

IN THE MATTER OF ART

THE automobile had dragged itself up the rise of the country road with a painful slowness — with a violently irregular beat of its disordered pulse and every now and then an explosive hoarse cough of protest. The chauffeur shook his head, and listened, and shook his head again, like a doctor who sees that the end is near. The man beside him kept flicking the ash from a cigar impatiently, with his eyes now on the turn of the road ahead, now on the row of little cedars that were held in single file along the way-side, like a chain gang, by three rusty strands of barb wire, for a fence. Behind them a cow, in an orchard pasture, chewed with true bucolic stolidity as she watched the car. Around her, the old apple trees, petrified by decay, stood motionless, as if they had just been interrupted in some skeletoned dance of death, their bleached limbs contorted, their bare twigs, as sharp as talons, still quivering a little in the sunlight.

The chauffeur pulled a lever that mercifully ended the agony. The car settled back against a water-bar, panting. The man sighed and rose from his seat.

The chauffeur had told him what was wrong — something the matter with the "contact" — but Ruttlely did not believe it. He believed that the chauffeur was one