

fattening into fruit : now in September, with no fruit yet arrived to substantiate their promise, they but made the gardener leave them with a shrug, knowing that they would never come to maturity. He might even pull them up in order to give to more profitable vegetables the soil which they did no more than misuse, substituting for them those that would give him a crop in response to his care. For artistic achievement, like peas and beans, will not come to fruition in late years, if up till then it has done nothing but flower in a spasmodic and podless fashion. Yet in the dining-room of this comfortable house, where Edward three times a day ate his meals and his mother refused hers (she ate a good deal between meals, in the shape of nutritive little soups and sandwiches brought her on trays), there hung just one pod from his otherwise fruitless stem. This was a finished portrait of his mother, executed fifteen years ago, a model of filial discernment and artistic achievement, done with all the perception of a son and the recording power of the true portrait-painter. But neither before that nor after that was there anything that showed more than the measure, just a scale, of what he might have been. He had done it once : there on the wall was the mark to which his head had once reached, a faint pencil-mark, but authentic. Since then, so to speak, he had sat in a chair and eaten his dinner, and, incidentally or perhaps primarily, been something instead of doing something.