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Jack

Barbara Adam assumed her adult persona as Barbara Wootton on 5 September 1917 at the age of twenty. She remained Barbara Wootton for the rest of her life – for the thirty-six days of her marriage to Jack Wootton, and for the whole of the seventy years and three months that she lived after it. She was one of a generation of women whose pathways into marriage and domesticity were permanently altered, disrupted or blocked by war. The scars of war appear not only on the bodies of soldiers, but on the demographics of countries and cultures, in the personal and collective memories of citizens. *This* war, the one that accelerated Barbara Adam's marriage, was not only the war to end all wars – the 'Great' War – but an international conflict that sharpened the edges of history, moving people into a new age with different customs and habits, cutting them loose from their anchors in traditional ways of living. And this was particularly so for women.

'Tall and dark and handsome in a rather melancholy-looking sort of way', Jack Wootton was a friend of Barbara's brother, Neil, at Trinity College, Cambridge. Barbara is somewhat coy in her autobiography: among all the comings and goings of her brothers' friends in the house in Barton Road in the early years of the War, 'the visits of Jack Wootton began to acquire a special significance'.¹ When she first noticed Jack, and he presumably her, she was still living at home, awaiting her entry to Girton, and occupied with the economics books of which her mother disapproved. Jack, six years older, had already collected his first class history degree and had been awarded a research studentship for a further year's study at Cambridge. We know little about Jack's interests, beliefs, motivations or emotions. At Trinity College, he was noted for being an outstanding scholar, a member of a none-too-serious formal debating society named after a Dutch brothel and a stuffed bird – the Magpie and Stump² – and a good athlete: he was President of the Trinity Athletic Club.³ There are close associations between sport and war in the ideology of masculinity – hundreds of football games were played daily in the army's base camps and even some in the trenches; the Battle of the Somme began

with an infantryman kicking a football into no man's land.⁴ In Edwardian culture, the duties of 'a Cambridge man' included not only athleticism but the obligation to fight for one's nation. The University Officer Training Corps, which dragged many young men like Jack Wootton and Arthur Adam into the awful realities of war, was a main outlet and expression of this 'élite masculinity'.⁵ In 1910, the year Jack went to Cambridge, one in three male undergraduates belonged to the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps; it organized drills, parades, lectures on military strategy, shooting exercises, summer camps, and an annual military tournament against Oxford. When war was declared in 1914, the Cambridge headquarters was crowded with young men eager to apply for commissions; by the time conscription was introduced at the beginning of 1916, seventy-five per cent of male students at Cambridge had already joined up.⁶

But there was nothing particularly élite about Jack Wootton's origins. The house where he was born survives today in a run-down area of Nottingham, a large industrial city in the East Midlands with a reputation based on the legend of Robin Hood and alarmingly high modern crime figures. Jack Wootton's birthplace lives on as a shabby red-brick house, large, with five front windows and an uneven privet hedge, and it overlooks a cemetery where grey graves stand at awkward angles, leaning in or out of the earth. There are no flowers anywhere; the people in the earth have been forgotten, like Jack Wootton. A little further down the street, also facing the cemetery, is the house where Jack's father was born. Many working-class families did not move far in those days. The Woottons worked in Nottingham's most famous industry – lace-making, an occupation descended from the manufacture of hosiery, popularized by the Victorian taste for prudery and privacy, and facilitated by the invention of machines that replaced the tradition of hand-knitting, although, as late as 1910, it was still 'a familiar sight in the side streets of Nottingham to see women sitting at the open door on a warm summer's day drawing, clipping, and scalloping lace'.⁷ In the centre of the city today there is an area called the Lace Market, now given over to aspiring shops, restaurants and bars, where some of the original flat-fronted many-windowed tenement buildings still stand, the buildings that housed the lace-workers and the products of their labour. In the 1901 Census, Jack's father, Arthur Wootton, is described as a 'lace curtain manufacturer' and as an 'employer' rather than a 'worker', suggesting a degree of prosperity that paid for the large house by the cemetery and the large family that inhabited it. When the 1901 Census was taken, Jack was ten, and his brothers Tom and Hubert were fourteen and seventeen. Nearest to him in age was Annie, eleven: the other two girls, Grace and Ethel, were nineteen and twenty. Their mother, Julia, must have had her hands full, with no living-in servants,

unlike Adela, Barbara's mother, in Cambridge, who had four to help her with half the number of children.

