

Charles hurried. Thoughts of Peter Finlay slipped out of his mind, and thoughts of tea and Miss Featherstonhaugh took their place. He was thirsty and lonely. The distractions of the day had upset him to such an extent that he did not give a second thought to the letter of which he had just heard. In five motions he changed his collar and tie; in five more he doffed a grey suit and donned a blue one; in two more he put on a new straw hat and took up his stick.

Charles found Miss Featherstonhaugh where he had last seen her; but now she wore a hat, and the typewriter had vanished from the surface of her desk. She handed him the letter. He thrust it into a pocket without glancing at it.

"You have been so very kind, bothering about my letters and all that sort of thing, I hope you'll be kinder still," he said with a pleasant air of eager diffidence.

"It is part of my work to bother myself about our authors," she replied with a faint smile on her flawless lips and a veiled glimmer of inquiry in her remarkable eyes.

Charles blushed.

"I'm lonely," he said. "So many people all around, and all of them strangers. The moment I heard your voice on the telephone I hoped that you would have tea with me somewhere—you are so good-natured."