

Marlow was at his best in the pentameter, but Ford usually got his thrill in a chipped line of about three words—three words which, while they mean nothing, mean everything. All depends on what you “read into” them. And the true impassioned student of human nature will read into the overheard exclamations of the street a whole revealing philosophy. What! Two temperaments are separately born, by the agency of chance or the equally puzzling agency of design, they one day collide, become intimate, and run parallel for a space. You perceive them darkly afar off; they approach you; you are in utter ignorance of them; and then in the instant of passing you receive a blinding flash of illumination, and the next instant they are eternally hidden from you again. That blinding flash of illumination may consist of “My big wolf!” or it may consist of “It is solely a question of the cache-corset.” But in any case it is and must be profoundly significant. In any case it is a gleam of light on a mysterious place. Even the matter of the height of the floor on which she lived is charged with an overwhelming effect for one who loves his fellow-man. And lives there the being stupid or audacious enough to maintain that the French national character does not emerge charmingly and with a curious coherence from the fragments of soul-communication which I have set down?

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On New Year's Eve I was watching the phenomena of the universal scheme of things in Put-