

CHILL HOURS

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Chill hours by Helen Mackay

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HELEN MACKAY

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INTRODUCTION

MRS. MACKAY'S third book of sketches is of the type that she gave us in *Journal of Small Things*. The title has, of course, reference to that hour before the dawn, well known to nurses and sailormen, when the whole earth shivers, when illness reaches its crisis, and vitality is at its lowest. This book represents France at a time when Germany had been defeated, but when France was not yet victor, and the apathy and the listlessness are wonderfully suggested in these sketches. But there is something added, the series of wonderful notes, entitled "Nostalgia." For the extraordinary jewelled beauty of the actual words which form the author's style, they are surely the most noticeable literary vignettes that have appeared for years; and, expressing as they do an almost perverse melancholy which is characteristic of the writer, they have a poignant and appealing beauty which is quite inexpressible.

Chill Hours is not everybody's book, and the author is not everybody's writer; but within the

Introduction

last four years she has discovered a keenly appreciative circle of readers in England, and in the writer's opinion this book will, if for "Nostalgia" alone, be welcomed with delight, not only by these, but by a larger number who love personality in literature and the beautiful words which wait upon the bidding of a few selected spirits.

A. M.