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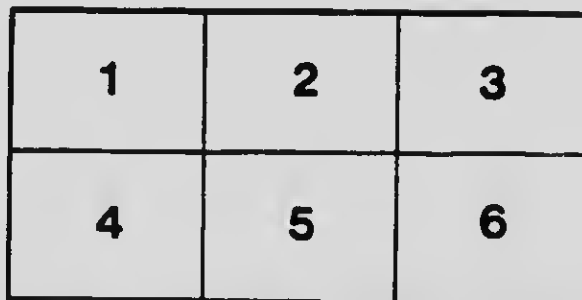
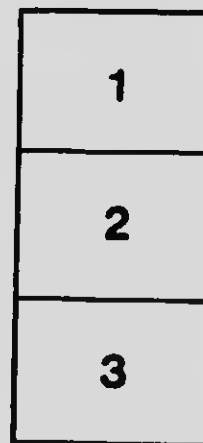
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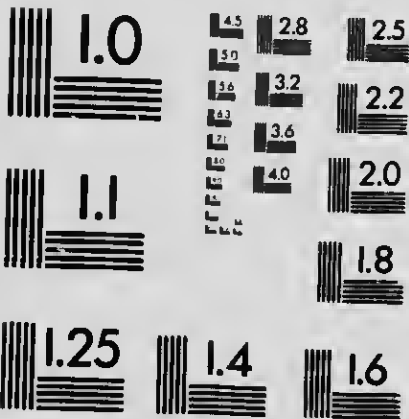
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*A TALE THAT
IS TOLD*



FREDERICK NIVEN

Toronto Saturday Night 23rd Aug 1924



DEVELOPING THAT NIMBLE WIT

Reading from left to right (seated)—Mrs. Frederick Niven, Mr. Frederick Niven, author of "Justice of the Peace", "The Woifer", Etc. For some time they have been living at Nelson, B.C., and we hope that they will remain in Canada permanently. Mr. Niven's sketch "Anything That Wears Hair" is one of the finest pieces of humor that Western Canada has inspired.

—Photo by E. O. Hoppe.

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A TALE THAT IS TOLD

FREDERICK NIVEN

"We spend our years as a tale that is told."

A TALE THAT IS TOLD

By

FREDERICK NIVEN

AUTHOR OF "THE LADY OF THE
CROSSING," "THE S.S. GLORY," ET C.



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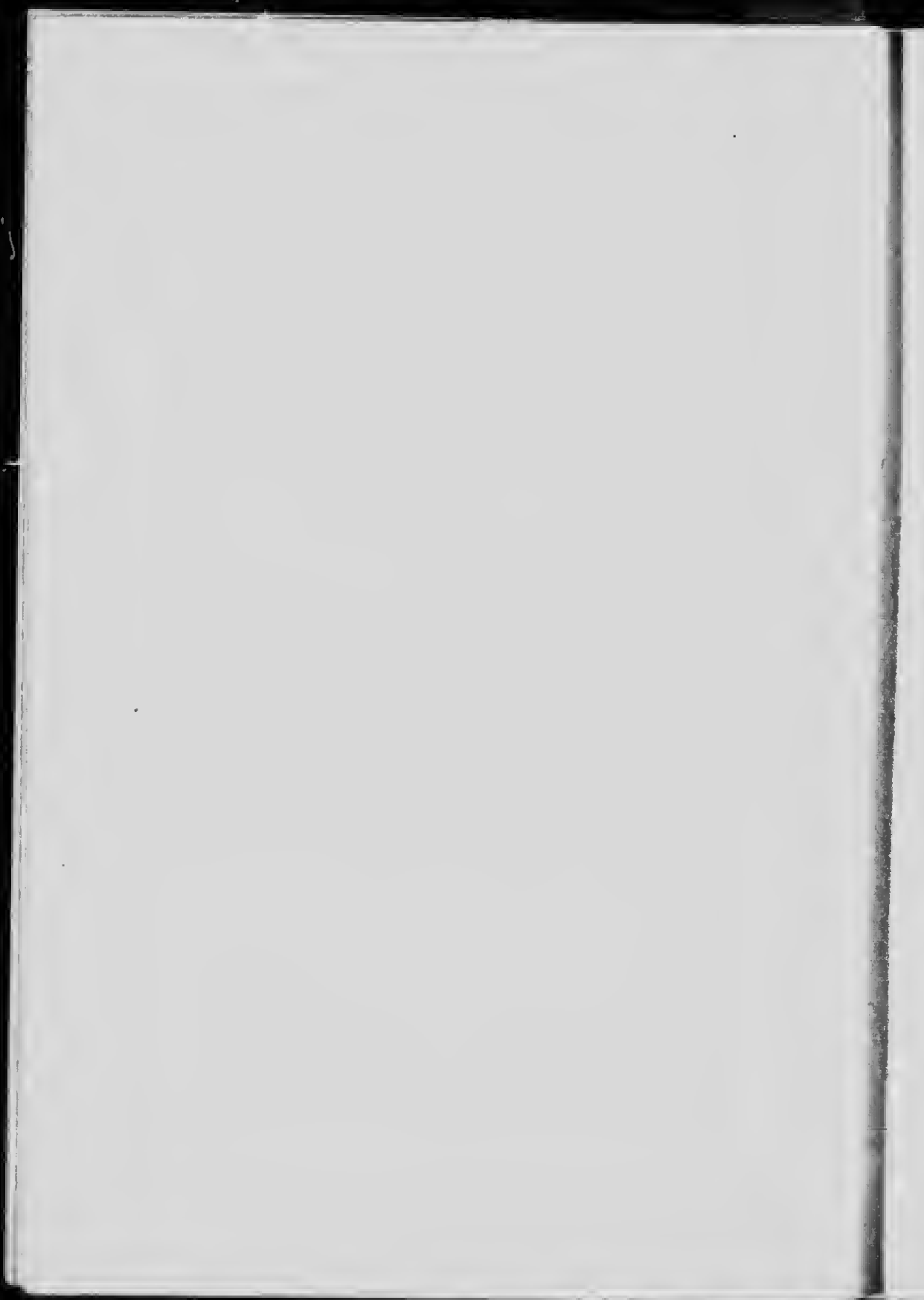
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TO
LYNED WILLIAMS
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FROM
PAULINE AND FREDERICK NIVEN



A TALE THAT IS TOLD

PROLOGUE

I OFTEN look on at myself as I look on at the other little puppet people who appear so small coming down Buchanan Street. Buchanan Street I mention because that is where I have my shop now; and when I am putting the books in the outside boxes—"the dips"—I sometimes glance up and down the street, wondering about them all. So small, and yet so interesting! I look a moment and then go back into the shop, to read a page or two of Tacitus or Herodotus and let the world wag. Puppets we are, puppets under the high stone house-fronts, and under Saint Rollox chimney that volleys out a cloud of smoke all day up there beyond the top of the hill which is as awfully covered with houses of the living as the hill behind Saint Mungo's cathedral with tombstones for the dead. That cloud, despite the height of the stalk from which it fans into the ether, is yet very low to one who, having looked up at it, looks up from it again, into the big gray-blue dome over-

head. How small, and yet how busy and eager we all are.

I would not sit down to write this book at all if I did not feel that, besides being in a sense puppets at the end of wires manipulated by very dimly perceived powers, we are something more. A phrase of Myers' often chants in my head: ". . . within, still deeper depths; without, a more unfathomable heaven." Because I am interested I write; and if I begin somewhat staccato that is because this is my first attempt. This is my one book, that I have heard is in all of us.

Realising that it takes more than ink, paper and a pen to write even that one book, I have pondered how to do it; and I think the result is going to be a blend of what that young novelist, Mr. Hugh Walpole, calls "a case," and at the same time partakes slightly of the qualities of the "slice of life" school. I find, thinking over the work before beginning it, that the "case" element must run through. I see, indeed, that I shall have to represent myself as a case—I trust not a hard case! What I am I shall not be able to hide even if I try. You will see me between the lines; you will discover me as I discover others to you, for all criticism is self-criticism, no matter how objective. Even anonymous criticism, although it does not reveal the name of the critic, reveals all else. I may as well say immediately that my book is not written to any Aristotelian formula of how to be a big seller. I do not by accident epically marry or kill my mother; I am not an unusual man. It is not my aim to twang on the one string of fear and make you shudder like a coward in your chair. I approach you not as an idiot to be amused and to giggle over what I have to give, but as a sentient be-

ing with a dash of eternity in you as well as dust, and conceive of you as greatly interested in life as I am myself. I do not look down on you and fiddle with secret contempt. In a way I love you, as I love all passing by. I have a plain story to tell—my own; not a story to a pattern. I think the world has in some ways progressed since the old Grecian days, and I believe that other themes may move beside unpremeditated matricide and the like. If not—no matter, for I write also to please myself.

It is, perhaps, to be exact, *a long case!* And in this way: Always, all my life, I have been haunted by a feeling that it is only part of a greater life. The incidents that have come out of the world to me most forcibly have made that view, if not an obsession, definitely formative. Do not mistake me for a melancholy. I am no imbecile impervious to the morning, to wakening to the light, to the miracle of my body's mechanism, to night and the stars at night, to the charm of friendship and the desire to love. But I have always believed that beyond life as summed up in the Old Testament history of things—and So-and-So begat So-and-So and he died; and So-and-So begat So-and-So and he died is a larger life. Also I have felt so much the effect of those around me that I have been chary when finding myself¹ in a rôle where I might be influencing others.

Tom, my eldest brother, whose creed is Give yourself, says I am "hyper-sensitive." What he means by "giving" is not giving his better part. When he "gives himself" I note that generally the person to whom he gives is wrecked. So I cling to my diffidence in making contacts with life.

"Am I to restrain myself," he once said to our

father. during an argument on how to live, "for the sake of the weak-kneed?"

"It depends," replied father, "... what you restrain yourself from giving—whether it is manna or strychnine!"

Father had elements in him of what is called humbug; and deliberately I intend to tell the worst of him; but he never gave poison to any. He gave them often sustenance; he gave them often twaddle which helped in their dimness, where perhaps another would have tried to enlighten them. I preferred him to Tom—which brings me to this point: I have preferences. Of course we all have preferences, but I shall try to tell what I have to tell with as little bias as possible.

Yesterday, in my shop, I had the last bit of evidence offered toward how to write a book. I looked on and applied to myself what was enacted before me. What befell was almost in the nature of a *fracas* between two customers who stood looking at a queer old print. After long gaze, said one of them: "This is very interesting. You will notice it relates to sun-worship. Look at this symbol here——"

"No, sir," the other interrupted. "It relates to phallic worship. That symbol is——"

The first cried out: "But it is obviously sun-worship! This sign here is of the sun's rays."

"Nonsense!" the other exclaimed. "Those are not sun-rays. They are shocks of life-force."

Where one saw a sun-dial, the other saw something else. Where one saw the symbol of the red flame of eternal light, the other saw the red flame of passion. Eventually I had to separate them.

What I have to do is to tell my story, and with these two cranks in mind I shall tell it as simply as possible. Arabesques and whorls, lightnings and convolutions are all very well to make a thin theme and paltry days seem a *tour de force* in the telling. I always suspect writers like Meredith and Carlyle of wishing to seem sages because of the violence they do to language. All life is so great and complex, and we such poor little figures struggling along in the jungle, that I must avoid hectoring, talk quietly; and I think the best beginning would be to tell how my father ate the sweetbreads shortly before we went for our holiday to Irvine.

CHAPTER I

LET me introduce the family sitting at table on that afternoon. My father, the Reverend Thomas Grey, D.D., sat at the head of the spotless linen-shrouded board, a massive man with twinkling eyes under a high forehead, across which swept one lock of hair from the cranium which was waning bald. He would at that time be about fifty years of age. His mouth gave an impression of being made of elastic; his face was florid, and to write of the whites of his eyes would be error, for the eyeballs were reddish gray, and a trifle prominent. He had a habit of dropping his head as he spoke and peering under his brows. His lips pursed tight, shut abruptly after speech, while the stare of his eyes continued.

On his right sat Mr. Smart from the *Weekly* — who was writing a series of articles for that journal under the inclusive heading of "Our Eminent Scottish Divines." Opposite to Mr. Smart sat Tom, recently down from Oxford, aged twenty-eight, promising his father's corpulence but his mother's son. His eyes always blinked when he was spoken to by any one of candid nature. Flick-flick-flick went the lids, so that we all sometimes wondered if he should go and consult an oculist, but mother always said: "Oh, no, I'm sure there is nothing wrong. It is just a mannerism. My brother Peter used to do

the same." He had come back from Oxford even less pleasant to my mind than before he left Glasgow. He laughed when there was nothing to laugh at. He seemed always to be hiding something. If mother or father asked him any question he would strike an attitude of listening, instead of just listening. On the smallest matters he seemed eager not to commit himself. The real man, whatever it was, was hidden behind extravagant gestures, and blinks, and almost incessant laughter. If mother asked him to fetch anything for her he would pose like a runner on a Grecian frieze and exclaim: "Ha! At once! I go—*mater*." It was not that he came back to us histrionic; it was not that he was stage-struck and play-acting. Mother would smile after him as she murmured: "Darling Tom," but father's gaze would follow the retreating figure from the frieze with eyes veiled under the frowning forehead, mouth twisted as the mouth of one in doubt.

Next to Mr. Smart sat Dick, who also frequently smiled, but his was a smile different from Tom's. He was a radiant youth, jolly. Often, too, he would sit with head thrown back and lids puckered, looking contentedly as if at nothing. He was just back (aged twenty-three) from Julien's *atelier* in Paris, and a year's painting in Italy. I don't know how he managed it, but his necktie was different from ours. Yet he wore just the ordinary kinds sometimes in a bow, sometimes in a sailor-knot; but always they looked what is called "jack-easy." I liked Dick as much as I failed to like Tom. To be touched by my eldest brother was abhorrent to me, and he had developed a habit of taking one's arm on all possible occasions.

