

THE DIVINE FIRE

man's natural distaste for clever women, admired his cousin's intellect, as well he might, for it was he who had taught her how to use it. Her sense of humour, too (for Lucia was dangerously gifted), that sense which more than any of her senses can wreck a woman—he would have liked her just as well if she had had none; but some, no doubt, she needed, if only to save her from the situations to which her kindness and her innocence exposed her; and she had just the right amount and no more. Heavens! Supposing, without it, she had met Keith Rickman and had yielded to the temptation to be kind to him! Even in the heat Jewdwine shivered at the thought.

He put it from him, he put Rickman altogether from his mind. It was not to think about Rickman that he came down to Court House. On a day as hot as this, he wanted nothing but to keep cool. The gentle oscillation of the hammock in the green shadows of the beech-tree symbolized this attitude towards Rickman and all other ardent questions.

Still, it was not disagreeable to know that if he could only make up his mind to something very definite and irretrievable indeed, Court House would one day be his. It was the only house in England that came up to his idea of what a country house should be. A square Tudor building with two short, gable-ended wings, thrown out at right angles to its front; three friendly grey walls enclosing a little courtyard made golden all day long with sunshine from the south. Court House was older than anything near it except Har-mouth Bridge and the Parish Church. Standing apart in its own green lands, it looked older than the young red earth beneath it, a mass upheaved from the grey foundations of the hills. Its face, turned seawards, was rough and pitted with the salt air; thousands upon thousands of lichens gave it a greenish bloom, with here and there a rusty patch on groin and gable. It contained the Harden Library, *the* Harden Library, one of the finest private collections in the country. It contained also his cousin Lucia.

He had always loved Court House, but not always his cousin Lucia. The scholarly descendant of a long line of scholars, Jewdwine knew that he had been a favourite with