

Perspective

immense pressure and menace of the war; and I believe that it was largely instrumental in saving me, nine months ago, from melancholia. Little wonder, then, that I feel unwilling to write "The End," and put my task on one side. And as I have said, a book of this kind can never be finished.

Only yesterday I found new experience that was like another beginning.

I had been to see a friend in Gospel Oak, a man who was a private in my company, and has since been invalided out of the Army.

I left his father's house oppressed by a sense of the narrowness of life. All that quarter is, to my mind, representative of the worst of London and of our old civilisation. The slums vex me far less. There I find adventure and zest whatever the squalor; the marks of the primitive struggle through dirt and darkness towards release. In such districts as Gospel Oak I am depressed by the flatness of an awful monotony. Those horrible lines of moody, complacent streets represent not struggle, but the achievement of a worthless aspiration. The houses with their deadly similarity, their smug, false exteriors, their conformity to an ideal which is typified by their poor imitative decoration, could only be inhabited by people who have no thought or desire for expression. And the boy I had visited confirmed me in that deduction. He had had what he called "good news" for me. The loss of a leg had not incapacitated him for the office stool, and his employer was taking him back at his old salary—with his pension he would be, as he said, "quite well off." Eleven months in the Army had had little effect upon him. Perhaps he was a little coarsened and hardened by his experience, less inclined to respect the sacredness of life, but in other ways he was the same youth with the