

regular united existence. They looked at each other, satisfied, admiring, happy, expecting glorious things from Fate.

There was a discreet alarm at the door. Simon came in. It would have been a gross solecism to knock, but Simon performed the equivalent. He paused, struck when he beheld Camilla, as well he might; for Camilla was such a vision as is not often vouchsafed to the Simons of this world. She was peerless that evening. And she smiled charmingly on him, and asked after his health.

‘Your coffee, dearest,’ she murmured to Hugo.

It occurred to Simon that the dome would never be the same again. This miraculous and amazing creature was going to be always there, to form part of his daily life, to swish her wonderful skirts in and out of the rooms, to — to — He did not know whether to be glad or sorry. He knew only that he was perturbed, thrown off his balance, so much so that he forgot to explain his invasion.

‘Well, Simon,’ said Hugo, ‘had your dinner and been to the *Morning Post* office?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Alone?’