

## The Book of Judgment

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and went; in a dream he transacted business of State. Something dark, vague, indefinable, overshadowed all, somehow making the weightiest matters of no account. With a curious sense of unreality he set out. The roaring bustle of the huge metropolitan station from which he started was at times as the murmurous hum of another planet. Instinctively he picked his way in the din and jostle, giving no sign of absent-mindedness; but though his body was in the thick of the confusion his spirit was far away.

He hoped to slip unobserved to his place in the train; but first one hat and then another was raised as he passed. Before he could hide the whisper ran along the thronged platform that that was the Home Secretary, the man, as people said, who was one day to be Prime Minister, and he had to endure the ordeal of an ovation. As he turned in the carriage door, bowing and smiling bareheaded, several ladies remarked confidentially how "nice" he was. The more romantic detected a profound sadness in his face; and they marvelled among themselves why he did not marry and be happy. If put to the test, more than one fair sympathiser was ready to exemplify her pity on the spot.

No sooner was the crowd left behind than it was forgotten. That day the Home Secretary had no thought of popularity or policy or statecraft. Nor had he eye or ear for what took place about him. He did not hear the shriek and clangour of the rushing express. At stopping-places he hardly noticed the peering faces of those who, on a hint from the guard, tried to catch a glimpse of a Cabinet Minister. He saw no landscape; and so slight was his consciousness of progress or the flight of time, that when the guard, who had discovered the junction at which he meant to change, opened his carriage door, he asked in surprise, "Already?"

"The local train is on the other side, Sir Evan," said the man, touching his cap with one hand while the palm of the other had the sensation that guards like best. "Thank you, Sir Evan. I'll tell them to get you a seat."

"Please do not," replied Sir Evan. "I can easily get a seat for myself."

Nevertheless the guard did his duty by his mate. "Bill," he said in the ear of him of the local, "see that gent a-crossin' to your train? Keep your eye on 'im. 'E's