

romance-weaving about the two strangers was brought to an abrupt end by an obsequious but determined footman, who, having discovered her, manœuvred her and her belongings out of the carriage into a waiting limousine and thus out of their lives.

The girl, standing on the platform beside her travelling companion, looked after her, and laughed.

"Do you know, I think that old lady was quite worried about us," she said. "I think she had an idea you were trying to persuade me to elope."

"I suppose a woman's mind can't help running on that sort of thing," he answered. He had carried out her travelling case for her as a matter of course, but without graciousness, and now he stood beside her, half frowning, impatient to be gone. The journey was over. His interest in her had come automatically to an end.

"What do you know about a woman's mind?" she asked.

"Nothing. I haven't had time—and I never shall have time——" He wanted to add that a crowded and noisy station was not the place for such a discussion, but he caught a glimpse of her profile, and the idea that she was still laughing—secretly to herself—momentarily disconcerted him. In that moment, too, he noted for the first time the wave of russet gold hair which escaped from the close-fitting fur cap. Its warm colour against the tired pallor of her clear skin gave him a faint but arresting pleasure. He hoped suddenly that she would not make some banal and obvious remark to close their acquaintanceship. If she had said, "Well, it's been so interesting," he would have hated her for as long as he remembered her—which would not be long.

She looked round at him. She was quite serious now.

"Your name's Harding, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes—Peter Harding."

"I thought so. I saw it on your labels. If ever you stumble over something big I shall know who it is. Well—good-bye, Peter Harding."

"Good-bye."

The frank, strong pressure of her small hand reinforced his momentary pleasure in her. But he forgot to raise his hat, and it was only when she had disappeared in the straggling, eddying crowd that he realised that, in return, he had not asked her name.