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EPILOGUE

THE library at Newbridge, already grey from the smoke of three cigars, became so hot as the sun stole round its eastern angle that Norman was grateful when May-Kingston, usually impervious to atmosphere, suggested that they should suspend work until after luncheon. As Norman rattled up the estate-map under its faded valance and watched his solicitor filling a wallet with papers, he recalled another morning when the two of them had sat in the smoke-blue library, arguing over long sheets of figures and trying to determine the fate of Newbridge.

"If I'm to let the place for five years, it must be to somebody I know or know about," he resumed, as they filed through a window into the south courtyard. "Apart from ordinary wear and tear, I don't want Newbridge to get into the hands of some genial beanfeaster who'll make a nuisance of himself to all my neighbours."

"You need have no fear of that," the solicitor reassured him. "Do you want me to do anything about your flat in London, or are you keeping that on in case you ever come back unexpectedly?"

"No, I want you to get rid of that. As I shall always take the best part of a month to get home, I can cable before sailing and get you to find me some kind of accommodation. I don't expect to be home at all; and I don't want you to send for me, unless the place is burnt down or the world comes to an end or something like that."

"Five years. . . . It's a long time," mused the solicitor. "We shall see great changes by then if we're still alive. If they're bad years, they'll bring the end of the big country-houses of England."

"Mr. May-Kingston will tell you it's no use my going for less," Norman explained, as he prepared to return to the house. "I'll just see how my wife is getting on with her share of the muddle."

Ever since he had brought Margery to Gloucestershire a