

THE ARROW OF GOLD

him in all the public places where in a provincial town men may expect to meet each other. I saw him for the first time (wearing that same grey ready-made suit) in a legitimist drawing-room where, clearly, he was an object of interest, especially to the women. I had caught his name as Monsieur Mills. The lady who had introduced me took the earliest opportunity to murmur into my ear: "A relation of Lord X." (*Un proche parent de Lord X.*) And then she added, casting up her eyes: "A good friend of the King." Meaning Don Carlos of course.

I looked at the *proche parent*; not on account of the parentage but marvelling at his air of ease in that cumbersome body and in such tight clothes, too. But presently the same lady informed me further: "He has come here amongst us *un naufragé*."

I became then really interested. I had never seen a shipwrecked person before. All the boyishness in me was aroused. I considered a shipwreck as an unavoidable event sooner or later in my future.

Meantime the man thus distinguished in my eyes glanced quietly about and never spoke unless addressed directly by one of the ladies present. There were more than a dozen people in that drawing-room, mostly women eating fine pastry and talking passionately. It might have been a Carlist committee meeting of a particularly fatuous character. Even my youth and inexperience were aware of that. And I was by a long way the youngest person in the room. That quiet Monsieur Mills intimidated me a little by his age (I suppose he was thirty-five), his massive tranquillity, his clear, watchful eyes. But the temptation was too great—and I addressed him impulsively on the subject of that shipwreck.

He turned his big fair face towards me with surprise in his keen glance, which (as though he had seen through me in an instant and found nothing objectionable) changed