

of it could possibly have been to cripple your affections and thwart your energies."

To a certain extent, Percy had succumbed, had confessed himself beaten. He had cut himself off from the living, breathing world, which is not less essential to the life of a man than his heart or his lungs. But that was over, and he had come back; he had ceased to be insane, he held up his head again. Also, she recollected (and suddenly put the stopper on her recollections) he was free.

Sybil had told Lady Otterbourne about her meeting with Percy the evening before, and about his renewed gift of the pearls to her, at which her mother came near to feeling a sense of shame. His generosity to them both had had something splendid about it, and she knew with annoying vividness how incredibly mean Sybil must have seemed to him. Sybil as a matter of fact had consulted her about the returning of the pearls immediately after the breaking off of the match, and Lady Otterbourne had advised her to keep them till he sent for them.

"You cannot send fifty thousand pounds worth of jewels through the penny post," she had said, "Percy will certainly send for them and you had better keep them till he does. They must, of course, be delivered to his representative."

This had happened in September; but as the days went on, and still Percy did not send for the pearls, Lady Otterbourne began to wonder whether