Jack's full name was John Wesley Wootton, after the founder of Methodism, a religious movement which attempted a revival of Christian worship by reaching out to those on the fringes of society, contesting the corruptions of the established clergy, and focusing on Bible study and a 'methodical' way of life. The Woottons were committed members of a local Wesleyan chapel, and Jack's brother, Tom, was a lay preacher. Arthur and Julia Wootton believed in education, which accounts for their children's social mobility, and they believed in *equal* education for all their children. Like his brothers, Jack went to Nottingham High School; the Wootton girls went to the girls' version. Both Hubert and Annie became teachers. Annie was on the staff of Nottingham Girls' High School, while Hubert provided another link with the world of Cambridge by becoming head of the boys' Perse School. 'A tall austere figure, unapproachable, unpredictable', and given to dogmatic assertion, he introduced a telephone, school dinners and a ruthless system of rules in the School; moreover, his phenomenal rudeness did not make him popular.⁸ The remaining three siblings – Tom, Grace and Ethel – devoted themselves to the family business. They were a close-knit family. When Barbara first visited their home in Nottingham, she was shown the mark on the wall where Jack had thrown his dinner in a fit of rage at one of his brothers. All the Wootton siblings were prone to hot tempers.⁹

Early in the war, Jack was commissioned through the University Officer Training Corps in the Suffolk Regiment ('The Cambs Suffolk'). This was closely associated with the Cambridgeshire Regiment in which Barbara's brother, Arthur, served. Now she had got to know Jack, and fallen under the spell of those dark eyes, Barbara worried that she would be the last to know if he were injured; like many women of her class, she took to scrutinizing the daily list of casualties in *The Times*. Jack's Battalion, the 11th, left England and crossed to France in early January 1916. For a time the men enjoyed reasonably comfortable quarters in French farmhouses, good food, and the pretty orchards and streams of Northern France.¹⁰ 'The men are as happy as sandboys', declared one officer, 'the country is exactly like the fens near Cambridge'.¹¹ They helped the local farmers, driving pigs and filling dung-carts. The Battalion fought in the trenches in Armentières in February, sustaining its first casualties; by mid-March they had accomplished three tours in the front line and had been congratulated on this by the Brigade Commander.¹² On 5 May, they went by train to Calais and then to Amiens, where they walked in drizzling rain on the straight road to Albert, part of a movement of thousands of men to Picardy in preparation for the Battle of the Somme. By the

end of June, they were headquartered in Bécourt Chateau, near the village of La Boisselle, only a thousand yards from the German trenches. The land round the chateau was a riot of wild flowers, flooded with the song of nightingales during the hours of darkness.¹³ The first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July, was a clear sunny morning. At 5 a.m. the 11th Battalion followed the 10th Lincolns out of Bécourt Wood into 'an inferno of blood, smoke and iron'.¹⁴ Each attacking company formed a line, with the men two to three yards apart, four lines in all, fifty to a hundred yards behind one another. The men walked slowly in straight lines across no man's land into the German front line. Private W.J. Senescall in Jack's battalion described how it went:

The long line of men came forward, rifles at the port as ordered. Now Gerry started. His machine guns let fly. Down they all went. I could see them dropping one after the other as the gun swept along them. The officer went down at exactly the same time as the man behind him. Another minute or so and another wave came forward. Gerry was ready this time and this lot did not get as far as the others ... Then during the afternoon Gerry started shelling no man's land in a zig zag fashion to kill the rest of us off. As each shell landed they gave a burst of machine gun fire over where it fell, to catch anyone who should jump up ... A very large shell fell some yards to my left. With all the bits and pieces flying up was a body. The legs had been blown off right to the crutch ... It sailed up and towards me. I can still see the deadpan look on his face under the tin hat, which was still held on by the chin strap.¹⁵

The outcome of the battle was decided by 8 a.m., but throughout the day further rushes were attempted by survivors, many of whom were instantly burnt to death by German flame-throwers. Jack Wootton was one of 120,000 men who 'went over the top' along the thirteen-mile front of what was afterwards known as the Battle of Albert. But to Barbara's relief and delight, he escaped with 'a splendid wound'¹⁶ – in other words, a small wound that took a long time to heal. A shell fragment had severed the Achilles tendon in one of his heels, and it kept him safe in England for fourteen months.

