

II

THE April sun, in that same April but a week later, fell, subdued by blinds and muslin curtains, into the room of a sleeping girl. The morning sun, bringing with it, even through curtains, shutters, and latticed screens, the ephemeral gladness, the perennial delusion of earthly renewal which, ever since the world began, has always ensnared the soul, complicated or simple, of every living creature—the soul of man, the soul of beasts, the tiny soul of piping birds.

Outside, the flutter and twitter of newly arrived swallows could be heard, and the hollow thud of a tambourine beaten to an Eastern rhythm. Now and again a sound as of some monstrous, bellowing beast rent the air: the voice of the hurrying liners, the hoot of the steam-sirens, revealing the existence of a harbour somewhere near, a great harbour in frenzied stir; but these cries of the ships sounded very remote and came up from below, and this gave a sense of loftiness and peace, as of a hill-top far above the sea.

The room into which the sun shone on the sleeping girl was elegant and white; very modern, furnished with precious simplicity and the