

and there upon its pages the record of good days which are gone, and he had come to the end of his good days; there were no blank pages in the diary waiting for inscription. He had lost everything, it seemed to him that night—his career, the delight of mere physical activity, the pleasures of emulation, the pride of a progressive success maintained through years, the long journeys under strange skies, among strange people, and, finally, now—Ethne. And he was young, he realized with a sinking of the heart that was almost despair; he was at an age when in these days many famous men have hardly begun their careers. He might live a very long, tiresome time.

He came in the end to his rifles and guns. They were to him much what Ethne's violin was to her. They had stories for his ear alone. He sat with a Remington across his knees and lived over again one long, hot day in the hills to the west of Berenice, during which he had stalked a lion across strong open country and killed him at three hundred yards just before sunset. The rifle talked to him, too, of his first ibex, shot in the Khor Baraka, and of antelope in the mountains northwards of Suakin. There was a little German gun which he had used upon mid-winter nights in a boat upon this very creek of the Salcombe estuary. He had brought down the first mallard with that, and he lifted and slid his left hand along the under side of the barrel and felt the butt settle comfortably into the hollow of his shoulder. But his weapons began to talk over loudly in his ears even as Ethne's violin in the earlier days after Harry Feversham was gone and she was left alone, had spoken with too personal a note to her. As he handled the locks, and was aware that he could no longer see the sights, the sum of his losses was presented to him in a definite, incontestable way. He was seized suddenly with a desire to disregard his blindness, to pretend that it was no hindrance, and to pretend so hard that it should prove not to be one. The desire grew and shook him like a passion. What if he changed

his destination to-morrow, travelled to London, yes, but from London straight to the East, out of the countries of dim stars. The smell of it and its music, and the domes of its mosques, the hot sun, the rabble in its streets, and the steel-blue sky overhead, caught at him till he was plucked from his chair and set pacing restlessly about his room.

He dreamed himself to Port Said, and was marshalled in the long procession of steamers down the waterway of the Canal. The song of the Arabs coaling the ship was in his ears, and so loud that he could see them as they went at night-time up and down the planks between the barges and the deck, an endless chain of naked figures, lurid in the red glare of the braziers. He travelled out of the Canal, past the redhead lands of the Sinaitic Peninsula into the chills of the Gulf of Suez. He zig-zagged down the Red Sea while the Great Bear swung northwards low down in the sky, above the rail of the quarterdeck, and the Southern Cross began to blaze in the south; he touched at Tor and at Yambo; he saw the tall white houses of Yeddah lift themselves out of the sea, and admired the dark brine-withered woodwork of their carved casements; he walked through the dust of its roofed bazaars with the joy of the homesick after long years come home, and from Yeddah he crossed between the narrowing coral-reefs into the landlocked harbour of Suakin.

Westward from Suakin stretched the desert, with all that it meant to this man whom it had smitten and cast out—the quiet padding of the camel's feet in sand, the great rock-cones rising sheer and abrupt as from a rippleless ocean, towards which you march all day and get no nearer; the gorgeous, patternless blaze of sunset colours in the west, the rustle of the wind through the short twilight and the downward swoop of the planets out of nothing to the earth. Durrance tramped backwards and forwards, forgetful of his blindness and parched with desire as with a fever—until unexpectedly he heard the blackbirds and