

## CHAPTER LXXI

### LIVING AND DEAD

"PATHETIC ECHO OF AIR-TRAGEDY. SHERBRAND, R.F.C. NOT DEAD OR PRISONER. RESCUED BY AMERICAN RED CROSS AMBULANCE. IN HOSPITAL NEAR YPRES. WILL RECOVER, BUT BLIND FOR LIFE."

The clamorous headlines had followed close on a telephone from Sir Roland. Patrine had learned what it means to cry for joy—an unforgettable experience. She had discovered that one who kneels down to thank God for a boon so marvelous, has no words left to offer Him, nor even tears and sighs.

She had written again and again to Sherbrand, saying only "*Let me come to you!*" Passionate, pitiful, tender letters, answered after weeks of delay by one page in the stiff, neat handwriting of the American Red Cross Nursing Sister who acted as amanuensis for the blind man.

"April, 1915.

"You have said that you wish to visit me in my blindness. I thank you for the expressed desire, but I cannot receive you here! I have never been the kind of man who bid for pity from women, and the ties that you broke voluntarily, six months ago, I do not wish to renew. My mother has been here to bring me some things"—the French and Belgian decorations, guessed Patrine—"and has gone away again. She understands that it is best for me to remain here, because, although the War is over as far as I am actively concerned, I can hear the guns and breathe the breath of battle, and know when the 'planes pass overhead, and follow them in thought. There is little else a