

CHAPTER XIX

Apologia

ON one of the worst days of last year, to wit the first day of the Eton and Harrow match, I had turned into the Hamman, in Jermyn Street, as the best available asylum for wet boots that might no longer enter any club. Mine had been removed by a little pinchbeck oriental in the outer courts, and I wandered within unpleasantly conscious of a hole in one sock, to find myself by no means the only obvious refugee from the rain. The bath was in fact inconveniently crowded. But at length I found a divan to suit me in an upstairs alcove. I had the choice indeed of more than one; but in spite of my antecedents I am fastidious about my cooling companions in a Turkish bath, and it was by no accident that I hung my clothes opposite to a newer morning coat and a pair of trousers more decisively creased than my own.

But the coincidence in pickle was no less remarkable. In ensuing stages of physical devastation one had dim glimpses of a not unfamiliar,