

did not see the man again; neither did he see Ralph, although he made good, so far as in him lay, his fiction of an engagement at the Touraine. But Ralph could not come; and Winter had lunched, instead, with an old friend at his club, and had watched, through a stately Georgian window, the shifting greenery of the Common in an east wind.

All through the luncheon the soldier's mind kept swerving from the talk in hand to Cary Mercer's face. Yet he never expected to see it again. Three years later he did see it; and this second encounter, of which, by the way, Mercer was unconscious, was the beginning of an absorbing chapter in his life. A short space of time that chapter occupied; yet into it crowded mystery, peril, a wonderful and awful spectacle, the keenest happiness and the cruelest anxiety. Let his days be ever so many, the series of events which followed Mercer's reappearance will not be blurred by succeeding experiences; their vivid and haunting pictures will burn through commoner and later happenings as an electric torch flares through layers of mist.

Nothing, however, could promise adventure less than the dull and chilly late March evening