Many years later, a man who described himself as Captain Wootton's servant, a 'Mr H. Allgood', wrote to Barbara on reading her autobiography to tell her more about what happened to Jack that day: 'We were going forward in rows. One row was leaving too large gaps, Captain shouts, Fill those gaps up. Soon after that I heard his voice. I looked back, he was on the ground, I went back & took off his boots, saw a hole through his ankle. He said, You will have to go, Allgood. I hope I shall see you again.' Allgood got a bullet in his neck, but he was back at the front three months later. 'The next time I saw Captain Wootton was when he

was in command of a Labour Battalion. He came to ask me to go with him as his servant again but I was not allowed to go. I would have liked that.'¹⁷

Jack had been lucky: of the 750 men of the 11th Battalion who climbed out of their trenches early in the morning of 1 July 1916, 196 were dead before the end of the day, most within thirty minutes of the opening assault, and many of the 495 who were injured died of their wounds. Of his fifteen fellow officers in the 11th Battalion, seven others were wounded, four were killed and two were registered as missing.¹⁸ On hearing the news of Jack's own splendid wound, his mother immediately telegraphed Barbara's mother, although nothing had officially been said at this stage about the growing attachment between the two young people. Some time later, Jack upset Barbara greatly by confessing that a letter proposing marriage had been in his pocket the day he was wounded: did he not have the imagination to understand, she asked furiously, how she might have felt if proposed to posthumously?¹⁹ The dust settled, and the family holiday that summer in Wiltshire included Jack, and Barbara's first experience of working for wages – they all went hop-picking. Then, in October, Barbara returned to Girton, and Jack to Nottingham, a semblance of ordinary life. In November he visited, but obviously was not quite courageous enough to broach the issue of marriage, so it was only after he had gone that Barbara finally received a letter proposing they get engaged. Adela was happy, though adamant that this must not interfere with Barbara's degree: the future was uncertain, and women ought to be able to earn their own living. Neil was happy: Jack was one of his closest friends, and perhaps his absorption into the family might soften the loss of Arthur. The Pie was not happy, not because she disliked Jack, but because no-one would be good enough for her 'Own Dear Missie'. Jack bought Barbara an engagement ring, an opal set in a cluster of rowan berries, and Barbara became one of a small band of Girtonians who had 'a fiancé with a ring'. The young couple's good luck continued when Jack was posted to an Officer Training Corps actually in Cambridge. He could now visit Barbara regularly, although only according to the Girton protocol which required no more than one visit a fortnight and a note each time requesting permission from the Mistress of the College. Even in cases of allowable visits from men (fathers, brothers, *married* uncles, fiancés with rings, but the young man in question had to be acknowledged by the student's parents), unchaperoned entertainment was still not allowed.²⁰

For around six months, Barbara and Jack saw each other regularly in Cambridge under these carefully supervised conditions, and then Jack was declared fit for active service and ordered to rejoin his regiment in France. Adela, to her credit, as Barbara acknowledged,²¹ suggested that this meant they should bring the marriage forward.