Opposite to Dick I sat—I, Harold, aged then twenty years; and by my side sat Florence, two years my junior. Florence and Dick were my favourites. They were rather like each other in appearance and easy to get along with. Opposite to Florence, on mother's left (mother balancing father at the other end of the table) sat John (twenty-five), who had taken to writing as Dick to painting. "Most unexpected," mother always said. "Who would have believed that John was to be the scribe?" This because Tom, at Oxford, had had two volumes published by a local publisher, one of them called *Poems* and the other *Prose Studies*. They were supposed to be mystical and seemed to be a blend of wishy-washy and gross. At that period John was the much less self-assured of these two. If one came into his room when he was twisted up over the table, alternately lighting pipes and burning off the polish on the table by setting a lit cigarette on its edge, he never struck an attitude and cried: "*Avaunt!* I am employed upon a prose-study." Instead, he would say: "Oh, heavens, what a start you gave me! Push off, kid. I'm in the throes of one of my B efforts. Push off; there's a good lad."

Before mother he did not speak like that, not because he humbugged her, but because she was what she was—slender, graceful, very charmingly dressed always, and with an effect of alabaster. She inculcated in us a sense of her refinement and kinship with blue china. Despite all this brood she had kept her figure. The trail of her gown, the fall of her draperies I shall always be able to visualise with the greatest ease. To see her with head on one side, and hear her saying: "Oh, darling, I am so worried about

you," was enough to make us never let her hear us say B anything.

There they all are, then (all except Mary, Tom's senior by a year, married to a man who was then a lecturer at Glasgow), at table, and father is speaking after a brief rhetorical grace.

CHAPTER II

“NOW, Mr. Smart,” said my father, “I have here a selection to offer you. We are making you one of ourselves, you see. I have some cold mutton, mint sauce and a salad to accompany. There is also—well, I declare how beautifully it is arranged—a dish of macaroni.”

“Perhaps Mr. Smart will begin with the macaroni,” mother suggested. “There are hot plates for it.”

“Ah, so there are. How remiss! Some *macaroni au gratin*, Mr. Smart?”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Smart; and Mary Lennox, our dainty parlour-maid, inserted that beautiful hand of hers (that Dick’s gaze used always to pounce upon as it came forward to remove or to set down a dish), took up the plate, and gliding round to Mr. Smart, put it before him.

“Darling?” inquired my father, after serving his guest. Mother nodded and was also supplied with macaroni-cheese. In turn our names were announced, and in turn we responded: “Please, father.”

“Dear me,” he said suddenly. “Dear me! Now I have not——”

Anxiously mother craned forward, looking beautifully worried.

“Have you none left for yourself?” she asked.

Tom blinked and blinked, then grinned broadly,

and tried to catch Mary Lennox's eye, as always, to make her smile. Scarcely a change of expression was on her face, and what change there was, I thought, did not seem pro-Tom. She knew what he was doing, but if she was enough interested in us to have preferences she preferred my father to my eldest brother.

"Have mine, father," Florence and John offered together.

"No, thank you," said he. "And, you see, by taking no macaroni I do away with the handicapping that comes of serving you all. By the time the server comes to an end at this crowded table it is almost time to begin the round again. I renounce the macaroni and begin with."—he helped himself on a cold plate—"mutton."

"You don't care very much for macaroni at any rate, do you, *pater?*" asked Tom, sitting very erect, munching away and grinning.

"Mm?" said father, and showed the under part of his chin to Tom. There was no reply. "No, no," he said, as one realising what has been said after a moment of uncertainty. "No, not very much, Tom. It is wonderful," he continued, turning to his guest and interviewer, "how the mouths are filled. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is in a sense re-enacted daily. Our daily life is a miracle," and he meant it.

Mr. Smart, who, I believe, was a very clever young journalist from the beginning of his career, bowed and smiled. If my father was being wise his face could suggest appreciation of wisdom; if my father was being jocular without profanity—appreciation of the grave jocularly.

"I am at any rate in a position now," said father, "to speak of the cold mutton. I can recommend it. Will you have some?"

"There is ham and tongue," said mother. "And also some sweetbread pat——"

At the same moment father was saying: "Why, yes, of course. Ham and tongue. That's it, ham and tongue or cold mutton. I can speak for the mutton. Mutton, Mr. Smart? Good. It is delicious." Then round the table again went the inquiries: "Ham and tongue or mutton?"

We all chose mutton.

"Let me see," said father, "I feel hungry. The labourer, I think, is worthy of his hire, Mr. Smart. I must have some more to eat," and taking a fresh plate he helped himself to a sweetbread patty.

It was mother who first noticed that the young journalist had finished his cold meat. She nodded to father and murmured: "Mr. Smart, dear."

"Good gracious—how remiss I am!" father exclaimed. "Now please, do have some more. It is just a simple midday collation. Look here, I insist that you have a little ham and tongue. You must not ignore it."

"Perhaps Mr. Smart would like to try the sweetbreads," said mother with what I can best describe as a worried twist of her body as she drew erect and raised her head to look at the semicircle of ashets and platters at the table's service-end.

"Darling," replied my father, "Mr. Smart has a guid Scot's tongue in his heid. I am giving him his choice. If he wants a patty he will say so. Now, this ham and tongue is being neglected."

"Thank you," said Mr. Smart.

Tom did not wait to be asked; the moment father's raised chin, as he tilted his head to survey the state of our plates through his pince-nez, pointed at Tom, he said, with a note of challenge: "Sweetbreads, father."

"Na!" cried father. "For the fun of the thing we are going to return to ancient ways. You have spoken before being addressed, therefore I shall select for you. You will have ham and tongue. There, that is for Master Tom!"

Mother laughed nervously, and Mr. Smart pleasantly, and we all smiled like a silent chorus.

"John, you are ready, I see. What will you have?"

"I think by his face, *pater*," said Dick, "that he would like a sweetbread patty."

"Richard! John is able to speak for himself—he's not a child. He is already cultivating the art of expression. Now, John, some more mutton? *Mens sana in corpore sano*, you know. Stick to the one thing if you don't want indigestion to interfere——"

"A little more mutton," said John.

"Aw!" Tom snorted, as one disgruntled.

"All again replenished?" asked father, glancing round the table—and then helped himself to more sweetbreads. Suddenly he noticed that I was finished. "Harold?" he said.

I thought that mother was in some trepidation lest Mr. Smart should notice how the sweetbread patties were being devoured. He did not look as if he had seen, but a good journalist would both see and look as if he had not. Still, good journalists do not sit in judgment; they take the world as they find it.

"Perhaps Harold would like a patty," said mother.

"*Place aux dames,*" said my father. "Florence may care for the last one."

Florence not only ate slowly but moved slowly, raised her fork slowly, cut with a pensive deliberation.

"No, thank you," she said, looking up.

"But you are not ready," father pointed out. "You may want it later. Have something else, Harold, my boy, in case Florence . . . look, now that's very tasty, ham and tongue. Oh, dear me, Mr. Smart, you have no wine. A little light wine?" My plate went and returned as he spoke. "I think the French are very sensible in their . . ."

He fell into a causerie that lasted till Florence set down knife and fork close together, and Tom and I, who had been waiting for that, said in duet: "Florence, father!"

"Now a little more mutton," said father. "It is more sustaining than anything else on the table. I don't think ham and tongue is at all the diet for a young lady just ceased growing, do you, Mr. Smart?"

"How about the patty?" said Dick.

"Well, as a matter of fact——" Florence began, then paused. "I would rather have a little more mutton," she said.

"There!" cried father. "Now, mother? No more? Sure? Ah, well, then, I think it is a shame to leave that sweetbread patty. Seeing nobody else wants it . . ." and he lifted it from the dish on to his own plate.

Having eaten with great relish, and such a

thoughtful manner as one may see on the face of wine or tea-taster, he tapped the empty dish with his fork.

"I am very partial to sweetbreads, Mr. Smart," he said.

"Oh, indeed?" replied Smart. "So am I."

"No! Why did you not tell me? Dear, dear. Darling, do you think there is another patty in the kitchen? Might not Mary ask cook . . ."

"Please, no," said Mr. Smart. "Not to-day. I merely meant I understand the taste. I preferred the other. No, no."

"Quite certain? Oh, very well—don't trouble, Mary. I'm sorry you did not have one, though. They were wonderful! I confess—what, darling? Yes, yes, a little more wine, Mr. Smart? Yes, I'm sorry no one cared even to help finish the sweetbread patties."

CHAPTER III

I DO not think Mr. Smart was any more snobbish than the average, but he had a view of what the public must know. Little asides that my mother had dropped in conversation, and that my father had announced in smiling and tolerant fashion, filled the opening paragraphs of the interview. "Eminent Scottish Divines, No. 4: The Rev. Thomas Grey, M.A., D.D.", told of how the Rev. Thomas Grey, D.D., was grandson of Sir John Grey of Lanark-Mains, that he was educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford, that in the year So-and-So he was commanded to preach before Her Majesty Queen Victoria at Balmoral, and that he married Sybil Clouston, whose great-aunt was Euphemia Clouston (the "Phemy" of Robert Burns' *Lines to 'Phemy*), a lady who kept open house to litterati of her day in the Scottish capital.

That article assisted toward that sense of prestige that gave to my father a genial, and to my mother a stately, complacency. Mr. Smart commented on the Rev. Thomas Grey's largeness of heart, stating that he had been honoured to sit at meat with him and see his large humanity, to come in touch with his genial and warm nature. My father never talked much about having preached to Queen Victoria at Balmoral, but it did have an effect upon his bearing—I think as much because of the way people looked on him, due to the distinction, as because of the way

he looked upon it. If a man is constantly being kow-towed to, it is only human nature that he will come to adopt easily one of two attitudes—either that of administering a kick, or one like a figure of Buddha. Now I come to think of it, my father did look somewhat like a Buddha, but his eyes were often abrim with geniality. Any one could hazard the guess, seeing him walk down a station platform, that he had preached to somebody in his day. That he had “married money” (the father who was not mentioned in the interview had spent the fortune of the grandfather who was) we need not throw in his face, for the grand-niece of Euphemia had married less Tom Grey without canonicals than the divine who had preached at Balmoral by special command. I think they were very well matched. He had an oddly deferential air to everybody, as well as that air to which I refer, of sanctified and comfortable importance. Halt him in his stride down the station platform and the hint of bombast fell from him, gave place to a large courtesy. He treated every man he met as though he, too, had preached to Queen Victoria and was not unduly puffed up about it. Only those will think I am merely jeering who have utterly escaped from a society of mock-sentiment and false gods. I think it is better to be a false god in a big easy fashion than to be of those who kow-tow to the false gods. My father had chosen (as I see it, looking back on him) the better part; and he was genial. Of course there was doubtless a third choice—there often is when we think there are only two—he might have chosen not to be a parson. I know that this air of geniality is discoverable in many selfish men.

Of his humbug I would say it was not of the devastating order. In Tom, who inherited it (or, perhaps, I should say, imitated it, for Tom was a good deal of a Clouston) it was otherwise. My father's humbug merely kept himself on his own perch. People used to smile at it and say: "Oh, he's not a bad old sort!" I think the main fault was that he was a parson. Had he been a farmer, tilling the acres of Lanark-Mains, and attending the local agricultural fairs in tweeds, with a cigar a-tilt under a reddening nose, no one would have chuckled profanely over him at all.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. SMART wanted a photograph from which to have a clay block made to accompany the interview, but none of the portraits father had pleased him.

"He says they are not me," said my father. "I suppose the article will have to appear without a cut, for tomorrow we go to Irvine."

After all, a portrait did accompany the article. I often wish my father could have been photographed by Hill, or lived long enough to be photographed by Coburn. Still, the portrait by MacPherson, some time of Irvine, is wonderful enough. I can't think how, when I wanted a picture of him years later, I forgot MacPherson's.

Father had chartered an entire flat of the Galloway Inn in the High Street of that gray and gold seaport on the firth. I recall how we arrived after night had fallen and drove thither in the hotel-bus from the station, so that my first impression was of a rattling of wheels on cobbles, the racket of loose windows, rows of gas-lamps in a fresh blue night, a twist of river, a graceful steeple against the stars through the door at rear of the little conveyance, framed and lost again, framed there as we waggled along. There was a cobbled entry down which we walked, with an upright parallelogram of dark blue sky at its end, and a star or two behind a tree that

was more a rustling than a vision. But we did not go to the entry's end; half-way along it we descended three steps into the inn. (Years later, when I returned there, I was aware of a change; guests walked straight into the hall instead of going down these steps.) What the illuminant was I forget. Perhaps gas was installed indoors, as well as on the streets, but the picture I have suggests a hanging lamp in the settled entrance. There was a lit table in a room where a repast awaited us. There was an over-mantel with mirrors in it, and crude vases in the brackets, and the wallpaper was wildly flowered. That was a modernised room; most of the others were dusky-panelled. I am not of those who must live with plain walls and one etching and one blue bowl, or else go into paroxysms. I like white paint and a Toby jug; but also I like conventionalised designs that turn into faces as one looks, and a multitude of aimless dishes with a coat of arms on them. The main thing is that the sun-rays can come in and move across the wall.

In bed at night I heard feet going past under the windows, and wondered what the town was like. Feet going past, the sound of footsteps—all life is in these words. Well did I get to love that little town. I suppose as I write now, this evening, the rooks are flying home to their trees in the Eglinton policies, after feeding down by the shore—cawing home over the roofs. But as to the photograph (and a truce to talk of these things which interest and inveigle me away from the interests of the majority of men and maidens—that is if my brother John is right in his view of what the public wants) I must tell how, on the morning of the day after our arrival,

a local photographer left a note for my father, informing him that he had read of his advent in the local paper, and that he would be immensely honoured if he might have a sun-record on one of his sensitive plates of so eminent a divine. With his jolly laugh, father handed the note to mother, who read it aloud.

