

TRISTRAM *of* BLENT

had said too much. He decided that he had not said a word too much.

At last he got up very deliberately and went into the hall. It was a quarter to ten; the soup and the claret were there. Harry stood looking at them a moment, but they could not answer his question. With an impatient shrug of his shoulders he walked out into the garden. And there his first thought was not of Cecily.

It was of Blent, Blent his own again, come back to him enriched by the experience of its loss, now no more all his life, but the background of that new life he had begun to make for himself. He was no longer puffed up by the possession of it—the new experiences had taught him a lesson there—but he was infinitely satisfied. Blent for his own, in his own way, on his own terms—that was what he wanted. See how fair it was in the still night! He was glad and exultant that it was his again. Was he too a curmudgeon then? Harry did not perceive how any reasonable person could say such a thing. A man may value what is his own without being a miser or a churl.

Nobody was to be seen in the garden—not Neeld, not Mina, nor Cecily. In surprise he walked the length and breadth of it without finding any of them. He went on to the bridge and peered about, and then on to the road; he looked even in the river in a curiosity that forgot the impossible. He was alone. With a quick step he came back and strode round the house to the stables. His fly was gone. He searched for a man to question; there was none; they had all gone to supper or to bed. And the fly was gone. He returned to the bridge with an uncomfortable feeling of loneliness.

Something came upon him, an impulse or an instinct. There was still a chance. She was not in the house, she was not in the garden. There was one other place