

when they went away on their wedding journey?"

"They don't talk: they just look into each other's eyes in a sort of ecstasy, saying, 'Is it I? Is it thou?'"

"That would be pretty silly," said Jean. "We shan't do that anyway."

Her husband laughed.

"You are really very like Jock, my Jean. . . . D'you remember what your admirer Dr. Johnson said? 'If I had no duties I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman, but she should be one who could understand me and would add something to the conversation.' Wise old man! Tell me, Penny-plain, you're not fretting about leaving the boys? You'll see them again in a few days. Are you dreading having me undiluted?"

"My dear, you don't suppose the boys come first now, do you? I love them as dearly as ever I did, but compared with you—it's so different, absolutely different—I can't explain. I don't love you like people in books, all on fire and saying wonderful things all the time. But to be with you fills me with utter content. I told you that night in Hope's inn that the boys filled my life. And then you went away, and I found that though I had the boys my life and my heart were empty. You are my life, Biddy."

"My blessed child."

About four o'clock they came home.

An upland country of pastures and shallow dales fell quietly to the river levels, and on a low spur that was its last outpost stood Mintern Abbas, a thing half of the hills and half of the broad valleys. At its back, beyond the home-woods, was a remote land of sheep walks and forgotten hamlets; at its feet the young Thames in lazy reaches wound through water-meadows. Down the slopes