"That is very pleasing," she said. "The poor man! You will, of course, give him a sitting. He says he will call here if you care or if you would honour him by visiting his studio—how very nice! If he does you justice it will be in time for Mr. Smart's article."

"Perhaps I shall drop in at his studio in passing," my father replied negligently.

"It would be nice of you," said mother.

"Some time, when passing," he repeated. "There is no hurry."

Breakfast being over, he put on his hat and went out into the hotel garden in his slippers, strolling round there grandly among the gooseberry bushes. I followed him, along the last half of cobbled-entry or "close," prying about in the garden and the rambling place, which was a couple of centuries old. From an alley at the back I looked into the dusk of the kitchen, where swirled the odour of porridge, of bacon and eggs of kidneys a-cooking. At the door I halted, and stood watching a slatternly yet wildly handsome girl, who assisted the cask-like and fussy old cook, as she broke an egg with a tap against the side of a frying-pan. I saw it spread white, the yellow yoke sputtering in the centre. It is a trifling detail, but I see it all so clearly that I must put it down, not to pad my book, but because I like that

picture of the dancing egg. Across the years I see that dusky interior and the eggs in the sputtering fat—so they dance here in my one book, the book of my life.

And the cock-crow, too, to rear of the hotel! That sound led the way for me, after my father. The rooster was beyond him, at the far end of the garden, and after it had crowed many times it strutted to a bush, tilting its head to look up at it, then—with neck still awry—bounced up, legs stiffened, and plucked at a gooseberry. My father stood looking down at it and chuckling to himself. As I drew near he said,—

“Now you see the auld Scots phrase: ‘Like a cock at a grozet!’ being enacted before you. Yes, ‘like a cock at a grozet.’ Simile. Folk-imagination. Folk-observation. H’m. Now, on holiday—a morning smoke, an after breakfast smoke on holiday.”

He clapped his pockets and produced an empty pouch.

“Well, well, we’ll stroll out and get some fresh tobacco,” he said. “Dear old town, Harold, dear old town.”

We went in for our boots, and found that Dick and John had already set off for a day’s tramp. Tom was writing letters in the commercial room downstairs, attracted by the hotel notepaper protruding from a rack. We saw his back as we mounted the stairs to our especial flight—where we found mother talking to the proprietor’s wife, who stood in the doorway of the sitting-room; and Florence, with her eyebrows up among her hair, her eyes very wide open, sat listening on the curved seat of the projecting window. The expression on her face was of not

understanding, and of wondering—wondering what was wrong with her that she could not understand. That was Florence all over in those days; when she failed to understand, she wondered what was wrong with herself! We were in many ways a diversified family. With Tom it was all otherwise: when he did not agree with anything he heard he was sure he was right, and said: "Rubbish!"

Astern of father, our boots on, I descended the stairs again, and so we came into the broad High street with the sun on the pavements, and on the cobbles, and on the tufts of grass that, on either side, thrust up raggedly between the stones. I looked to and fro in the street, and how shall I express it? I think I may say I loved that street. Houses, bricks, knockers of brass and iron—knockers like laurel wreathes, knockers of lion's heads—door handles shining on the one side and just bright on the other, windows flush with the walls, windows a little projecting, windows a little withdrawn, the brass plates of a doctor, of a dentist, perhaps of a veterinary surgeon, farther along, on a gate of a house with stables at its side, roofs high and roofs low, all higgledly-piggledy, slate roofs and tiled roofs, and here and there a cottage wedged in between tall, newer houses: how can one feel a love at first sight, and a sense of having loved before, for such inanimate objects? The sight of the little old cottages between houses only elderly, and houses comparatively new, reminded me of a game we used to play at the school I had recently left. It was called Shove Up. A row of us would sit down on a form till all the space was occupied; then a boy would charge at one end and clamp himself down there.

The row would squirm and heave. Sometimes three or four boys would be thrust up in air together like a Siamese triplet or quartette. "Shove up!" we would shout. I wonder where they all are now. Every now and then some town committee shouts: "Shove up!" and out goes one of the old houses, without any stir along the string. But that does not often happen, for when the old houses can be made sanitary, they remain. That street in Irvine, even to-day, is very much not only as I saw it all those years ago, when I was twenty, going out with father to locate the photographer's while buying tobacco, but very much as it was in the days of our grandfathers and grandmothers, with their stocks and crinolines, as any one can verify by looking at the old print in the Town Hall.

The tobacconist's shop had a bulging window like a great glass tun, or barrel, with the staves left on; and there was a wooden effigy of a Highlander taking snuff to one side of the doorway. Studiously, meditatively, my father discussed tobacco with the shopman, as though here were his first attempt; and in the end bought a tin of the brand he usually smoked. This solemn ritual over, we came out again, and he beamed on the street once more, much as I have seen him beam upon mothers and babies at a christening service, but with more sincerity.

"Dear old town," he said again. "What's that shop over there, Harold? Why, yes, it's the photographer's!"

It also had a protruding window, though not curved like the tobacconist's. The photographer's window projected about a foot from the wall, and the panes of glass in it were none of them, perhaps

needless to say, of bottle-glass with the mark of the blowing in them.

"Let's go and look at it," said my father.

As we strolled across the broad street, a dark little man, about John's age, with long hair, came fussing out of the place and stood looking at his own window, plunged in again and moved all the specimens of his art an inch to one side, then plunged out again, very tense, his hair fluttering up a moment in the speed of his motion like a lapwing's crest.

"Obviously an artist," my father growled in his deep voice, and, glancing at him, I saw little puckers of mirth on his cheek.

As we drew near behind the photographer, that spasmodic young man clutched his right elbow with his left hand in a sudden jerky movement that jerked his right hand to his chin, which he held fiercely. He gathered himself together, humped his narrow alert shoulders, all intent either upon his display or on the reflection of our progress across the street. Next moment he had whisked indoors and drawn the green curtain along the rail behind the exhibition of photographs.

Arrived at the pavement, we stood and gazed at his display. In the centre of the window was the portrait of a lady (the provost's wife, we heard later) smiling in a phaeton. To left was a photograph of a gentleman in a frock coat, with chains of office hanging round his neck—the provost; to right was a picture of the Burns' statue at Ayr. These were the dominant and large pieces, and in a semi-circle before them were presentments of his clients, singly, in full length, in profile, or looking over the shoulder—a study of cheek, nose-tip, and drooping

eye-corner. Set as it were in a little slot, looking up the street, in the projecting part of the window, was a picture of Burns' cottage at Maybole. My father having looked at this, stepped to the window's other end, beside the door, curious to see what balanced Burns there. It was a photograph, apparently taken without command, of Queen Victoria smiling from a carriage.

"A speaking likeness," said my father. "A speaking likeness. I must have a copy of this. Your mother would be delighted with it. A speaking likeness," and he entered the shop.

Suddenly before us, bowing like a dancing master, was Mr. MacPherson.

"Good-morning, sir," he said.

"Good-morning," replied my father. "I wish to have a copy of this photograph of Her Majesty that you have in the side of the window."

"Of Queen Victoria, sir?" said Mr. MacPherson. "Or Dr. Grey, I should say, I think?"

"Why, yes," said my father smiling.

"Well, to be frank, I have it there more as a specimen of my art than for sale. I was able to get it at the procession in Glasgow. If you like it, perhaps you will allow me to present you with a copy."

"Oh, no, no. The fact is, I thought it a speaking likeness."

The photographer bowed.

"You have seen Her Majesty," he said, but without interrogative inflection. It might have been a statement.

"Yes, yes," said father in an off-hand fashion that to one who knew him had an edge of irritation.

"I, of course, only saw her as a layman, and feel greatly honoured you should say what you do of it," MacPherson responded, bowing again. "I have never sold any copies of it. Allow me to send you one."

"Well--well, thank you. My wife would like it. I have often told her of Queen Victoria's smile. That"—he raised his hand, pointed at the window-corner, and kept the hand in air—"recalls so vividly to me the day that I talked with her at Balmoral, looking out over the purple heather, and she asked me my opinion on various ecclesiastical movements of the time. A charming smile!"

"I hope, sir," said Mr. MacPherson, "that you will not consider it *lèse majesté* if I say it, but it is my sincere feeling that I would be more honoured to photograph intellect than pedigree. You received my letter?"

"Wonderfully put," my father rumbled at him. "I think we can all retain our admiration for royalty and yet realise that there are other seats besides thrones." He seemed to feel that he was not talking very well, the matter inferior to the manner. He puckered his lips and frowned. "Yes, I had your letter," he said, "I won't forget. Some day, when I am passing, I shall look in."

"Why not now, sir? Some day you may only be passing—this morning you are here. *Une belle occasion, sir.*"

My father laughed.

"Really, you deserve to have your request granted," he said. "You have a mighty inveigling way with you, young man. But, you know, I am afraid of the camera. I think there must be a humble streak

in me somewhere. Perhaps, though, if I go away now, it will be hard to get me back. Let us get it over."

MacPherson whisked round and drew the curtain that hung over a door at the end of the shop.

"Please step this way, sir," said he.

I waited until they returned. My father looked large and majestic as he came into view again, the camera-artist at his side, heels together, bending from the waist as he held back the curtain.

"Oh, no, please, no fee!" he was saying. "Allow me to send you proofs. If you care for any I shall be very happy. I am an artist. I do not look on this commercially. It is different with ordinary clients. All I would ask is that you let me know which ones you prefer. I have frequently requests for portraits of well-known people—the provost—our divines. I am enough of an artist to wish to have worthy presentments of any eminent person who may visit this town—to record them."

"'To record them' is good," said my father. "There is something in that, though of course I am afraid that I—in the vernacular—am no 'great catch' for you."

He smiled down in Mr. MacPherson's eyes, and Mr. MacPherson twinkled back at him.

"You are too humble," MacPherson declared. "I always find that humility accompanies merit." He stepped to the outer door, opened it, and I had a feeling that he was done with my eminent father, dismissing him.

"I wish you success," said father. "I am sure that you are cut out for success. You have commercial acumen—commercial acumen—you are an egregious

flatterer, sir, and flattery is the way to success in life."

Mr. MacPherson, bowing us out, looked very serious and said nothing. Laughing gaily, my father stepped out into the street, and I followed, the photographer giving me a bow exactly one-third the depth of the bow he gave to father.

"Don't tell your mother about this," said the Old Man as we strolled home. "Let them come as a surprise to her."

But over lunch he had to tell of the visit himself after all. He was thinking of it all forenoon.

"A most astounding little fellow," he said. "He's the first photographer I've ever heard of who takes one naturally. He did not put my head in a vice, did not even suggest that I should brush my hair. I just stood and talked to him!"

(The photographs are known to all those who possess the two volumes of my father's letters, in which—by the mere accident that Dick came upon them when the collection was preparing for press—they appear.)

A few days later the proofs arrived, and there is no doubt that they were excellent. To my mind they are as good as any of the photographs taken by Carl Ferzon in Bond Street to-day of people (I must pocket family pride and confess it) more eminent by far. I never see that exquisite rubric, "Camera-portrait by Carl Ferzon," but I recall the shop in the High Street of Irvine, and that projecting window, and letters like writing instead of print over the door: "Charles MacPherson. Sun Portraits." Even then he was on the first rung of the ladder, at the top of which he now sits. But he cannot draw

the ladder up after him. He has his imitators. Let him invent something new for a sitter to hold in hand, or to gaze at, and next week in half a dozen other studios of London are replicas of the thing to be gazed at or held. The air of importance, of being somebody, is in all his photographs.

My father ordered half a dozen of each, and then one day he came in from a solitary walk and held a long discussion with my mother.

"I say," said he, "that man MacPherson has put my photographs in his window. He has one on either side, one looking up and one looking down the street. What do you think I should do about it?"

"In what way?" she asked.

"How does it strike you?" he inquired.

"You think he should have obtained your permission?"

"I just wondered about it. I must say they look very well."

"Which ones are they?" mother asked

Father posed before her.

"That one," he said. He posed again. "And that one."

"Oh, but they are very good," said she.

"You don't think it looks as if I was seeking publicity in the town?"

"I—don't—think—so," she replied slowly. "No, I don't think anybody would think that."

"Ah! You don't think anybody would think so?"

"No."

"Well, that's good. That's all I was doubtful about. And, of course . . ." he pondered. "Support local industries, you know, and that sort of thing. I dare say it may help the fellow to have my portrait

in his window. It might be more charitable of me—more broad-minded—not to suggest to him to take them out.”

“I would say nothing,” my mother advised.

“Quite,” he responded. “That is if you are sure that people won’t think——”

“There are other photographs in the window,” mother said.

“Yes, yes,” said he, and gloomed. “Yes, quite—so there are.”

Mr. Macpherson had somehow invented a new pose for the Old Man. I think the latter must have been moving slowly to and fro, so that the photographer saw what was less a pose than a movement. One of the portraits was certainly remarkable; it showed my father in one of his attitudes that became familiar, typical, and, I believe, greatly helped towards his receiving a call from America. The right hand clutched the lapel of his coat (in the pulpit he thus clutched his gown), the head was raised leonine. That raising of head, that clutching of coat or gown, had always been natural to him, but MacPherson’s photograph gave him a cant forward with the left hand flung back. It was a picture worthy of John Hill. Every one who looked at it—except the proprietor’s wife at the hotel—said: “Oh, that’s remarkable!” She was a foolish woman, and when she saw it, said: “I don’t like that one so well. It looks as if he had moved or was stopped in a step listening for burglars or something,” and she crackled a laugh. To me the portrait was what is called alive.

