

A NOVELIST

IT is a joyous day for a young man when one of his articles wins him a letter from a well-known writer. I walked through Bloomsbury with elation, feeling, square in my pocket, the note that invited me to call on a novelist whose work had given me a paragraph in one of my diminutive essays. He was so well known that it was a little surprising to find him in Bloomsbury at all. Why not in St. John's Wood? I asked. Why not in the real country? At least, I pictured a very sumptuous flat. Through the old streets I walked, through the squares of tall old houses once fashionable but now infested by landladies, expecting all the time, as I neared the street he had mentioned, to find more signs of opulence. I found it at last, and it was dingy, miserable, more depressing than the rest. The novelist lived at No. 7. I rang the bell and waited with a fluttering heart.

Presently the door opened a suspicious six inches, and the tousled head of an elderly woman in curl-papers showed itself in the opening. On asking for my novelist, I was told to come in, and driven into the usual lodging-house