

# A SPLENDID HAZARD

## CHAPTER I

### A MEMORABLE DATE

**A** BLURRING rain fell upon Paris that day; a rain so fine and cold that it penetrated the soles of men's shoes and their hearts alike, a dispiriting drizzle through which the pale, acrid smoke of innumerable wood fires faltered upward from the clustering chimney-pots, only to be rent into fragments and beaten down upon the glistening tiles of the mansard roofs. The wide asphalts reflected the horses and carriages and trains and pedestrians in forms grotesque, zigzagging, flitting, amusing, like a shadow-play upon a wrinkled, wind-blown curtain. The sixteenth of June. To Fitzgerald there was something electric in the date, a tingle of that ecstasy which frequently comes into the blood of a man to whom the romance of a great battle is more than its history or its effect upon the destinies of human beings. Many years before,