-dreadnoughts, for one longed to know, to embrace, and to love everything. This languid Whitmanism might have its aesthetic value, but its practical incoherence offered no guide to young people when they found themselves at the parting of the ways. They pawed the ground trembling with impatience at all this uncertainty and the uselessness of their time as it went by.

They welcomed the war, for it put an end to all this indecision, it chose for them, and they made haste to follow it. "We go to our death,—so be it; but to go is life." The battalions went off singing, thrilling with impatience, dahlias in their hats, the muskets adorned with flowers. Discharged soldiers re-enlisted; boys put their names down, their mothers urging them to it; you would have thought they were setting out for the Olympian games.

It was the same with the young men on the other side of the Rhine, and there as here, they were escorted by their gods: Country, Justice, Right, Liberty, Progress of the World, Eden-like dreams of re-born humanity, a whole phantasmagoria of mystic ideas in which young men shrouded their passions. None doubted that his cause was the right one, they left discussion to others, themselves the living proof, for he who gives his life needs no further argument.

The older men however who stayed behind, had not their reasons for ceasing to reason. Their brains were given to them to be used, not for truth, but for victory. Since in the wars of today, in which entire peoples are engulfed, thoughts as well as guns are enrolled. They slay the soul, they reach beyond the seas, and destroy after centuries