

PREFACE

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portrait. It is not a novelist's business to draw portraits, but to create living figures, and the nearer he gets to the first the farther off will he be from the second. "Exton" itself is a picture as close as I could make it of an actual place. I lived there for three years—at the White House—and I have re-let the houses of my friends, so to speak, to the people of my story. If that is a liberty it is the only one I have taken. Exton, or—to throw off the very slight disguise—Beaulieu, in the New Forest, is much visited, and though you may be able to recognize the Abbey and the Lodge and the Street House, if you go there in the summer, you will not come across Lady Wrotham, or the Dales, or Mrs. O'Keefe, or anybody like them.

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