If Jack were injured, Barbara would then be able to go to him. The young couple were easily persuaded, although Barbara notes that Jack may have had 'some conscientious worries about the remoter future' (she does not say what these were). He thought that after the War he might seek an academic job in a Commonwealth university, and they both liked the idea of eventually producing 'a considerable family'.²² The wedding was announced in *The Times* on 21 August 1917: 'The marriage of Captain John Wesley Wootton, the Suffolk Regiment, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wootton, 137, Foxhall-road, Nottingham, and Barbara Frances, only daughter of the late Dr. James Adam of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Mrs. Adam, 21, Barton-road, Cambridge, will take place at St. Mark's, Barton-road, Cambridge, on Wednesday, September 5, at 2. All friends will be welcome at the church.' Barbara did not have far to go; St Mark's, an undistinguished red-brick building, was in the same street as the Adam household. Despite the haste with which the ceremony was arranged, Adela made sure that everything was done properly. Her musical taste ruled out the popular Mendelssohn Wedding March; Barbara entered the church instead to the Bach Cantata *Sleepers Wake* played by the Girton Organ Scholar, Miss I. G. Bonnett. Adela gave Barbara away and second cousins Mary and Arthur Hetherington, aged ten and six respectively, the grandchildren of Adela's sister Laura, acted as bridesmaid and page. The best man was Arthur Ritchie, a friend of Neil's, later to be a Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, and the author of a key philosophical work on the scientific method.²³ The bride wore a long white dress and a veil; in the wedding photograph published in the local newspaper, she looks feminine and almost demure, her arm through the much taller and handsome uniformed Captain's. Barbara is smiling, Jack is not. They were both victims of misprints, 'Barham Frances' rather than 'Barbara Frances', and 'Captain Wootton' with a missing 't', both of which, if her irritation at such errors in later life is anything to go by, probably annoyed Barbara greatly.²⁴

They thought they were going to have two weeks' honeymoon in Norfolk, but the day before the wedding Jack got a telegram ordering him to leave London early on 7 September. The honeymoon was cancelled, and a friend found a low white farmhouse in a village called Haslingfield, in the flat fen country a few miles from Cambridge, where they could go for their wedding night. So there they went, in the autumn sunshine, 'with the last of the corn stooks standing in the fields'. Looking back, Barbara thought both of them very young for their ages (twenty and twenty-six), with little conception of what they were doing and little idea of what they were committing themselves to.²⁵ They were both virgins; it would not have occurred to them to be anything else.²⁶ Writer Naomi Mitchison, the same age as Barbara, and marrying her Dick the year before Barbara married Jack, recalled a general

expectation that men and women would 'keep themselves' for their future spouses; there were plenty of virgin soldiers around.²⁷ The day after the wedding, Barbara and Jack took the train to London and stayed at the Rubens Hotel so as to be near the station for Jack's early departure. 'I saw him off from Victoria along with a train-load of other cannon fodder.'²⁸ The term 'cannon-fodder' was his, not hers.²⁹

It is hard to appreciate how she must have felt, how the constant imagining and reality of violent death must have infused the very emotion of love. Margaret Cole called it, 'this narrow margin between vigorous life and muddy and gangrenous death'.³⁰ The future together Barbara and Jack envisaged was a precarious thing, and they both knew it. When Jack rejoined his regiment, the men were stationed in Péronne, on the banks of the Somme. In October they moved to the neighbourhood of Langemarck and Poelcappelle to take part in the Ypres-Passchendaele action. The 11th Battalion was responsible for filling shell holes and otherwise repairing the roads in the forward area close to the front line. It was a horribly unpleasant task, carried out under constant shell- and machine-gun fire. The German painter and war realist Otto Dix famously described the trenches with a barrage of nouns: 'lice, rats, barbed wire, fleas, shells, bombs, underground caves, corpses, blood, liquor, mice, cats, artillery, filth, bullets, mortars, fire, steel'.³¹ Trench warfare meant living with the dead, with bodies and bits of bodies stacked up in untidy piles. On 9 October, the attack on Poelcappelle was launched, but only minor advances were secured at the cost of 13,000 casualties for the Allies.³² Everything was worse in the bad weather conditions. Most of the Battle of Passchendaele took place on swampy reclaimed marshland; sometimes the soldiers simply drowned in mud. Jack Wootton did not drown; he was shot through the eye while repairing the roads. He was one of fifty men in his Battalion to be killed in this way. He died on a French ambulance train somewhere in either France or Belgium forty-eight hours later.³³

The individuality of loss is muted by statistics: between 1914 and 1918, half Jack's Battalion died,³⁴ some 722,785 British men, one in eight of those who set out to fight;³⁵ altogether thirteen million people were killed in the War.³⁶ It was 'industrialized slaughter',³⁷ a war of 'staggering carnage'.³⁸ But the young Mrs Wootton, who received the official telegram announcing her husband's death, was unaware of these statistics; she had lost her husband of five weeks, the man with whom she had planned to spend the rest of her life. A corner of the telegram was torn; she became unreasonably obsessed with this trivial detail, just as her mother, Adela, had complained at the War Office's description of her beloved son Arthur as a 'Lieutenant' instead of a 'Captain'. Eventually Jack's blood-stained kit was 'punctiliously' returned to Barbara.³⁹ Inflicting 'the terrible smell of mud and blood' directly on grieving relatives was common practice.⁴⁰

