

LII

THE happy peaceful years were slowly gliding—not racing away from them.

They looked down from their castle walls, and it was as if he held the inverted glass that he had used when a child at the play. The glass made all things small; but a turn of the glass made things big again. They saw the fertile plain, and the bailiff's work—houses, bridges, and dikes,—men like ants toiling, but with purpose in their toil. And though so small, so far off, these toilers and he were as one—bound together in the common task, united by sympathy. He could turn the glass and bring them near. In imagination he could join them. In imagination they could join him. Miles away across the fields, peasants on the edge of the moor shaded their eyes, and looked at the castle—with love.

Centuries had rolled by, and no serf had so looked at the castle. Grand and wonderful things had happened at Dykefield.—It had stood sieges; it had helped to break rebellious hopes; it had taught loyalty with axes, and religion with flames; maidens had been done to death in it, monks had gone mad in it, sovereigns had slept in it;—but never till now had this thing happened. Its serf, staring at it over the ripe corn and the cropt pasture, felt his heart grow warmer and his eyes soften, as he thought that the man who lived behind the stone walls was his best friend.

They looked from their castle walls at the far-off world of fashion, and it was as if he used the inverted glass given to him when a man by Gladys. Ants or a restricted ant-heap,—moving restlessly, ceaselessly,—without purpose striving,—burying themselves. Fussy foolish little people.—He could not turn the glass and bring them near and make them large. He could not in imagination sympathize with them; he had lost the power of understanding them.