

thoughts. His eyes wandered from the page to a charcoal drawing of Deryk by Blessington, completed a week before sailing, and from the drawing to an oil-portrait of his wife. The boy had his mother's brown eyes and dark hair, but the thin-lipped, wilful mouth, the bony, fleshless jaws and temples, the straight, rather aquiline nose and exhalation of dominant, nervous vitality came from the other side at a time when his own nervous endurance was almost proverbial in New York. (She, poor soul, had unaccountably lost vitality when she married.) Sir Aylmer looked back, like a man recalling a forgotten story, on the twelve years in which he had risen from nothing to be one of the richest men in America. In moments of detachment even at the time of his greatest triumph he used occasionally to feel that he was really watching someone else who chanced to bear his name; now that it was all over, there seemed nothing to link up the "A. L.," whose movements and operations were followed with an interest only accorded to kings in Europe, with an English baronet, broken in health and looking if possible even nearer to death than he really was, thin, bent, lined and haggard, revealing only by flashes and empty smoke the volcanic energy and will-power of other days. Of the surge and thunder of New York not an echo or reverberation reached him; for an hour or two each day he could dictate letters and answer appeals to his charity; perhaps once a year his friend Raymond Stornaway, the philanthropic organiser, would explain and interest him in an endowment involving a hundred thousand instead of the normal, wearisome hundred. But he was unequal to detailed supervision; he had looked on impotently, while the Rhodes Bequest was formed, conscious that he could never undertake a similar effort. Ripley Court, regarded as the strong-room in which the Lancing Trust Corporation was encased, was the only reminder and tie.

When the clock liberated him from his irksome, obligatory rest, he threw aside his book, walked into the study next to his bedroom and unlocked a drawer of his writing-