Jack Wootton was, according to an officer in the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, a 'most conscientious and hard-working officer' who was well liked by all the members of his Company.⁴¹ An officer in Jack's Battalion wrote to Barbara after hearing her on the radio in December 1958 to tell her that he used to feel Jack's men would follow him anywhere. This correspondent, C. Lloyd Morgan, had taught Jack history at school and had known Jack's family well; his daughter had taught at Nottingham Girls' High School with Annie Wootton. He and his wife well remembered a Sunday lunch at Barbara's home in 1914, when the Battalion had been training at Cambridge. 'You were there, with your mother and, I think, both of your brothers and Jack. Not far short of a half-century ago. We wonder what has happened to your brothers.'⁴²

After Jack's death, Barbara stayed at Barton Road with Adela, Neil, Winifred, baby Jean and The Pie, but she resumed her Classics studies at Girton. Dora Russell, Barbara's contemporary there, remembers 'vividly seeing her blank, shut-in face'.⁴³ By the time Barbara wrote her own autobiography half a century later, she had evolved an organized presentation of Jack's death and its meaning: it was one of four deaths of people close to her (father, school-friend, brother, husband), all before her twenty-first birthday. 'In ten years I had learned little about life, much about death.' She was clear, but not over-dramatic about the psychological consequences. 'I do not think that anyone can live through such experiences without some significant and permanent marks remaining. Had these years been different, I am sure that I should have been different too, even to-day. But at least I entered upon my adult life with a realistic sense of the impermanence of earthly relationships.'⁴⁴

John Wesley Wootton's grave is in the Longuenesse Souvenir Cemetery in the southern outskirts of St Omer in France. The road that passes the cemetery is busy, the route to an Auchan supermarket, a McDonalds, a Citroën garage; a nearby restaurant is called *L'Envoi*. Christ on a blue cross faces the local cemetery which abuts the military one; in the military cemetery, the white graves and manicured lawns follow the standard pattern, exactly like the cemetery where Arthur Adam is commemorated, a few miles away. In the Longuenesse Cemetery, a path divides the 2,874 First World War graves from the 403 of the Second; Jack is 54th from the right in row 119. He shares his tombstone with a twenty-year-old Lance Corporal from the Yorkshire Regiment, J.W. Holmes, who died the same day. A red rose is planted in front of the grave. At the bottom are inscribed the words: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation'. This passage from the Bible (Revelation 7:14) continues, 'they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'.

Did Barbara choose these words, or was it Adela? In 1984, when Barbara was eighty-seven, MP Ann Clwyd asked her how she remembered Jack, and what his

death meant to her. Barbara said she remembered him most as a strong-minded person, and that his death had been 'completely shattering'. The scar it had left was 'a total mistrust of life'.⁴⁵ It was one reason that it took her eighteen years to marry again. But she was not much given to psychological speculation. As she explained in her autobiography, she was brought up with the attitude that one did not succumb to emotion or wallow in unhappiness: 'Whatever happened, one was expected to go ahead and make the best of whatever the next job might be'.⁴⁶ This was a markedly different response from the one spelt out in that iconic First World War text, the book that William Haley, editor of *The Times* and a man who would later become a close friend of Barbara's, called 'the war book of the Women of England':⁴⁷ Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth*. There were many parallels between Barbara Wootton's and Vera Brittain's lives. They were born within a year of one another, and experienced solid middle-class upbringings; Vera became a student at Oxford, Barbara at Cambridge; they both lost brothers and lovers to the War. Vera's brother, Edward, acquired a splendid wound on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, like Jack Wootton, and his convalescence was nearly as long as Jack's; like Jack, he was killed shortly after returning to the front the following year. Roland Leighton, Vera's fiancé, was her brother's friend, just as Jack was Barbara's brother Neil's. Roland Leighton was killed in December 1915 when Vera was twenty-one. He had been out in the moonlight inspecting the barbed wire at the front of a trench when he was shot in the stomach by a German sniper.⁴⁸

