

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

VII

SEATON, on realising that some of the guests had arrived, retired for refuge to the conventual seclusion of his bedroom, and did not appear again till the gong sounded for dinner. He was giving his white necktie one last disconsolate pull, when Glanville knocked, looked in at the door, and exclaimed with a laugh, "Capital! I see you are quite ready for the theologians in disguise downstairs."

With a sinking heart Seaton entered the drawing-room and found himself alone with a man who was standing before the empty fireplace. The aspect of this personage was certainly not theological. His age might have been about sixty. His carefully trimmed moustache was slightly waxed at the tips; a turquoise, surrounded with diamonds, shone on his shirt-front; and his collar, as though it were a bearing-rein, so upheld his chin, that he jerked his head at intervals with an air of jaunty restiveness. Seaton, with his grey-blue eyes, which were dreamy though half humorous, with his shock of ruddy hair, and with the shy uncertainty of his pose, formed a curious contrast to the stranger. The two men bowed and looked at each other like dogs of two different species.

At last the gentleman of the magnificent turquoise stud gave a nervous pull to a pair of jewelled cuffs, and said, "Have you come here for the fishing?"