

"Do you seriously mean to tell me you believe that you'd have had some sign of his death; felt some unmistakable intuition?"

"In my soul I know it." He spoke with an entire conviction that was almost horrible. I felt that it would be useless to argue with him in that mood. Rosewarne, I thought, was hardly sane. What he said next reassured me a little.

"I'm not always as bad as this. There are days, even weeks, when the menace seems to withdraw. Then I think that he is far away, somewhere at the other side of the world. When the fear comes upon me like a flood, when it shakes body and soul as it does now, then I think—he is near, he has found me out and he will strike."

"But you've been as bad this before, and nothing has happened."

"Yes, but by some chance he must have missed me then—God! I almost wish that he could find me now!"

We had by this time reached the rising ground that leads up to the grey walls of Guerande, that self-contained little city set upon a hill. We turned to look back across the salt marshes, shimmering under the sun of noon, to the church of Le Croisic. Rosewarne laid his hand upon my arm and spoke in an altered voice.

with haphazard flashes. Memory and imagination, I thought, had done their work.

I had a curious feeling, as we sat at lunch together in a sunny room that opened upon a vine-wreathed verandah, that he and I were of two different worlds. I found myself trying to conjecture how he regarded material things, even the food before him and the wine in his glass. Did these strike him as being the means, not of life, but of forcing him to keep alive that terror which he bore in his heart? And later, when he sat down in the cafe and wrote two or three picture post cards, I wondered how he regarded such ordinary and trivial things. As I watched him a sense of unreality began to creep over me: there was something strange in the sound of his pen. Was he writing to commonplace people?

The sky was overcast as we walked back to Le Croisic, and the marshes, with their sentimental pyramids and domes of salt, appeared infinitely vast and dreary. The wind, too, was rising, and the low boom of the sea reached us across the waste. At another time I should have welcomed this changed aspect, but now I feared its effect on Rosewarne. But he did not seem to be affected by it: indeed, his eyes were quick to appreciate varying tones of color, and when a sudden sunshaft



Pack ponies crossing one of the tributaries of the North Thompson river, B.C.

"I don't want to leave all this. I love the beauty of the world—of the world that cannot speak or sin. I have not even any quarrel with men, except myself. I have had the means to do as I wished; I have been a wanderer seeking beauty in the shadow of death. It would have been easy, you may think, to end this fear by ending myself. More than once I have held the poison-phial in my hand—but no, I could not do that. I must bear the burden to the end; mine must not be the hand that freezes me for ever."

"My dear Rosewarne," I said, "believe me, I pity you from my soul. If I could only convince you that this fear of yours is a mere phantasm, the result of brooding on a sensitive mind."

"I have tried to believe that. But even supposing it were so, what then? The fear remains. But I know, I know!" Again I felt it useless to argue with him then, though I determined gradually to try to win him out of this terrible labyrinth.

"It's awfully good of you," he said, "to listen to me like this. The thing had me so by the throat that I had to speak, and I was sure you'd sympathise even if you didn't understand."

"I'm glad you spoke," I said, "talk as much as you like."

We entered Guerande by the beautiful Porte St. Michel, and for a time wandered about the narrow streets, quite happily. The shadow seemed to have lifted from Rosewarne's spirit, and he talked entertainingly of many things. I was astonished at his range of knowledge. He had read deeply, and, as I have said, travelled widely, and he had a wonderfully retentive memory. Moreover, it was a memory that classified and collated, so that he presented you with well ordered facts and theories, not

struck the spire of Le Croisic to an ethereal whiteness he gave an exclamation of delight. "Constable," he said, "would have loved that!"

After dinner we walked out to the lighthouse at the end of the breakwater, and watched the fishing fleet, blue and yellow sailed, beat out against the haggard Western glow. It was difficult to stand against the rush of the wind on that exposed point, and impossible to talk save in shouted monosyllables. We lingered until all was a blur of tempestuous turmoil.

On the way back Rosewarne took my arm.

"This has been the best afternoon I've had for months," he said, "thanks to you."

"No great thanks to me, after all."

"I feel quite free for the time. Things look different. Le Croisic looks different, the people, everything."

"And they'll remain different," I said, "if you fight hard."

"We shall see," he said musingly.

There was no one in the cafe of our hotel except two or three of the maids, who always did their needlework there in the evening to the accompaniment of a subdued chatter. Rosewarne and I had been talking about nothing in particular for some time, when a man entered, the Englishman whom I had seen pass the window the day before. He gave the usual friendly greeting and sat down at a table near us.

"My God," whispered Rosewarne, "it's come at last!" I looked at him: his face was stricken grey.

"Nonsense!" I said.

"Look at the left cheek—the scar!" I looked closely, and a cold shiver thrilled my spine. Certainly there was a scar. I pulled myself together.

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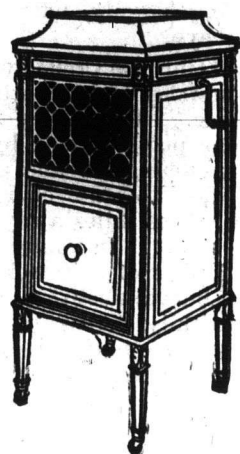
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