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“But, Jack—” he began; but Forrester stopped him with uplifted hand.

“Don’t!” he said. “I know what you’re thinking. I’ve been her friend, as good a friend as I knew how to be; that’s all. You can put that out of your mind. If I had been fit—” He walked to the open doorway and stood for a moment looking out into the night, waiting for control. When he turned to face Mark again, his lips were smiling, his eyes alight, as though his depth of feeling had been but a passing humour. “If the child is really father to the man,” he laughed, “then my young father and I have an account to settle, for the things I’m incapable of. But friendship is n’t one of them, Mark, I’ve been her friend, and now I’m trying to be yours. You’ll have that to thank me for after a while. Go ahead with your supper; I want it, bad.”

When the next dawn came, a spring rain was falling, warm and soft, cleansing and vitalising, bringing a sense of