

INTRODUCTION

To the FOREWORD of this book I have practically nothing to add. It describes how the book was planned, and how at last it came to be written. The novel—*The Weavers*—of which it was the herald, as one might say, was published in 1907. The reception of *Donovan Pasha* convinced me beyond peradventure, that the step I took in enlarging my field of work was as wise in relation to my art as in its effect upon my mind, temperament and faculty for writing. I knew Egypt by study quite as well as I knew the Dominion of Canada, the difference being, of course, that the instinct for the life of Canada was part of my very being itself; but there are great numbers of people who live their lives for fifty or seventy or eighty years in a country, and have no real instinct for understanding. There are numberless Canadians who do not understand Canada, Englishmen who know nothing of England, and Americans who do not understand the United States. If it is so that I have some instinct for the life of Canada, and have expressed it to the world with some accuracy and fidelity, it is apparent that the capacity for understanding could not be limited absolutely to one environment. That I understood Canada could not be established by the fact that I had spent my boyhood there, but only by the fact that some inner vision permitted me to see it as it really was. That inner vision, however, if it was anything at all was not in blinders, seeing only one section of the life of the world. Relatively it might see more deeply, more intimately in that place where habit of life had made the man familiar with all its detail, but the same vision turned elsewhere to fields where study and sympathy played a devoted part, could not fail to see; though the workman's craft, which made material the vision, might fail.