

## The King of Arcadia

Ballard scowled, looked as directed, and took the measure of his latest rival.

Wingfield was at a table for four, with Mrs. Van Bryck, her daughter, and a shock-headed young man, whom Ballard took to be the football-playing Blacklock. In defiance of the clean-shaven custom of the moment, or, perhaps, because he was willing to individualise himself, the playwright wore a beard closely trimmed and pointed in the French manner; this, the quick-grasping eyes, and a certain vulpine showing of white teeth when he laughed, made Ballard liken him to an unnamed singer he had once heard in the part of *Mephistopheles*.

The overlooking glance necessarily included Wingfield's table companions: Mrs. Van Bryck's high-bred contours lost in adipose; Dosithea's cool and placid prettiness—the passionless charms of unrelieved milk-whiteness of skin and masses of flaxen hair and baby-blue eyes; the Blacklock boy's square shoulders, heavy jaw, and rather fine eyes—which he kept resolutely in his plate for the better part of the time.

At the next table Ballard saw a young man with the brown of an outdoor occupation richly colouring face and hands; an old one with the contradictory "H'm—ha!" written out large in every gesture; and two young women who looked as if they might be the sharers of the single Christian name. Miss