

**CLOUD  
AND SILVER**

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Cloud and silver by E. V. Lucas

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**E. V. LUCAS**

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BY

E. V. LUCAS

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### ON BELLONA'S HEM

Allies to the End    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

*(December 1914)*

WE were sitting in a little restaurant in the Gay City--which is not a gay city any more, but a city of dejection, a city that knows there is a war going on and not so long since could hear the guns. There are, however, corners where, for the moment, contentment or, at any rate, an interlude of mirth, is possible, and this little restaurant is one of them. Well, we were sitting there waiting for coffee, the room (for it was late) now empty save for the table behind me, where two elderly French bourgeois and a middle-aged woman were seated, when suddenly the occupant of the chair which backed into mine and had been backing into it so often during the

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evening that I had punctuated my eating with comments on other people's clumsy bulkiness—suddenly, as I say, this occupant, turning completely round, forced his face against mine and, cigarette in hand, asked me for a light. I could see nothing but face—a waste of plump ruddy face set deep between vast shoulders, a face garnished with grey beard and moustache, and sparkling moist eyes behind highly magnifying spectacles. Very few teeth and no hair. But the countenance as a whole radiated benignancy and enthusiasm; and one thing, at any rate, was clear, and that was that none of my resentment as to the restlessness of the chair had been telepathed.

“Would I do him the honour of giving him a light?” he asked, the face so close to mine that we were practically touching. I reached out for a match. Oh no, he said, not at all; he desired the privilege of taking the light from my cigarette, because I was an Englishman and it was an honour to meet me, and—and—— “Vive l'Angleterre!” This was all very strange and disturbing to me; but we live in stirring times, and nothing ever will be the same again. So I gave him the