

A SKETCH OF A TEMPERAMENT

of local make, and of the fashion of thirty years before, the achievement of a tailoress at East Quarriers. He also let his iron-grey beard grow as it would, and what little hair he had left from the baldness which had followed the fever. And thus, numbering in years but two-and-sixty, he might have passed for seventy-five.

Though their early adventure as lovers had happened so long ago, its history had become known in the isle with mysterious rapidity and fulness of detail. The gossip to which its bearing on their present friendship gave rise was the subject of their conversation on one of these walks along the cliffs.

‘It is extraordinary what an interest our neighbours take in our affairs,’ he observed. ‘They say “those old folk ought to marry; better late than never.” That’s how people are—wanting to round off other people’s histories in the best machine-made conventional manner.’

‘Yes. They keep on about it to me, too, indirectly.’

‘Do they! I believe a deputation will wait upon us some morning, requesting in the interests of matchmaking that we will please to get married as soon as possible. . . . How near we were to doing it forty years ago, only you