But my father began at that period to stand so in the pulpit, to accentuate the forward cant. Two

deacons from America, touring Britain in search of a live clergyman for their new edifice, were certainly in the church on the day that he preached that wonderful sermon of his into which came the words: "We can imagine with what a rush the Israelites came down into the valley—as a wave breaking." as he spoke he threw forward one knee, thus tightening the silk robe, and at "with what a rush" he swept the palm of his right hand along the tightened silk so that the "Sssh" of it, like an echo of the sea, went round the walls, up among the overhead fretwork. The end of the movement was an upward swing of the hand almost to the shoulder; then, grasping the gown again, he stood tilted forward, paused, listening to the rush of the Israelites passing away beyond the last rafters. The audience—or congregation—sat tense as at a play by Maeterlinck, whose harp is of the one string, the string of fear. It was moving. I heard him preach that sermon in Glasgow, in Edinburgh, in Irvine—and always I waited for that part with tensity. Those Israelites, in their way, were splendid. I remember when I saw Beerbohm Tree act, years later, I thought of my father. Beerbohm Tree in canonicals was what those Americans wanted. They "called" my father. Non-committal, but courteous, he replied, and they then called on him; and he told them that he would, with pleasure, come to preach to them one summer when he took a long vacation, but not with a view to giving up his charge in Glasgow, only in a brotherly way.

This is the first time I have done what novelists call "anticipating." Let us get back to Irvine.

CHAPTER V

I DO not like to think that the sense of kinship with Irvine, of the place being there to await my coming as though the coming were a return, is a bit of cumulative evidence toward a theory of reincarnation. Remember, you who would say it is, the story I told of the two cranks in my shop, one seeing phallic-worship everywhere and the other sun-worship. I am as ready to believe that some other person, dead and gone from this world, used my eyes to see it again, followed me about, tapping my impressions, as that I had been there before in some forgotten prior existence. That is as feasible an explanation as the reincarnation one, though I expect they are both wide of the mark.

With the second possibility I like to toy occasionally, considering how two or three generations back my mother's people had lived there. The Cloustons were Ayrshire people, and that was why Euphemia Clouston opened her doors to Robert Burns when he went to Edinburgh while she lived there, wife of a writer to the signet. My great-grandfather, on her side, was educated at Ayr High School, and my grandfather at Irvine Academy. Reincarnation? Not necessarily; and hardly will the spirit follow the one flesh through generations. Is it telepathy from the world after this, where our dead go? It need not even be that. The feeling of loving Irvine at

first sight may only have come from my fondness in boyhood for poring over old books. I must have seen, casually, innumerable luring prints of just such old towns, innumerable steel engravings of just such an old school—the low buildings, the pillared portico, the playing-ground. On my first London visit, when I went down to the Thames and saw the barges on the river, and the men atilt, foot on hatch-edge, springing back with the sweeps, I had something of the same emotion, but alertly realised that I was seeing before me, in actuality, merely that folding canvas delight, souvenir of the Great Exhibition, part of my mother's "truck," called "Panorama of the Thames."

All this I write to let you know in what manner the town came into my heart; and it is not out of place in my narrative, as what is to follow anon will show. Those were happy days. Dick, who was then lost in the coloured world of the Impressionists and carried about with him, wherever he went, a copy of a charcoal portrait of Claude Monet, had several paintings in course of completion. His theory (the theory of those who spoke what he found truth), was that to sit at one place all day, painting one scene, is idiocy, because all day the light is changing, always the world is rolling round. A scene is never the same from hour to hour. And the weather changes, too. He had a canvas of a corner in Lady Eglinton's policies, a canvas of slanting sun in a wood, the tree-shadows all running out attenuated across a field. Seven in the morning was the time to sit down on his camp-stool to that, and at eight he packed up, came home, washed the smell of "turps" away, and appeared radiant at breakfast. He had

two paintings of the Isle of Arran from the Irvine shore, one of sunset and another of storm, and I know not how many pictures he had of the stretch of bents to north of Irvine on the firth side, some with the tide far out, some with the waves curving and leaping inland. They were all records of transient mornings, brief noons, lingering afternoons, ebbing evenings.

I liked Dick because he had interests. I disliked Tom because he had only argumentation. Not only was he one thing to-day and another to-morrow, but in one single conversation he was like a flea, bobbing this way and that for the joy of deriding. To make a mock of you he would change his base half a dozen times in a quarter of an hour, and when he could not prove you wrong in what you said he would roar with laughter as though he had been witty and had to laugh at his own brilliance. I was not sorry when his short holiday ended and he went back to Glasgow, to continue learning all about bookselling from Mr. Alexander Street, who was, otherwise, Messrs. Street and Rhodes, Booksellers, Renfield Street. Tom's affairs were held sacred, not discussed by the family, but it was generally understood that this preliminary education over, he was to become a partner in the firm.

For me, I have had much that I desire, but I am not exactly "master of my fate," otherwise I don't think I would ever have gone into partnership with Tom in the adventure of Grey's Select Library, which came later. I protected myself from him with something in the nature of taciturnity as carefully as he hid himself from us all with his laughter, his extreme gestures, his blinking. I dared not even tell

him, for example, that I liked Irvine, or he would have made some unpleasant jest about the place. He had already invented an obscene limerick on it:—

“There was a young lady of Irvine
Who . . .”

He came down from Oxford, the Oxford of that beautiful passage of Newman's (by which he will live in anthologies, despite his weakness and need to lean) about the snapdragon on the wall, the Oxford of Matthew Arnold who wrote “The Scholar Gipsy” and “Thyrsis,” with nothing, it seemed, except a great store of limericks. Not a town could one mention in talk but a silly smile suffused his face, and on the first convenient moment, when the visitors or the elders were gone, he would out with it and whoop with joy.

After a course of Tom we would all want to go for a swim, but even to do that, if he came too, was not altogether refreshing. Even tolerant John called him “a dirty dog.” He would pass comments on the boys who splashed about on the beach, and if he saw us stealing glances at the girls he would shout: “You lecherous bounder, Dick (or John, or Harold). Oh, you lecherous bounder!” and then would follow his roaring mirth. But girls with drenched hair, in dripping bathing-costumes, with bare calves and flat sand-shoes, I never found subjects for lechery. Dick we always looked upon as apart in these matters, for he had drawn and painted from the nude for some years—old men, boys and maidens. Still, it was over some such twittering or jeering of Tom's that Dick lost his temper there on the shore. Tom tried to pretend he had only been joking, but—

"Fun or no fun, you dirty dog, stand up and let me punch you!" said Dick.

"What you want is a larruping," replied Tom, rushing at him.

"But I'm not going to get it!" said Dick, and as Tom charged at him out went his left arm rigid and met the other's nose.

The blood flew. Tom leapt on Dick, who ducked, and delivered another blow an inch lower down, but slipping on a wet stone, he fell, thus giving Tom the opportunity to "larrup" him. The moment he desisted, up leapt Dick and brought his fist up so quickly that the movement was a mere flicker in the sun. The blow caught my elder brother under the chin, sent him staggering back, and before he could recover, Dick made a lunge forward, made a jab at his jaw that deflected him again, and crashed him down sideways. Looking up, we saw father coming over the sand-dunes. He halted, stared, turned and walked rapidly away. I remember feeling a very great respect for Art Students, though I might have known Dick could look after himself from a story or two he had recited, without any braggadocio, of brawls in Montmartre with specimens of the genus *Apache*.

When we got home, mother was in bed in a sad state over Tom's lip, which was horribly swollen. She wanted to know all about it, but dad said: "Ask no questions of belligerent youth, darling, and there will be no prevarications."

"But Tom would not lie," she ejaculated.

"That is all right, my dear," said he. "Young men will have their little squabbles and settle them in the ancient way. That's right, isn't it, Tom?"

Tom inclined his head.

"That's right, *pater*," he agreed pleasantly.

Tom's mania was what is called the "unpleasant." If any of us expressed dislike for a novel, he immediately jumped to the conclusion that the dislike meant it was pornographic, and would rush off for a copy. If ever he extolled a book, we knew that, whatever its merits, or demerits, it would contain some reference to incest or some one-sidedly realistic description of taking a dog for a walk. And, as he would say, "Why not?" We could none of us understand why he was so definitely mother's favourite. Father was doubtful of him; we were sure of that by the way he used to brood gloomily after talks with Tom; but mother pampered and adored him. His favourite reading matter was Rabelais. "It is the greatest book in the world," he used to declare. "Those who can't enjoy it are prudes and puritans and prigs."

He had another row with Dick, to whom he said that once, for Dick replied: "All you say about Rabelais may be true, my friend, but I know one of his admirers who looks to me damned unhealthy. An intolerant Rabelaisian! I wonder what Rabelais would think of you. You only understand the heel-taps, the swipes of Rabelais, anyhow! The fact that you call those who are bored by him "prudes" shows all that you find in him. It is the centralisation of your mind that gives me the hump. If I kept telling you funny stories about nothing but my little finger you'd think I was dotty. I think you are dotty."

John and I moved off. It was an unwritten code amongst us that, when the view of one was opposed by the other three, the two who were not talking

"pushed off," as we used to say. Perhaps we did so as men fleeing from temptation.

In those far off days, John was almost as greatly devoted to his craft of words as Dick to that of pigments. Always he carried a notebook in his pocket, in which to get down, as nigh to exactitude as he knew, scenes observed and, I presume, by the grim and pensive look on his face at times, emotions felt. It was not till long after these prentice days that he exorcised his literary conscience and wrote mainly with dreams of yachts or saloon berths on P. and O. liners, of a reserved table at the Berkeley, of being everywhere "in the season"—London, Switzerland, Cairo—at the back of his mind. As Tom would say, "Why not?" And though, personally, I prefer his first books, the later ones are the big sellers. I always got along well and quietly with him. We accepted each other with occasional exercise of "give and take." I do not think he deserved what befell him later. He was a little touched with insincerity—or, perhaps, I should say (as I don't know that insincerity is the right word) that to-night with all his heart he might plan some good deed, and on the morrow forget. He was very sensitive, came not to be able to brook a word of adverse criticism, but we got along well. He was never a humbug in private life.

But Dick was my favourite; he was nowhere a humbug. A bit of a humbug myself at times, I take off my hat to Dick. We have on our walls to-day one of his Irvine pictures, though I often feel we should offer to give it back to him: a picture of an old house there that cast a great spell on me. Somehow or other, not by any trick, I am sure, but by see-

ing and practising how to portray, he has got a personality into his canvas, and it is the personality I also tapped in the house. A straight, flagged walk, with stone-crop bordering it, from gate to door; and then the door (dark blue, with double panels ending in two curves, and with a bright blob of handle, shining circle of knocker), beyond two broad and shallow steps, set back between slender pillars holding up the porch; a gray-blue front with sunset reflected in the windows and a twisted thorn tree making a shadowy design over half the wall: that is the picture, in my drab words.

It was in this house that there lived old family friends of the Cloustons, my mother's people: a lady, more than elderly in those distant days (she would be going on for eighty at the time of that far-off visit), Mrs. Stroyan, and her orphan grand-daughter, Marjory. Marjory's father was Peter Stroyan, Irvine born, the well-known Glasgow shipper, who had a fleet of clipper barques in the South American west-coast trade. The fourteenth was launched a week before he died.

Old Mrs. Stroyan was not religious, or perhaps I should say not devout; and I believe that was why my father liked her. She made him laugh with more genuine gusto than anybody. She had a way of drawing her aged head backwards and exclaiming: "Pshaw!" in the middle of some story she was recounting, that would send his head back too—but to laugh joyously. And to say he was laughing at her would be untrue. She delighted him. That, now I come to think of it, was very much my attitude to him in those days. These Irvine days I recall very clearly. I think I probably saw more of him there—

at least during the first month of our stay—than I saw at home.

Sometimes Mrs. Stroyan would turn to the Scots for force, and, discarding her "Pshaw!" give us a rolling "Ha-vers!" In moments of extreme disgust her eyes would close, to finish the gesture of disdain. I think father often brought forward for discussion subjects on which he knew she held definite views just for the joy of noting her vigour. Mock-sentiment, superstitions, the inculcation, by parents, of devotion to parents, the gravity of dying unbaptised, subscribing to the Chinese mission—these were some of the themes I remember as leading to that crescendo: "Ha-vers!" She prided herself on seeing clearly without spurious emotion, and was constantly being imposed upon by mendicants and people with tales of woe, doling out aid to them. Let anybody come to her with a plea for some one in financial difficulties, and she would say: "No, not a farthing! I know these stories! *I* have had experience." Next day she would be at her door, listening to some sad account of poverty, fingers in her long, knitted purse with the silver bands round it. At times she had a way of turning all into argument. Her manner would be as for combat over the question of whether the wind blew south or south-west, whether some one, mentioned in a gossip of old friends was married in the spring or the autumn, whether the cat on the hearth was of the same litter as the kitten given to the linen-draper to keep down his mice, or of the litter before. She believed herself a great authority on the family histories of Scotland. On occasions when any one mentioned a family, and glibly began, for example, in this fashion: "His older brother

held the chair of divinity in Edinburgh," she would bridle and say: "No, not Edinburgh—in Aberdeen," and forth would come floods of evidence.

My father managed her splendidly. He was, I noticed, a deal of a diplomat. He would always commence such talk with: "I believe I am right in saying—but you will be able to correct me if I am wrong—that So-and-So, of whom I have a story to tell, held the chair of divinity in—now, was it Edinburgh or Aberdeen?"

"Aberdeen," she would reply, and then hastily: "But don't take my word. I may be wrong. Still, no matter. Let us have the story."

She liked to see us eat a good meal; plumed herself on being without narrowness.

"Do you smoke? How old are you?" she fired off at Dick and me one day when we were there alone, after she had looked at us as one looks at a person who seems restless.

"Yes. Twenty," said I.

