

to see her. Then I would spend my mornings in the park, intent no longer upon watching the romance of others, but contemplating in long silences the wonderful possibilities of my own. What would it be when she was well again? All hope that I might win her for myself I counted beyond the utmost probability. Such disfigurement as is mine, once a woman has expressed her horror of it, is not forgotten so easily as that. So at least it seemed to me. And as I sat or walked in the park, journeying so far sometimes as the gardens in Kensington to see the crocuses and the young tulips rising above the earth, I thought it all out, making in my imagination the future I would have for her.

I built a cottage then in the country—an old-fashioned place standing far back from the road, with a tiny orchard of gnarled apple trees and a garden where all the sweet peas in the world could grow in such profusion as would shame even Cruikshank himself. It should be within fifty miles of London, so that whenever she needed me I could easily reach her. For a few hundred pounds the freehold of a place like that could be bought, and it should be her very own. The little that it would cost for her to live there, she would surely accept at my hands.

"She's at my mercy," I told myself, cheerfully. "Can she possibly want anything better than that?"

There were other schemes too. I spent a glorious morning devising them. But none pleased me better than this, and I longed for the moment when I might tell her of it.