

514 The Broad Highway

"Yes, sir."

"And you know -- where to look?"

"I think so --"

"Because, if you don't -- I might --"

"I shall go to a certain cottage," said I tentatively.

"Then you'd better go, boy -- the mare's all excitement -- good-by, Peter -- and cutting up my gravel most damnably -- good-by!" So saying, he reached up and gripped my hand very hard, and stared at me also very hard, though the tears stood in his eyes. "I always felt very fatherly towards you, Peter -- and -- you won't forget the lonely old man -- come and see me now and then -- both of you, for it does get damnably lonely here sometimes, and oh, curse it! Good-by! dear lad." So he turned, and walked up the steps into his great, lonely house.

"O Wings! with thy slender grace, and tireless strength, if ever thou didst gallop before, do thy best to-day! Spurn, spurn the dust 'neath thy fleet hoofs, stretch thy graceful Arab neck, bear me gallantly to-day, O Wings, for never shalt thou and I see its like again."

Swift we flew, with the wind before, and the dust behind, past wayside inns where besmoked figures paused in their grave discussions to turn and watch us by; past smiling field and darkling copse; past lonely cottage and village green; through Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, with never a stop; up Pembry hill, and down, galloping so lightly, so easily, over that hard, familiar road, which I had lately tramped with so much toil and pain; and so, as evening fell, to Sissinghurst.

A dreamy, sleepy place is Sissinghurst at all times, for its few cottages, like its inn, are very old, and great age begets dreams. But, when the sun is low, and the shadows creep out, when the old inn blinks drowsy eyes at the cottages, and they blink back drowsily at the inn, like the old friends they are; when distant cows low at gates and fences; when sheep-bells tinkle faintly; when the weary