It was this action, one that served no military purpose and was utterly devoid of heroism, that provoked Vera Brittain's memoir. *Testament of Youth* was a mixture, as Brittain acknowledged, of fiction and fact, although much of its power emanated from its almost universal acclamation as fact.⁴⁹ The book, subtitled 'An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925', was first published in 1933, and it rapidly became, and remained, a bestseller; reprinted by Virago in 1978, and boosted by a BBC Television five-part dramatization in 1979, sales by the mid-1990s had reached three-quarters of a million.⁵⁰ *Testament* offered itself as a testimony of women about *their* War, and in so doing confirmed a dominant legend of the War – the sacrificed generation, the tremendous wastage of ideals.⁵¹ But the book upset some, including Barbara, for what they read as its self-centred and self-indulgent rendering of women's war experiences. Vera Brittain treated herself as special, but loss and grief were the ordinary experiences of millions of women: war losses touched virtually every household in the country.

The First World War and its deaths gave rise to a literature of grief, anger and despair at the barbarity and insanity of war, and to litanies about 'the lost generation'.⁵² This gentle phrase belies the reality, which is that those who were

lost were killed, because, after all, the main business of war is not dying but killing.⁵³ The War converted many, including Vera Brittain and Barbara Wootton, to pacifism. 'It's one's future, not one's past, that they really hide, those graves in France,' says one of the young women in Vera Brittain's much less successful novel *The Dark Tide*, written well before *Testament of Youth*, in 1922.⁵⁴ There is no evidence that Barbara ever visited her hidden future in the St Omer Cemetery, or evidence that she did not – other than her wish to close the door on the past and carry on. But she could hardly have avoided seeing Jack's name on the roll of honour borne by the now badly-weathered war memorial which stands at the front of St Mark's Church in Barton Road, Cambridge, the same church in which they had been married. Jack's is the last of fifty-one names, and Arthur Adam's is the second: Barbara's experience of grief nearly spanned the alphabet.

So twenty-year-old Barbara Wootton, widowed after five weeks of marriage, had to make sense of life without Jack. Along with the invocation 'the lost generation' went another, that of 'Surplus Women', the generation of women who expected to marry but found themselves deprived through the slaughter of the First World War of adequate numbers of possible mates. The War killed fifteen per cent of British men under 29; the 1921 Census showed a gap of a million-and-three-quarters between the numbers of males and females.⁵⁵ This indicated 'a seismic effect' of the War on marriage rates. Most of the effect was confined to the upper and middle classes where War deaths had been concentrated, because the poor physical state of many industrial workers had saved them from active service.⁵⁶ One consequence was more intermingling of the classes, as upper- and middle-class women married 'down'; this is what Barbara Wootton was herself perceived to have done when she married for the second time in 1935. But the inter-war years were also years when spinsterhood became a real choice. Some professions required women to resign on marriage, which was a reason why ambitious women might not marry in the first place. Feminism combined with demographics to make women's financial independence increasingly plausible. Surplus Women gave birth to the New Woman who eschewed traditional feminine pathways, thus providing a focus for male anxiety and castigation of the politics of female freedom, although neither the idea of being surplus to requirements nor the notion of womanhood reinvented was actually quite new.

The story of what happened to Barbara Wootton combines both these themes: her life, forever scarred by the killing of Jack Wootton, became one of unbroken female achievement. It was hard at first – well, it probably went on being hard, but she rarely commented later on the difficulties. In the months following Jack's death, life in Barton Road began to get easier as her remaining brother's mental health