"Yes. Twenty-three," said Dick, beaming.

"Um. Well, smoke if you want to. Never do anything in secret that you can't do openly."

Marjory looked at us both and smiled pleasantly. At first I thought she disliked me; and I found her a touch queer for a young girl. In those days it did not occur to me that perhaps she had been subdued by the early loss of both father and mother. Her long silences, with eyes wide open and air as of conjecturing, had been wont to worry me when she stayed with us in Glasgow while visiting that city. She seemed a sphinx-like, almost uncanny, kid. By the time of this holiday in Irvine I got on comfortably with her. I think she must have been shy with us in

Glasgow. The ways of most women with men, in my experience, is that if they dislike a man they will contradict him on all occasions, even to seeing black as white; similarly, if they wish to prove intelligence, they will argue, not really about what he talks of, but in a side-slipping fashion, so that to a third party listening there comes the desire to say: "Oh, don't go on talking, man. She doesn't understand what you say, but she wishes you to admire her reasoning power!" If they like a man (unless they like him very genuinely, not only like his liking for them) they will say to him just what they think he wants to hear—the way brother John now writes his novels for what he has reasoned out as the essential public. Like John, they sometimes make errors, but like John, they swing back again charmingly into place.

At Irvine I felt much more at ease with Marjory. She was brighter. I never found her looking at me inexplicably sideways with a precocious quiet. Her precocious quiet had changed to a young stateliness. I refer to her thus as I recall her indoors. Out of doors, when we were beyond the town, among the sand-dunes, she ran with us like a deer and laughed and glowed. Marjory has always been different to me from women as I have just generalised on them! In her case, after the first diffidence at Glasgow, seeing her again in Irvine, it became clear that a bit of her was really like a bit of me. We would never play-act one to the other; and if we disagreed on any subject, that similarity behind, a big, mysterious similarity, prevented altercation taking the place of pretence.

The first month of our holiday fled. Out in the garden one night, early in the second, looking across

at the river lapsing along for the last twists past the gray-green links to the sea, she said suddenly: "How queer, Harold, to think that a hundred years to come it will be snaking down like that and I won't be here."

The same obvious thought had been in my mind (for it is not precocious to think thus in the late 'teens, but very usual. Was it not André Lang who said something to the effect that the verses of all youthful poets are to the title of *Alas?*), but I had not voiced it. She spoke only for herself; it was "I," not "we," she said. Even the most cynical, as the word is used, could not have asked her if she was weaving nets. It was that trite remark that made Marjory Stroyan seem a human being to me instead of just a girl that I had been unable to understand, and then had come to like without understanding.

CHAPTER VI

WHILE we were in Irvine my father preached for the Rev. Henry Dalziel, then on holiday, and I remember an incident that brought Marjory closer still by the fact that we both saw and realised it.

Mrs. Stroyan was not at church because of alleged rheumatism; and mother was keeping her company, while Florence kept mother company. John, sitting next to me in the parson's family pew, nudged Dick immediately after the service, and they slipped into the aisle, demurely but rapidly making exit. I turned to Marjory, who was on my other side, and elevated my brows in mute inquiry, but she was gazing before her with a Madonna expression on her face. I thought her very beautiful. Twice during the course of the service we had touched each other, and her touch had sent me into a state of sentiment. I had felt a wild, tremendous pleasure over the thought that we both belonged, through our ancestors, to the same place. Had I John's gifts I would have tried to write a song on how her grandfather and great-grandfather had known mine, and how we sat there in that pew together, and how jolly her smile was when I thrust a hassock forward with my toe. She sat still a decent interval after my father's wonderful consoling gesture from the pulpit, his left

hand outspread, the gold wedding-ring on the third finger a flick of light, the massive jowl illumined by the overhanging reading-desk reflector, as he pronounced the benediction: "And now may the Peace of God which passeth understanding . . ."

Not having darted away immediately after that, like John and Dick, we had to sit still longer, for my father came tremendously in a great hush down the pulpit steps, as Moses from the Mount, and slowly went from sight through a door to rear. It was then that Marjory came back from her far gazing and rose. So we walked out into the porch and then, disentangling ourselves from the marching worshippers making exit, went down the corridor to the vestry.

I tapped at the door, opened it; Marjory entered and I followed. My father stood in the centre of the room, lost in thought. He did not appear to observe us; I can see his expression yet, and I do not believe (despite all my seeing through him of the unfilial variety) that his thoughts then would be utterly unworthy in the mind of a Good God. After all, I would rather have praise from one who can "see through" me than from one over whom I had cast a spell. I have seen a deal of men since these days; and his expression lives so that I can, as it were, to-night open the vestry door again and study his face.

He was thinking of himself, but of himself *apropos* of his effect on the congregation; and I think he was worried somewhat by a sense of what he might call his "unworthiness"; I think he was hoping that what he had said would be of aid to all these people flocking slowly out of the church with the organ

booming them into the night. He really did not consider us at that moment. He heaved a sigh, his lips moved, and very lowly he said: "The Peace of God which passeth understanding . . ."

With the entry of the deacons, each carrying an offertory bag, he came out of his reverie. He was changed—they changed him. He could not kick them. He sighed again and looked like a gloomy figure of Buddha. It was the third Sunday of preaching at that church, and he had interested himself in the deacons in his big father-of-the-flock way. "I am only among you temporarily," he said to one, I remember, "I am the *locum* shepherd, but I don't want because of that to be as a stranger. Is this your wife? I am delighted to shake hands with you, Mrs. MacQueen." This was in the High Street one morning when a lady and gentleman, suddenly coming level with us, seemed awed, uncertain. Frankly, I felt (perhaps it is a family failing) a slight contempt for these men in black with the bags; they slid in, tiptoed, seemed larded over with a false unction. They stooped, and appeared rather to be acting as people knowing how to look awed, or a little awed by the stained glass and the dust (as some are awed by the glitter and carpets of a crack liner) than people feeling the presence of the Holy Ghost there. Mr. MacQueen, though weak, might have been sincere; he might be in his position in the church because of some sense of principalities and powers round our days, some dim sense of a divine streak through the ages, some desire to have a light to guide him. He had a superstitious droop to the edges of his eyes, but a multitude of kindly lines round their edges. I should think him a man with a natural tendency to

temper who had mastered it by what he got in that place, not "giving himself" as he was, but trying to give something better than his natural self. But the others! It is absurd, of course, for me to say they were what I had then the impression of them as being. But the effect they had on me they had also, I could see, on my father. One, I would have hazarded, was in the church for business, as are most men in Parliament. Another had the face of a fanatic. The fourth was the most painful blend of self-righteous and oily. None of them, I think, can ever have read Fergusson's *Braid Claith*. They laid the bags down in rotation, and each chink seemed like a jar in the little room. As they were at this routine my father looked at them under his brows, and then,—

"How is your wife to-night, Mr. MacQueen?" he asked.

"Better, thank you, sir."

"Oh. I'm glad of that, glad of that. She must be careful, though. These evenings we are having just now, with heavy dew-fall, are very bad for any one with"—the other deacons were going backward from the room, and to them he bowed as he spoke—"her malady especially," he said, turning his gaze again to Mr. MacQueen. "Very wise to keep indoors in the evening."

"Yes, I think so. Thank you. It was a wonderful sermon, sir."

"A very good congregation, I was pleased to see."

"There always is, sir, where you go."

Father at that seemed to be lost in reveries again, and Mr. MacQueen, bowing, left us alone. Still the Old Man did not move, stood brushing back the

Napoleon lock over his forehead, then plucking it down, brushing it back again.

"What is the matter with Mrs. MacQueen?" he broke out.

It was at this point that Marjory and I glanced one to another.

"I don't know, father," I said.

He saw my smile and responded to it with the most delightful twinkle.

"I didn't mention it last Sunday over the table, when I came back, did I?" he asked. "No. Dear, dear. He did tell me what was the matter with her, but I've forgotten now. Still, any malady is not aided by the dew. Sympathy—that is the great thing. They like it; it helps them." He raised both his hands, clasped his temples, then ran the hands backward. "I can't remember it all, not all."

At that juncture the beadle entered carrying the Bible from the pulpit, and, bowing at the door, he stepped over to a piece of furniture, half-wardrobe, half-chest-of-drawers. There he opened a drawer, as one in stealth, put the Bible away, then stealthily closed the drawer. That done, he came and stood behind father, who then spread out his arms wide (it was a gesture such as I had seen silence a whole congregation when he did it in the pulpit) and the beadle removed his gown, which he hung in the wardrobe. Free of his gown, father shook his head as a dog coming out of water.

"Thank you, John," he said. "You are well?"

"Yes, thank you, sir."

"It is a gorgeous night. I think it wonderfully fine of so many people to turn into church on a summer evening like this."

"To hear you, sir."

"Oh—me! Good-night, John."

"Good-night, sir."

The beadle retired.

"Well," said my father, "we'll go." He stepped over to take his hat from a peg, and then—"Hallo! What's this?" he exclaimed, and pried at the side of the wardrobe. "A golf-club! Oh, Dalziel! You keep a golf-club in your vestry."

The Old Man thrust his hand in at the wardrobe's end beside the wall and drew forth a mashie, held it up, gave it a fillip, then clasped his hands round the handle and made ready to drive.

"Here's the real man!" he growled.

"The chandelier!" shrieked Marjory.

Father looked up.

"Just in time, Marjory," he said. "What a drive it would have been! Come along, you young people, come along."

He put the mashie back in its niche and made a motion as of one herding chickens. I opened the door and Marjory passed out, still laughing. Outside, hat in hand, the beadle was waiting in the passage.

"Not locked up yet, John?" asked father. "Are we keeping you?"

"Yes, sir, the front. No, sir, not at all. I'll just put out the gas."

"Oh, all right." Father walked back a step, reached up and turned out the one light in the overhanging cluster that had been saved from destruction by Marjory's cry of warning. We went down the passage to the side-door together. John standing under the gas-jet outside the vestry door, hand raised, head lowered, peering after us.

"Right!" said father, thrusting us out before him. "As I said, John, a beautiful evening. Good-night again."

"Good-night, sir," replied John.

His accents told his admiration for the Rev. Thomas Grey, D.D. When father said: "Here's the real man!" I think we have the secret of all that was wrong with him as a parson. It was not his vocation. And yet, if one is to judge by his congregations, to take their size as the measure of success . . . I give it up. There is his protrait. You can decide.

CHAPTER VII

THERE is a kind of man who is everlastingly telling us that he is what his wife has made him; and the obvious ripost (though withheld for the sake of the amenities), in most cases, is that if he wishes us to admire her creative skill he should really not mention the fact. These are mostly men infatuated. They have a hectic desire to be paladins of women; they tell us with a wild shadow on their brows that to most men women are either occasion for sentiment or passion in life, and find therein a stigma on their own sex.

I have no doubt there are women in the world who might be more than that to me, but I have not found them. My experience is that the average woman resents being approached without either a touch at least of sentiment or of passion. I have not settled whether she is right or wrong; it is not a subject on which I grow excited. There are times when I think men and women are of different races as well as of different sex. I do not dislike them; only those infatuated and lost men who begin to snarl as soon as the word woman is mentioned, and rumple their hair as a dog erects its coat, and wish to start out looking for Andromeda in trouble, will take it for granted from these remarks that I am decrying their idols. I have never met any member of the other sex as blatantly unpleasant, as filthy in texture (from my

point of view of filth) as my brother Tom; but I always feel in talking to the average woman that I have to handicap myself for affairs to go courteously—as I do in talking with a Japanese. They are always tangetting away, not from what I have said but from what they imagine I have said. Inter-racial misunderstandings crop up all the while. As for the highly-educated ones I have met with hope, Mistresses of Art and Old Maids of Science, lecturers on fossils or forestry, or what-not, they make me simply bow and agree with all they say as one agrees with a lunatic. Yet I do not find a way here out of my comparative consideration to exalt the one race and abase the other; for men of that ilk are usually equally "impossible."

The most self-complacent and self-lauded human ass I know is my eldest sister's husband. She married him on the day he was appointed lecturer in Glasgow, and had twins on the day he was appointed a professor. His sense of his own importance is so constant—it continues sub-consciously, I believe, even in his sleep—that if one is in a certain order of absent-minded mood on meeting him there is a natural tendency to go down on one knee before what he thinks of his brain, and his body, too. Meeting him in another mood of absent-mindedness, the natural instinct is to put one's foot on him and draw it backward with a rubbing motion on the pavement. On any subject upon which treatises have been written he can write another treatise, but on subjects upon which no treatises have been written he is like a horse with the blind staggers. He has written a book on the Critical Faculty (not daringly; he has no daring—but with perfect ease); he has lectured

on Dante, Homer, the English novel, Eugenics, Education. But let him forget for a moment what was crammed into him at school and college, let him forget for half an hour that he is a professor, and he will sit bolting his food, lost in ecstasy over a novel by Stratton Porter. The other day I saw him reading *Freckles* to his grandchildren, and he was enjoying it as though he had passed into his second childhood. He does articles on Shakespeare for the press, in which he says that the greatness of Shakespeare is that though his scenes are laid in Troy, or the Forest of Arden, the stupendous genius of the man makes his Troy not essentially Troy, and his Forest of Arden not essentially the Forest of Arden; and then he writes a column on three books, or so, by modern authors regarding whom he has had no indications from text-books, in which are such phrases as: "The next book in my batch has its scene laid ostensibly in Paris, but there is nothing essentially of Paris in it. It might happen anywhere." I fear there is doubt that Mary married him because she realised he had the stuff in him to rise high in scholastic circles.

