

THE ARROW OF GOLD

ingly on her right hand, with that impenetrable air of guardianship. Don't touch! He didn't like his treasure to be touched unless he actually put some unique object into your hands with a sort of triumphant murmur, 'Look close at that.' Of course I only have heard all this. I am much too small a person, you understand, to even . . ."

He flashed his white teeth at us most agreeably, but the upper part of his face, the shadowed setting of his eyes, and the slight drawing in of his eyebrows gave a fatal suggestion. I thought suddenly of the definition he applied to himself: "*Américain, catholique et gentil-homme*" completed by that startling "I live by my sword" uttered in a light drawing-room tone tinged by a flavour of mockery lighter even than air.

He insisted to us that the first and only time he had seen Allègre a little close was that morning in the Bois with his mother. His Majesty (whom God preserve), then not even an active Pretender, flanked the girl, still a girl, on the other side, the usual companion for a month past or so. Allègre had suddenly taken it into his head to paint his portrait. A sort of intimacy had sprung up. Mrs. Blunt's remark was that of the two striking horsemen Allègre looked the more kingly.

"The son of a confounded millionaire soap-boiler," commented Mr. Blunt through his clenched teeth. "A man absolutely without parentage. Without a single relation in the world. Just a freak."

"That explains why he could leave all his fortune to her," said Mills.

"The will, I believe," said Mr. Blunt moodily, "was written on a half sheet of paper, with his device of an Assyrian bull at the head. What the devil did he mean by it? Anyway it was the last time that she surveyed the world of men and women from the saddle. Less than three months later . . ."