improved. The pages of *The Girton Review* for that term and the next two make little mention of Barbara, though she was awarded a £20 Classics scholarship, and she remained one of the 'consuls' of the Classical Club. In May 1918, she was due to take the Part I examination of her Classics Tripos. Thereby hung a considerable tale which did not please her mother. A week or two before the examination was due to begin, Barbara, who was never normally ill, developed raging tonsillitis. Adela wandered restlessly from room to room, eaten up with anxiety about her daughter's potential imminent failure to prove herself as a brilliant Classics scholar. Letters flew back and forth between Adela and Girton and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations and Lectures Syndicate. The examination was relocated to Barbara's bedroom. 'I am to fetch the paper,' wrote Adela to the Mistress of Girton on 15 May, 'and Lizzie [The Pie] will be allowed to take it to Syndicate Buildings.' Adela would also take the doctor's certificate to the Guildhall. She changed the time of her Plato class to the afternoon to make these arrangements possible. Then she reported that, 'The little girl' – rather an odd designation, given Barbara's status as a twenty-one-year-old war widow – 'finished both her papers to-day in spite of her troubles. She has a slight temperature, 99 1/2'.⁵⁷ Four days later the little girl's temperature had risen to 102.6, and the doctor considered she might not be able to take any more papers.⁵⁸ In her autobiography, Barbara spelt out what Adela may or may not have suspected: she pleaded with the doctor to certify her as ill so she would not have to continue with the examination. The result was what was known in peculiar Oxbridge parlance as an 'aegrotat' (Latin, literally 's/he is ill') degree. This is an honours degree awarded on the assumption that the candidate, if well, would at least have passed, but it lacks the crucial classification into first class, second class etc, and so it deprived Adela of the ability to claim her daughter as a first-class Classics scholar. By the time she published her autobiography, half a century later, Barbara acknowledged that the whole business had been a conscious and deliberate act of revenge on her part: 'revenge for the Greek verbs on my lovely summer holidays, revenge for years of being exhibited as the clever daughter, revenge for a world which could value my distinction as a classical scholar above the extra hours that Jack and I might have had together'.⁵⁹

When the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918, the bell of Girton College chapel rang, like many across the land, and the flag went up over the tower. A notice was put up in the Reading Room: 'Students may smoke in their own rooms after dinner.'⁶⁰ Many of those who were in Cambridge at the time attended a thanksgiving service in the dim candlelight of King's College Chapel. After dinner in Hall, Girtonians toasted the King, the Navy, the Army, and the future League of Nations, and then retired for their own chapel service which ended

with Kipling's *Recessional*, with the refrain, 'Lest We Forget'.⁶¹ There was never any danger of Mrs J.W. Wootton doing that. For decades, Barbara kept in touch with Jack's family: with Tom, who ran the family business; with Ethel, who ran the Nottingham household; and with Annie, the teacher at Nottingham Girls' High School. 'Always uses her first husband's name', someone has written on the form Barbara filled in for *The Girton Register* in 1973. Barbara herself, then aged seventy-six and widowed for the second time, wrote on the form '(Mrs) WOOTTON, otherwise WRIGHT [her second husband's surname] (not ADAM)'.⁶² She called herself Wootton for the rest of her life, although nowhere publicly did she ever comment on the reason why. Perhaps the inquisitive reporters just did not ask the right question: 'I presume that one takes a title. I wish still to be known as Barbara Wootton', she told *The Evening Times* when she was made a peer forty-one years after Jack died.⁶³ Did she love Jack Wootton for the rest of her life? If so, was it the man himself she loved, a man whom she had only just started really to get to know, or was it what his disappearance from her life symbolized: the enormous and pointless waste of life occasioned by man's folly towards man; the urgent need for human beings to create the meanings of their lives out of what exists here on earth? And/or was holding on to the Wootton name a way of keeping in touch with that parallel life of wifehood and motherhood his death stole from her? Whatever shaped her decision to remain Barbara Wootton, Jack stayed around. Fifteen years after he first gave it to her, Barbara thought she had lost Jack's ring in a hotel bathroom, and was so distressed that she managed to remember the name of its designer, who made her a replica which she wore for the rest of her life. Then, a few years before she died, Barbara's faithful colleague and friend, Vera Seal, found the original 'in a drawer with all kinds of rubbish and stuff', and Barbara told Vera to wear it, so she did. They both wore Jack's ring. Vera even did the gardening wearing it. As Barbara's mind declined, one day when they were out visiting friends, Barbara unhappily accused Vera of stealing it.⁶⁴ Stealing Jack's ring was something that mattered very much, even at a distance of more than seventy years. And the photograph of Jack, unsmiling in his military uniform, with his clipped moustache and his dark brooding eyes, looked down from her bedside as she died.