Married to Hammerhead (as John nicknamed him), Mary was obsessed by the desire to get Florence married. She connived with mother's sister, Mrs. Parker (wife of the celebrated saltpetre merchant of Glasgow), to that end. Between them they made Florence ill. Always they were lassoing young men and pulling them along into our drawing-room, trying to get them to observe Florence. In careful mating of pigeons, a bird-fancier puts a cock and hen bird in cages close together; if they are not irritated by the sight of each other he then puts them together

in a cage; but if at the end of a day or two it is evident they abhor one another, or that one abhors the other, the attempt to mate them is discarded. Mary was a determined woman and did not know when to desist. The way those two women—my sister and Aunt Janet—behaved, was enough to sicken Florence; and it did.

She was not at all well when we went down to Irvine. I think she poured out some of her plaint to Marjory, for they were great friends, and I think Marjory eased her. If only Florence had been left alone I'm sure she would have been happy, but all these arrangements, these schemes, depressed her. They began when she was eighteen and went on until I, for one, hated both Mary and Aunt Janet. I hated Mary's home. I disliked Hammerhead because he was Mary's selection. I wonder if you will understand what I mean when I say that he always seemed to me like one of those dogs that live with a cat, so that when it goes out, and the other dogs smell, they rush at it and only at close quarters realise their mistake. Their text-book way of breeding cast an influence over the house. I used to tap it in the hall; I always felt myself there to be in the presence of diapers. As I said, when beginning this book, it is easier to describe other people than to describe myself.

As time went on, and it became Mary's hobby to look for a mate for Florence, my mother adopted the air of not interfering—with Florence. I think she would have been better advised had she sent Mary packing, told her married daughter to "get off with her"! Instead, her attitude was: "This is Florence's affair, not mine. I won't interfere," and

thus she was actually party to the conspiracy, very stately and sweet to all comers. Very exquisite she looked, too, in gray foulard, her favourite material, talking and slightly moving her head to and fro, her great lustrous eyes now gentle on the face of her guests, anon gazing sidelong into a high and distant corner of the ceiling.

It was at Irvine that I began to look on at my mother. I heard many conversations between her and the proprietor's wife at the hotel, I with my back to the room, looking out of the window, Florence sitting on the window-seat, mother in a chair to one side of the hearth (filled with silver paper and wood-shavings), father stumping down to the commercial room, ostensibly to look at the papers. Dick would be off to some forenoon effect in a meadow, or on the seashore, and John re-brushing his hair in the bedroom, and gazing at his reflection in anxiety to discover if there was a spark of genius in his eye. These conversations! From staring at the street I often flicked a glance to my sister, and I know by her (may I wear my heart on my sleeve and say by her dear face? for I was fond of her) that she was at the employ of trying to make two and two seem five as, so far as she could see, two and two made to the women round her.

Some of Mrs. MacQuilp's *bons mots* were delightful. At these mother could smile. But the ethics of Mrs. MacQuilp had no evident effect upon her. Many were the themes that held our landlady in the doorway when she came in to see if a meal had been satisfactory, or if the next one would be partaken of indoors or carried away in a luncheon-basket. I recall one talk, or monologue, on the new-fangled ideas

of doctors. Her grandmother had lived to be ninety, she said, and never had her tonsils cut—"and look at these two girls that serve on you. Bessie had her tonsils cut—havers, I call it!—she had her tonsils cut, and then Nance had tonsilitis!" I have a natural bent for *bons mots* like that. I cherish them. They upset all the logic of life for a moment and fling us into a fourth dimensional world.

I pointed out to Brother John that he should study Mrs. MacQuilp. I said to him: "She is what is called the Great Heart of the People." So he went down and leant against the wall of her little sitting-room, and came back to tell me that her two favourite authors were Charles Dickens and Annie S. Swan. He asked me what I made of that.

"I don't know," I said. "That's for you to find out."

It was Mrs. MacQuilp's views on marriage, and my mother's tacit agreement with them, that made Florence stare her widest one morning. Their two and two made five to her almost all the time.

"There's Maggie MacCrae on the other side of the street," said Mrs. MacQuilp. "Now, she has her wits about her, Mrs. Grey. After the marriage the certificate was given tae her husband, and she stoppit dead and said: 'Now that's mine, by richts. Let us begin fair and square and all will be weel.' He gave it tae her at once—he's that kind o' a body. He said he didna care whae had it. 'All richt, then,' says she, 'I'll ha'e it.' You see, Mrs. Grey, that's a woman's only hold on a man. If he was to rin off what hold wad she ha'e on him? That's what I say: begin as ye intend tae go on.'"

"How awful!" said Florence in a whisper after her departure.

"They are very ignorant people she spoke of," said mother. "The girl need not have behaved like that. She could always procure a copy of the certificate at the registrars for a nominal fee."

Then my sister sat and stared at mother. Another of Mrs. MacQuilp's utterances that sent Florence's eyebrows up amongst her hair was:—

"Some women are *fond*—that's what I call them, *fond*. There's my brither's auldest gone and married a blind man. If a man went blind after a lassie married him—weel, she'd just ha' to put up wi' it and accept the seetuation cheerfully; but tae marry a blind man!"

Florence's eyebrows came down. There was a tender look on her face. I think she was relieved to hear of the existence of that lover.

"And she had every chance tae get oot of it. After the explosion"—(we had to guess at parts of Mrs. MacQuilp's stories, for to ask for details would have taken too long)—"the first thing he did when he found he was blinded was tae ask the nurse at the infirmary tae write and tell her she was nae longer hauden tae him. She could have got oot of it wi'oot any suggestion whatever of heartlessness from her worst enemy. But no. She would ha'e him. *Fond*, I call it. *Fond!*"

Of the marriage of her own daughter we heard much.

"Effie could have had half a dozen lads in the town," she told us, "but she was weel balanced. There was one she likit fine, but he was aye choppin' and changin', now in one job, and then in anither. She's a spur tae a man. She told Sandy Shaw, when

he cam' courtin', she would ha'e him when he had bought the hoose. And there they are now, wi a hoose o' their ain, paying nae rent."

"What became of the other young man?" asked father, he being present on this occasion. He had risen to depart, but paused now, waited, interested.

"Which?"

"The one that chopped and changed."

"Ah, weel, it's amazin'! Of course, nobody could ha' foreseen it. He's got on wonderful weel, after all. He went to London and has a business of his ain, but I never blame Effie. It was quite unforeseen. Huh! And look at him. He goes up tae London and marries an English lass. I think it's disgusting. As soon as a lad gets on he goes to London now. Glasgow even doesna satisfy him—and nae sentiment in him for the auld hame. The first English lass that blinks her e'e at him he loses his heart tae. They're designing lassies, yon. They see a chance and they tak' it. Rope them in—that's what I say."

Always at mention of London, John's eyes jumped. He should have been studying Mrs. MacQuilp, I suppose, to write another *Auld Licht Idyll*. Not far south of us, about that time, George Douglas was soaking in his *House With the Green Shutters*, which was to put a quietus on the "Kail-yard School" for ever; but no—John was thinking of London, and Mrs. MacQuilp he did not see. Father listened with the twinkle in his eyes and the corners of his mouth puckered. Mother just listened calmly. Florence was clawing about in all quarters for solutions to the marriage question. I thought Mrs. MacQuilp was merely Mrs. MacQuilp, but, as I discovered, going

out with my sister after that talk, she had a different view.

"Isn't it terrible?" she said at the door, blowing out a deep breath.

"It's very amusing," I replied. "She's a caution."

"It's not amusing to me," said Florence, "because I am coming to the conclusion that Mrs. MacQuilp and Queen MacQuilp are all one. Queen MacQuilp may not state her views so crudely, but they have an understanding—all of them. What a queer view of marriage!"

"I suppose," I pointed out, "if it was not for marriage heaps of men would bolt after—er—bolt, I mean, not be faithful to one woman and—and then, the children? Who would look after them?"

"Considering all the gush we hear about mother-love," said Florence, even she going off at a tangent, "I can't quite understand all the fuss about girls having babies."

(We had been treated to another story, the burden of which made mother look worriedly in our direction, regarding a girl who had had a baby out of wedlock and killed it.)

"I do think," said I, following my sister on to her new scheme, "that the bounder who was the father of that child should have stood in the dock beside her."

Florence absolutely blazed at me—no, not at me but at my thick-headedness. We were excellent friends, swinging along.

"She—wasn't—being—tried," said she slowly and forcibly, "for having had a baby. She was being tried for murdering it. If he had carried it off and murdered it he would have been in the dock." Then she added vehemently, with a toss of her head: "And

I expect the girl would have sobbed about her mother-love so as to make doubly sure that she was not charged with being party to the thing." She bit her lip, and tears were in her eyes. "It is all very horrible," she went on. "I wonder why so much fuss is made about it?"

I am afraid I did not help her in those puzzled days, for I became enamoured in a gentle, diffident fashion of Marjory—and Florence saw. I could never entirely understand that sense of pleasant disturbance, of happiness, of almost content, content with a dash of inexplicable trouble in it, that I experienced with Marjory in those days. It seemed at times to be more her clothes than the girl herself I liked! Perhaps they expressed her. Perhaps it was the deep and inner Marjory I turned to. Certainly, in a plain blue bathing-suit (for Irvine was not a pleasure resort, a show place, and these suits were for bathing in), wearing a cap with elastic in it over her hair, and her calves wobbling, very, very white, she gave me a shock. One very wet day in goloshes (I have told her so since then) she seemed terrible to me! But under a pretty hat, with stockings hiding the flesh of her legs, and giving only their contours, in an afternoon gown of filmy fabric, and drooping her head, to look at me with a smile right into my eyes: that Marjory enraptured. I forgot at such moments that she had views on various subjects that seemed to indicate her as a traveller on another road.

But there came a moment I must note, as it is *apropos* of Florence, of whom this part tells. From various scattered amusements we were coming individually, or in couples, to Waterside for dinner, and

I had seen to it that I arrived first. Fraud that I was, I said: "Am I too early? Have the others not come?" I recall that evening well—and that moment in the long garden with the flagged paths to rear of the house, with the purple fuschias like little hanging lamps, midget purple lamps in the green of their bush, and roses, red and white, the sky overhead all pale silken blue, and little clouds in it like stray flames, the sun on them still above the little town. The house-walls and the garden were bright only with reflected sunset and a young moon. What a witching dual light! And I was twenty, and Marjory was eighteen. And sunset, and the new white moon together, sprayed the world with glamour. At that moment Marjory and I seemed ecstatically at one. I did not think of our diversities, or if I did I knew—knew—they were trivial. The magic of the hour, that made the fuschias doubly miraculous, and the rose petals eternal, was on her face, too. All the gold and silver drizzle of light on flagged path and bush had got into my heart.

I put out my hand and—I was about to say, held her arm, but I will express my timidity and temerity better, I think, by saying that I felt the quality of the cloth of her sleeve. As she only gave me a very engaging smile at that sartorial caress, I arranged her lace-fall that the slightest of evening breezes had ruffled. Then I heard steps and, looking round, saw Florence come abruptly from the house. In Irvine, away from Aunt Janet's and Sister Mary's inquisitorial insolence, their everlasting inquiries if she had not a sweetheart, there had been, so far, only Mrs. MacQuilp's dissertation on sex and marriage to keep these themes to the fore. She was looking better in

the life of long walks, of boating and of bathing. Her expression, on seeing us and our foolish attitude, was one of regret, but not for us. It was an introspective regret.

"Oh, dear!" I imagined her saying to herself.
"They're at it, too!"

CHAPTER VIII

BACK in Glasgow, the memory of Irvine lingered on a long while; and the memory of Marjory was constantly with me, with me even when some urgent affair of the moment claimed all my thoughts—with me then like a treasured book in my pocket. I saw the little old town with the rooks flying home over it through the golden haze before sunset, saw the last burnished twist of the river past the wharf where the smacks lay, the streets and the cobbled closes, the people moving to and fro like puppets, as in a *camera obscura*, all alive, all real, but dwarfed by distance and soundless. Often I thought of Marjory. Many and many a time, in the evenings at home, I was not reading the book that lay on my knee but was seeing the contours of her face again, hearing her voice again.

My future had to be considered, and I found myself indentured to a firm of chartered accountants. I liked the people there greatly. The head of the firm was a man of wide reading and many sympathies. One of his sons was interested in cremation—president, if I recall rightly, of The Scottish Cremation Society. I recall that after I went to hear him deliver his lecture on Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia* I was entirely pleased to be a chartered accountant!

During the next years, Marjory and I met ever and again, and that she and I were both together in the world sufficed me. Nebulous dreams of the future I had, but I did nothing to hasten their fruition. She came one year with us on holiday to a house at Connel Ferry (near Oban), and we shot the Falls of Lora in boats, climbed the hills, picnicked in the ruins of an old monastery where the grouse chirred over mossy graves and one still upright stone with the ancient sign I.H.S., tramped to Glencoe and rediscovered the wood of silver birches above Duror in Appin. Another summer we spent in the Isle of Arran, and the red sunsets, the slow, luminous twilights, the leisure of life on the sheep-farm, all preached to me the same assurance that all was well, and would go the way it was meant to go. In the winter Marjory would come to Glasgow for two or three days, and we would hear Paderewski play, or visit the Institute of Fine Arts' winter show. I was reading much during these years, of history: Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* . . ., Burton's *History of Scotland*, the tangled life of Mary, Queen of Scots, in the deciphering of which there was so much dubiety and guess-work.

