

On a late summer afternoon of 1897 Hatherly waited to recognise and greet a friend of his own age, whom he had not seen for ten years. He looked long for a tall, black-haired man of forty-six with an aquiline nose and obstinate mouth; all that he discovered, led thereto by an overwrought boy of nine in black clothes, was a grey and bearded old man with restless eyes and flickering lids, who had been carried down the gangway by one set of men and was seemingly waiting to be carried elsewhere by others. Hatherly took charge and bore his friend to a private nursing home in the country, while he chose a school for Deryk and bought Ripley Court from the Stornaways, as though he were buying a ready-made coat in a storm of rain. Something had to be done very quickly for a man who would be an invalid for the rest of his life; it would be time enough for recriminations later on. "Whatever you think best, per-perfectly sat'sfied," was Lancing's unvarying stammered comment, as he sat huddled in bed, staring out of the window and gently scratching at the sheet with long, claw-like fingers. Six months before he had not been satisfied with anything that lacked his seal and imprimatur; he would have cleaned his own windows, if he could, because others did the work less well.

The sight of Lancing's helplessness drove Hatherly to a Quixotic act of sacrifice hardly justified by any claim of friendship. He called his two partners together and told them that he proposed to confine himself in future to the care of the Lancings and their estate. For years Deryk could expect no attention from his father, and he looked at first sight too highly strung to be neglected in any way; for the rest of his life Aylmer Lancing would be unequal to the single control of his own affairs. "I'm not doing this for my own amusement," Hatherly explained ruefully, already half repentant, when his partners mildly expostulated at the unexpected break-up of the firm.

From that day he did nothing for his own amusement, and such amusement as came to him was slight. He was sacrificing himself in middle life to a dying man, whose will