

THE GLORY OF THE TRENCHES 139

There was a time when I thought it was rather up to God to explain Himself to the creatures He had fashioned — since then I've acquired the point of view of a soldier. I've learnt discipline and my own total unimportance. In the Army discipline gets possession of your soul; you learn to suppress yourself, to obey implicitly, to think of others before yourself. You learn to jump at an order, to forsake your own convenience at any hour of the day or night, to go forward on the most lonely and dangerous errands without complaining. You learn to feel that there is only one thing that counts in life and only one thing you can make out of it — the spirit you have developed in encountering its difficulties. Your body is nothing; it can be smashed in a minute. How frail it is you never realise until you have seen men smashed. So you learn to tolerate the body, to despise Death and to place all your reliance on courage — which when it is found at its best is the power to endure for the sake of others.

When we think of God, we think of Him in just about the same way that a Tommy in the front-line thinks of Sir Douglas Haig. Heaven is a kind of General Headquarters. All that the Tommy in the front-line knows of an offensive is that orders have reached him, through the