Soon after the passing of my twenty-seventh birthday, we were into another winter, with a special course of sermons for father and courses of literary lectures. John had a finger in the arranging of the latter, suggesting that many authors whom he admired should be invited to lecture, and in one or two cases having his desire, seeing them in the flesh not only at the reading desk in the church, or on the platform of the specially chartered hall, but even sometimes sitting at our own table. For Glasgow

had capacity to enjoy authors who did more than merely cater for the great heart of the people (for those hard of heart who can enjoy only mock sentiment, for those simple who can laugh only over a false nose or the account of how Tommy Tossopot fell into the river) such authors as John, at that period, relished and admired, before he married and it became necessary for him to make much money. Even those "popular" ones who came to lecture to us (on the Decay of the Novel, on the Renaissance of the Novel, on Woman the Guide of the World, on Woman, Shall she be Free?) were not only popular. We got them to come down at the period before they had given in; and they were often not at all, in conversation, what might have been imagined from the major part of their books. Many of them were really both simple and interesting; and I soon saw that, like my father, they knew what filled the house but, for themselves, had tastes greatly different from those for whom they catered. Their attitude to the public was that of grown-ups in the nursery. With not all of them was the result flamboyance, even in private. With some, indeed, the result seemed to be a touch of melancholy.

John eventually went that way. He did not adopt the false-nose and falling in the river vein, but the infallibility of the feminine one, the wonder of impulse, the dynamic power of female emotion. To come to detail, if a hill was mentioned, he described it as shaped like a "woman's breast"; if there were flowers on a table he had to speak of the "amorous scent of the roses." I rather like roses; on the bushes, or in hedges, especially, I like them, or even one or two in a bowl to match them pleases me. And

I understand what Samain meant when he said: "Quand je me sens devenir pessimiste, je regarde une rose." But I am only in Glasgow yet—in the winter of 1894, or perhaps 1895. I am uncertain at the moment. Yet what matters time?

My father delivered the inaugural secular lecture, on Robert Burns. It was common knowledge that mother's great-aunt, Euphemia Clouston, was the 'Phemy of—— but you will remember, unless you have skipped my book! An air of intimacy was given to this lecture because of that personal link, of which most of the audience were aware. He spoke as with authority. His voice thrilled as he touched upon the poet's lapses from rectitude.

"Who among us," he asked, "can cast the first stone?"

Many a question he propounded, and paused after each, casting up his leonine head and listening as for an answer. These silences were deeply moving.

"Had he been other than he was, would we have had those imperishable songs?" his voice rang out. "Some of us are tempted. Do we always say nay to the tempter? And which one of us can be egregious enough to rise and say that he has one hundredth part of the great fires of this man? With a hundred times more natural vigor, where would you be, that is what I ask? There was nothing common or unclean to this meteor across the mirk of that drab century. His great heart had compassion for even the field-mouse cast out of its home by his plough-share; his great heart had compassion even upon a louse."

I went home that evening feeling tremendously at one with all humanity, and thinking how big-hearted

and humane my father was. As he felt the need for laughter in his flock his next lecture was on Mark Twain, with many quotations. I remember Dick rather damped his pleasure in the joyance his lecture created by saying,—

"I say, dad, don't you think it a bit queer that Christians should whoop with such merriment over that vastly humorous incident in *Innocents Abroad* where they see a light that has been burning in an Eastern church for thousands of years, or whatever it is, and one of them blows it out and says: "Wal, I guess it's out now!" Don't you think it queer?"

Father gloomed heavily. Dick was frank heretic. When he went into country places it was the old "pubs," not the old churches, he was enthusiastic over. The Old Man was very patient with him. I think he liked him greatly, but hid the measure of his liking so as not to seem, as the Scots say, "to make step-bairns."

"I see your point," he said, "but don't you think you inquire a trifle narrowly? They were immensely tickled, and laughed, and were happy. And, after all, Mark Twain is one of the Great Writers."

"Quite. He is one of the Great Writers on the strength of such mental pabulum. My question is simple—let me put it this way: how would all these Christians, who bayed with delight over, 'Wal, I guess it's out now!' like to have somebody wander in here from the East, and blow out their candle that has been burning only under two thousand years, so to speak?"

"The length of time the candle has been burning does not matter," said father, hedging—like Tom.

"No, of course not," Dick agreed. "It's the blow-

ing of it out. Why do they, with a candle of their own, laugh at the blowing out of that candle?"

Father cleared his throat, stroked the back of his head, and pondered. Dick was not like Tom. He waited, and gave dad full time to consider. He was desiring an answer one way or the other, and was not merely anxious to smash father. Tom would have chipped in with a roar of laughter, as of victory, and half a dozen other questions during that pause; but Dick sat silent and at last the *pater* spoke.

"There is another side to it," he said. "Mark Twain stands for those who would abolish flummery. To flummery he brings the laughter that is more devastating than serious criticism."

Dick nodded his head several times.

"That, if it was the mood in which he wrote that incident, does exonerate him considerably," he said. "But as for those who laughed—I'd rather they had no flummery of their own. Yes, I see your point, dad."

CHAPTER IX

YET it was not a point my father saw for himself a few evenings later.

To tell of that night, I must explain that, in his quest after Breadth of Vision, Bonhomie, and the like, the Old Man had taken up further winter labours. He (a Presbyterian), the Reverend John Stewart (a Baptist), a Mr. Gorner (a street-preacher), and Father Ambrose (of the Roman Catholic Church), were leagued together for the supply of warm winter underclothing to the poor in certain districts of the east-end. I fear their endeavors brought them many a disappointment, and often made occasion for them to cling tenaciously to the belief in the Great Heart of Humanity, refusing to be embittered. As with old age pensions to-day, so with these disbursements. People who were merely poor, but had fought hard, were often less catered for than people who had their clothes in the pawn on Monday morning, out on Saturday night, and in again on Monday. The parasites clothed, I fear, outnumbered the stoics discovered and then clothed. I am aware that I may seem hard to some in speaking so, but I am only stating facts; and I have noticed it is generally those with no hearts at all who cry out: "Oh, how heartless!" to the ever-hopeful, ever-trustful, who, dashed by evidence of injus-

tice in the world, protest against it. Mock-sentiment seems to be more popular than the real thing. Mrs. MacQuilp flourishes like the green bay tree, big and smiling and callous; my sister Florence grows pensive, with a tender heart for all. But here is an aside; let us return to the Woolen Comforts Endeavour.

My father and the Baptist, both being preachers with large congregations and many wealthy communicants, were the collectors of the fund. Father Ambrose, being a Roman Catholic, was in an impoverished district, and supplied names of the needy. Mr. Gorner was in his element in a room in a back street beyond the Glasgow Green, handing out the underwear, and saying: "May God go with this shirt! Halleluiah! Here is a pair of drawers. Remember, my friend, God seeth thee!" or: "Here's a semmit, man's size. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground . . . my friend. Try to keep off the drink. God bless the wearer!"

Father Ambrose often came to supper with us. Mr. Gorner came once, and while father was saying grace broke out with a groan, and "Praise God!" in the middle so that, for a moment, father lost his aplomb. But he took up the thread and did not lose it again when, near the end, Mr. Gorner interjected another groan and "Halleluiah!" Mother was pale and terribly polite to him; and I saw that he hated her. He called one afternoon for a parcel of clothing while father was out, and she received him alone. But after she had given him the parcel he said: "Madam, I never make a call on any home without a word of prayer before departure. Let us go down on our knees," and down he went. Mother repeated

the whole prayer to father when he came home, and some of the phrases I can still recall:—

“ . . . we kneel before You two penitent sinners, but doing our best to help towards the coming of Your Kingdom . . . let us lay aside the sins which so easily beset us. Do not let us imagine that by good deeds we can enter into Your Tabernacle . . . what is a little bit of underclothing in Your sight? Filthy rags! . . . let us pray here on our knees for humility, and that we do not fancy ourselves better than other people . . . for everybody in this home I pray, for whatever is their besetting sin. Perhaps they have no grievous sins, but to be Stuck Up, is evil in Thine eyes. For the master of this house I also pray, that he may conquer his besetting sin, whatever it is . . . for all the children I pray, that they may walk humbly with their God, and the sins of the fathers be not visited upon them. . . .”

Father listened very seriously to the narration of this visit.

“What did you do?” he asked.

Mother was still pale, and had the aspect of one who has received a stab. She looked as though she dreaded she might never forget the episode.

“I simply said ‘Thank you’ when he rose, and opened the door for him—and he trod on the train of my dress, and didn’t apologise!”

After that the parcels were sent by post, and Mr. Gorner did not return. The Rev John Stewart also came only once—a large, clean-shaven man with an ivory complexion, in a turn-down white callar, with white bow tie: a quiet, thoughtful man, with his head, I should think, full of dreams and troubles, of hopes and hopes dashed, still, like most of us, trying to do

his best. I believe he had a direct business-like talk with father, for when they came from the den to dinner Mr. Stewart was putting a notebook in his pocket.

"That's very satisfactory," I heard him say. "We will stick to clothes, not money. I shall give all these details to my Dorcas Society or my wife will. That will be something definite for them to work for."

As they went upstairs to wash, father's voice was rumbling away genially, Mr. Stewart answering in friendly tones. Of the scheme, little was said over the table. Mother asked Mr. Stewart what he thought of it.

"Oh, excellent! Excellent!" he replied. "I have noted the kind of things wanted, and our Dorcas Society will, I expect, supply a good deal. And I have just been saying to your husband that when it comes to the question of asking our flock for money as well as garments, we should go and see that the things are rightly distributed. I have seen so much of the seamy side of life. I have known of clothes being accepted and carried away and pawned—children's clothes, too, and the parents get maudlin drunk on the profits."

"I know. It's very depressing," said mother.

"We will give. We continue giving——"

"And believing!" broke in father genially.

"Yes, and believing. But when we are handling donations of people, we must see that they are laid out as we tell them, in collecting, they will be laid out."

"Oh, yes, quite," said father. "Oh, I'm sure that will be all right."

That was all on the Comforts Endeavour. I remember Mr. Stewart found that John was writing an essay, and talked of books to him. He left a sense of himself still there when he had gone. I have never forgotten him, although I never saw him again. Parcels came from him regularly, and father sent him accounts of how the clothes were distributed.

Father Ambrose, ruddier than the berry, came several times.

"I like this endeavour of ours," said father to him one night that I recall well, after the priest had ceased to make merely business calls relating to the woollens, came as a friend. "It is non-sectarian. I feel that we are following in the way indicated by Christ who said, when his disciples told him of another casting out devils whom they had forbade to continue: 'Forbid him not, for he who is not against us is for us.' I like to be associated with you, Father Ambrose. I feel that we are working towards the abolition of sectarianism."

Father Ambrose sipped his wine, set down the glass.

"Of course I belong to the Church," he said genially. "Sectarianism is outside the Church. This is excellent wine."

I do not think my father greatly cared for Father Ambrose, but (on the one hand) he was pursuing a course of broad-mindedness and (on the other hand) the priest could drink with him glass for glass, and both remain bland. To a toper, many differences of opinion become trivial in a man, so be that man can bear him bottle-company, not go under the table, thus advertising the fact that a drinking bout is in progress. It is almost a parallel case to that of the

man who lets passion blur his mind to the fact that he brings little of any other link to bind him to his passionate mate. Such are the matches that many call "love-matches"; and when they go wrong we hear great diatribes on Liberty, little lyrics on how "love" burns out and dies. I am afraid that is what the word Love means in all John's later books.

For the sake of a toping companion, the *pater* let all such remarks of Father Ambrose's go unheeded; and the priest, while adhering to his attitude of belonging to the infallible sect that was not a sect but the only Church, always would add some such comment as: "This is excellent wine." Here Marjory again enters; for the incident of that night she shared, as she had shared the incident in the vestry at Irvine, she having come up to Glasgow to stay with us over Christmas and the New Year's beginning.

On the evening in question there had been a meeting at the church, and at the door I met father, to walk home with him. Hardly had we gained the first corner than we made up on Father Ambrose bound to our home for supper. Salutations were made and we all set off together. Suddenly father stopped abruptly with a "Chut!"

"Forgotten something?" I said.

"Yes." He stood stock still. "It can't be helped. I must go." Then his manner changed. "There has been a bereavement in the house of one of my flock," he explained.

"Haven't you seen them already?" asked Father Ambrose.

"I promised. I saw the daughter to-day, and promised to call on the mother this evening. Yes, I must go. A bereavement." His voice became

deep and mellow. "Just a word of comfort in their hour of sorrow. I won't stay long. I think at such times, Father, it is better not to stay long."

"Quite agree," said Father Ambrose.

"Well—shan't be long. You two go home and have my slippers warmed! Tell mother I shall soon follow, Harold."

He arrived shortly after us and was very subdued on his entrance.

"Is there something wrong, darling?" said mother.

"No. It is only that I have called at a house of sorrow—poor Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"Poor soul," said mother.

"Very sad," he went on. "Even though we have Faith—it is the leaving of friends . . ."

"I believe he has left her well-provided for," remarked mother.

"Yes, I'm glad—I'm glad." He begged leave to "run and wash," and by the time he returned had mastered his emotion.

Present in the drawing-room with the big easy-chairs, chintz-covered, and the pink-shaded lights, were mother, Florence, a young man named Arthur Neil, Marjory, myself and Dick, the latter seated cross-legged on a hassock, plucking a mandoline and singing Italian peasant songs. He and I stayed only a short while in the dining-room after dinner with the two divines, because of Marjory Stroyan being with us, and young Neil obviously wanted to follow Florence. To us, about half an hour after we had followed the ladies, came Father Ambrose and the *pater*, big and cheerful and urbane.

"Do you remember that time I came over to see you when you were in Italy, Dick?" said my father.

Dick ceased to strum and rose from the hassock.

"I remember," father turned to the priest, "seeing a procession of your Church——"

"Of the Church? Oh, yes."

"I remember feeling at the time how much more you were really fathers than we. We are not dignified enough, or else we don't inculcate sufficiently into our charges a sense of dignity. It was really very wonderful. Dick and I stood at a window looking down at it all." He had seated himself, but as he spoke he rose, stood large before his chair with one arm upraised. "There were young acolytes, I presume, in advance, and priests carrying various ecclesiastical insignia, and at a very slow pace the procession advanced. Quite a spectacle. But what struck me most was the people—their behaviour on either side. As the procession advanced, those lining the route knelt"—he made a motion as of thrusting something down before him. "And then came one carrying a Cross, and an elderly dignitary of the Church."

