

"*Vanitas vanitatum*," said I. "*Omnia vanitas*."

"Rot!" said Dale.

"It's true."

"I must fetch Eleanor Faversham back from Sicily," said Dale.

"Don't," said I.

"Well, I give you up," he declared, pushing his chair from the table and swinging one leg across the other. I leaned forward and scrutinised his ankles.

"What are you looking at?"

"There must be something radically wrong with you, Dale," I murmured sympathetically. "It is part of the religion of your generation to wear socks to match your tie. To-day your tie is wine-coloured and your socks are green——"

"Good Lord," he cried, "so they are! I dressed myself anyhow this morning."

"What's wrong with you?"

He threw his cigarette impatiently into the fire.

"Every infernal thing that can possibly be. Everything's rotten—but I've not come here to talk about myself."

"Why not?"

"It isn't the game. I'm here on your business, which is ever so much more important than mine. Where are this morning's letters?"

I pointed to an unopened heap on a writing-table at the end of the room. He crossed and sat down before them. Presently he turned sharply.

"You haven't looked through the envelopes. Here is one from Sicily."

I took the letter from him, and sighed to myself as I read it. Eleanor was miserable. The Sicilians were dirty. The Duomo of Palermo did not come up to her expectations. The Mobray-Robertsons, with whom she travelled, quarrelled with their food. They had never