He bowed again toward Father Ambrose and then turned to us as he described—what we had often heard him describe. He caught Marjory's eye and addressed himself especially to her, perhaps realising how well we of the family circle knew the incident he narrated. Marjory and the priest became his two chief auditors. Very slowly, he erect, he began to pace the room in what was more a marking time with slight advance, than a walk. Thus he moved as he went on with the story.

"The people knelt on both sides, you understand, so—and so. And this great dignitary, as he walked

—thus and thus—extended his hand, just touched a kneeling citizen like this.”

He progressed majestically, a hand extended now to left, now to right. When he came to where mother sat he touched her shoulder.

“Oh!” she cried out with a shudder, drawing up her shoulders. “I don’t like that at all. I think it is rude!”

Father raised his head and roared joyously, and then tried to touch Marjory, saying: “Bless you, my child,” but, laughing, she drew back also. Father Ambrose, blinking drunkenly before him, was very grave indeed.

“I’m afraid, I’m afraid,” said father, “that these kith and kin of mine have not a sense of ——”

“Yes,” interrupted Father Ambrose, “we do inculcate the dignity of the Church. You are a loss to the fold, Dr. Grey. You compromise—we are uncompromising. The Roman Catholic Dogma is the truth come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ. All else is si-si-schism and so-sophistry. It is mosh ashonishin——”

He paused, and then we knew the man’s measure. Ninety-nine out of a hundred would have tried again and very deliberately have enunciated: “Most astonishing.” He did not. He looked at us quickly, and as we all gazed politely on him he decided that maybe we had no acute auricular organs. We had, perhaps, noticed neither the stammer nor the compromising slur. His thoughts were clear on his face. Afterwards Dick imitated it and said: “You could see what the old buffer was thinking. ‘Did they notice? No! Yes? Well, anyhow, I’d better go straight on!’ And he went straight on.”

“. . . that you should be where you are, Dr. Grey. I almost said—let me say—Brother Grey! We have been as brothers of late in our work of mercy.”

I glanced at father and found him standing with chin on chest staring at Father Ambrose. He looked as one ageing. His trousers had an old hang coming to them; they reminded me of an elephant's hind legs. Creases behind at the knees were not as creases in the trousers of the young. Head lowered, chin on chest, he studied Father Ambrose. His eyes were wonderfully clear, though his face was florid. If he had rumbled: "Why, man, you're drunk!" I don't think he would have astonished us or shocked any one except mother, and I know Dick would have been delighted.

"Darling," he said, turning to mother, "could we have a little coffee brought in?"

"Why, yes," she responded, with a quick look of affection upon him.

As the coffee was being sipped or gulped, according to our individual ways, there came up somehow (I have forgotten the links) the name of one of father's flock.

"Ah, there's an interesting man," said he.

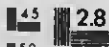
"Is he?" asked mother.

"Yes, indeed. I met him one day recently and just casually"—he now addressed Father Ambrose, courteously—"in the manner I have—for, after all, if people don't come to church it may be my fault—I asked why we had not seen him at service for some time. And he said: 'No, I have not been to church recently.' So I said: 'Well, I hope you won't go by the door always, but be moved to come. "Forsake



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not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is . . ." you know.' Brodie thought over that for a moment, and then replied: 'Text for text, sir. You will remember——' and he quoted a text to me, I must say with fine delivery, too: "'And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you they have their reward . . ."' and then he lowered his voice as he added: "'But thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. . . ." the last bit, frankly, sir, I don't like,' he said, 'but I'll quote it: ". . . and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'"

"Preposterous!" cried Father Ambrose. And at the same moment mother was murmuring: "How very rude of him!"

"And you," boomed the priest, glaring at father and pointing a denouncing finger, "only a few minutes ago were extolling the dignity of the Church. Yet you admire that man!"

"Admire!" said mother.

Father glanced at her, and though he was evidently on the point of saying more, he raised his head and gave that laugh of his that comes at such times when, if I may use an aphorism of the card-table, he genially says: "Pass!"

"Preposterous!" cried Father Ambrose again. "In the Church it would be impossible. This quoting of Scripture to—— Oh, it is not to be tolerated! These are sad days, Dr. Grey, with their free-thought and bi-bi-blical kly-cism."

"I think it perfect humbug of Mr. Brodie to talk to you like that, as well as insolent!" declared mother, I think speaking again in an attempt to seem unaware that her ecclesiastical guest was in a condition that, however much "the thing" in the days of 'Phemy Clouston, was, among the best people, lapsing into desuetude. But probably the *pater* did not realise her reason for starting afresh; this time he did not hold silent.

"Humbug?" he said, and shook his head gently. "Ah, now—I don't know, my dear. I would be chary of imputing humbug to anybody—for we are all humbugs greatly, I fear, unless to some very lenient observer who may, perhaps, know everything. Yes, all are inclined to humbug, more or less."

She gazed at him with her dotting expression as who should say: "What a humble man I have married!" I was often at a loss regarding her. At times I would think her blindly limited; at others I would think she saw, and pretended blindness. I always found her interesting and lovable. There were points that she refused to see, because the admission of the seeing of them might raise the inference that she was not, as it were, of rose-leaves and alabaster. This tendency to a lack of frankness (and in using such a phrase let me hasten to say that I am far from having decided that even frankness is for all moments—but that is by the mark here) helped toward leaving me uncertain regarding her often. I think she was also a hint naive, somewhat simple. The blend of deep and shallow, and the fact that her face was not nearly as expressive as father's, made me frequently leave my view of her pending, like the Montaignes of the world. I think,

at this last juncture of the talk, she only saw her husband as humble, failed to notice a certain frown on his forehead, a slight lowering of the brows. Expressions we almost intuitively feel. Begin to describe them, and it seems as though the people of whom we tell go about through life grimacing! Father's face had not the immobility of mother's, despite the set jowl; changing thoughts made what seemed more like lights and shadows to drift under the skin of his face. All this commentary at the moment does not hold up the narration, for there is no more to narrate of that evening. While mother was still doting on father, and he gazing before him unaware of her, Father Ambrose suddenly shot up from his chair. He had been sitting with legs close, knees together, and the motion was a sharp upward bob. And——

"I must go," said he.

From that day, or evening, there was much less of extreme unction in the *pater's* manner, at least in private. His second lecture on Robert Burns (for the first was so successful that he was asked to repeat it) saw a return of it, but that was excusable. He never put himself deliberately into any position that would be bad for business, so to speak. Few people do. Few can jeer at him on that score, or, as he would say, throw the first stone.

I liked him greatly in these last days. I say "last days" because it was at the end of that winter, the winter when the second call came to him from the church in Philadelphia (U. S. A.), that he received another call; and he who had hardly known a day's illness in his life got a stitch between his shoulder blades one Sunday night, after a visit to a house of

mourning to speak a few words of consolation. Let me say here that I honestly believe he comforted in his own fashion.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning, despite an all-night working over him with cylinders of oxygen by a local doctor and a specialist, he went out into the Unknown.

CHAPTER X.

FOR some time before the passing of my father, there had been coming much to our home a young man—Arthur Neil—whom I have casually mentioned as being present on the evening when the Old Man gave us that rendering of a procession he had seen in Italy.

Arthur Neil was, for me, provocative of many musings; and the reason for my musings was that it was evident to us all that the main attraction for him in our household was Florence. John had brought him home, and when calling, Neil used to ask for him at the door: "Good-evening, Mary. Is Mr. John in?" but it is not only because I was humbugging in something the same fashion sometimes when calling at Waterside that I looked lightly upon this ruse of his. It is no inhuman little subterfuge. However, I could never get in touch with him to my satisfaction. He clearly admired Florence; he seemed a pleasant enough fellow; and yet he was not (to use an expression Mary Lennox had brought into family speech when touching on people we had nothing against, but for whom we did not care warmly) "my handwriting"! I can't think he would ever do anything quixotic. There was a shrewdness in him somewhere always on deck, always having a glance at the compass, always casting an eye on the man at the wheel. I am not finding fault with him

for being like that; but, seeing he was like that, he was naturally more John's friend than mine. In temperament, Florence was more of a lack-lustre blend of Dick and John—and I think I got on with her better than did all the others.

I had a great affection for my younger sister, and wondered what manner of youth Neil might be, wondered if there had been any girls in his youth before, if he were good enough to pay court to her. Mother obviously thought he was—indeed, it seemed to me, too obviously; and I think Dick thought so, too, by the way he used to frown sometimes when she was gushing at the young man. Tom's views it was hopeless to discover; he was merely a weather-cock making creaking sounds, with his idiotic laugh. He used to laugh even over the words: "How do you do?" as soon he entered a room. I really don't think, if I may be allowed to use the phrase, that he gave one Continental damn for any of us.

Neil was on the staff of the *Evening* — at that time, had an Aberdeen degree and what mother called the "cultured non-accent; a trig, alert figure, with a conversational gamut extending over politics, poetry, salmon fishing, golf, music, and Dan Leno. I am sure he did not like my eldest brother, and if he was as pleasant to him as to the rest of the family, that was only because he soon saw that Tom was mother's favourite and he did not wish to chill her. I thought I saw a look of pleasure in his eye once when father (to cast back a little way, taking up this part of my memories which pertain chiefly to Florence) "sat on" Tom, and when mother was not in the room he made it evident that he was bored by Tom's idiotic "Why not?" about everything, that he would fire into the

middle of discussions. We all liked Neil, if not excessively. Yes, we liked him—that is the way to put it. "A very nice fellow!" we used to say. I have written so far about my sister not as though talking of her with the knowledge gained since the days of which I tell. My attempt has been to write of the past as it seemed when it was the present. I should really have kept a diary then, instead of now writing my memoirs; but as I did not, I go upon this principle: when narrating incidents that later lights illumined, I have tried to tell only what I saw at the time.

I was of the opinion that Florence cared for Neil. To me it seemed that any man of any parts at all would naturally have a great admiration for her. I admit she was somewhat lazy. I admit that her desire to go in for medicine, her dream of becoming a lady-doctor, was short-lived. I admit that to the kind of people who wish to direct another's life (people such as Sister Mary and Aunt Janet) she might well have been a cause for screaming hysterics. The desire to be left alone was strong in her. But only one without discernment would think that her meekness meant subservience, only a blind bully would say: "There is my prey!" Mary and Aunt Janet were blind as bats. Actually there existed in Florence, among all her charms, a streak of contrariety where bullies were concerned. A trifle listless, not caring very very much at a cross-roads whether she went to left or to right, if the one she walked with was one she liked, and took the path to right—she would go on walking and talking and take that path, too, as though she did not see the other; but even though, alone, she did not care which path she took,

if one she did not care for tremendously was with her and turned to right she would immediately say, sweetly: "We'll go this way!" and take the path to left. She was only influenced by affection—or, if influenced otherwise, influenced negatively. Fair-haired, with long fingers, with a pretty curve to her neck, I see her still as she was in those days. Her shapely upper lip was out-thrust ever so slightly beyond the lower; but her little chin curved out instead of receding after that inward line of the lower lip. This shaping of the profile lines about her mouth was not in the faintest degree a blemish, though unusual. All that some might call blemish was the slight overlapping of the two middle upper teeth. All her teeth were milky white, and small.

After father's death, when she was run down by his loss a-top of the nagging by Mary and Aunt Janet, she grew very quiet. But his death hurt us all. It was terrible never to see him looming big and rosy and delightful, and sometimes almost ridiculous, in any of the rooms. It was almost a relief to leave the manse and remove to a house in Huntley Gardens, because of his having left it. In those days, before he went away, father was very friendly to young Neil, used to take much notice of his presence in the house, twinkling a little on him, head thrown backward, as though reconstructing his own courtship. That was his way with people he liked; he never showed banter with people he disliked. Also I saw him look troubled once or twice when mother seemed more than naturally solicitous of Neil's comfort: "Do sit there, Mr. Neil. That's a nice seat next to Florence. There. Now we're all comfy." Also, not once, but on several occasions,

she designed so as to leave the two young people alone. I believe in giving folks a chance to know each other before committing themselves to marriage; but to rise and drift from the room murmuring: "Oh, I've just remembered . . ." and then to come back and call away whoever was left behind besides Florence and Neil—how shall I express it? She certainly did not do these things tactfully. There were too much cushion-tapping and solicitations over Neil not being in a draught, or not being too warm. She seemed more to leave them alone so as to give him a chance to propose marriage, than to leave them alone so that they might get to know each other and say: "I'm sorry—I have made a mistake. Good-afternoon!" if necessary. She was inclined to pester on pleasantly in this fashion with most people—asking if they were too cold, or too warm, I mean—but with Neil it was overdone. I once heard Dick say: "Oh, damn!" to himself when she was coddling round Arthur Neil so.

There is no doubt that Arthur was glad to have moments alone with Florence even though feeling that mother was party to them; but I would that she could have managed things better. Dick and I had a less obvious plan of campaign. We would take Neil away to show him something, then one of us would depart and not come back, and then the remaining one would ungraciously leave Neil alone, and he would drift round the house to look for Florence. At dinner (or if it was on a Sunday, at tea-table) we would all gather together again as if we behaved that way with guests entirely naturally! It was generally Dick and I who made these strategic movements, for John, Neil's alleged friend, was

out a great deal when he called, at his club, or talking literature in some coterie of young men excited over words, or at the Border Ballad Society, his taste for having many acquaintances already almost a passion. Where Tom was we neither knew nor cared. Mother was sure that he worked late at the shop; we suspected that he used to go night after night to see the same play, or music-hall turn, wherever he could find a spangled leg or a bare back.

Aunt Janet came once when Arthur was visiting, and he was introduced. She examined him through a lorgnon and then flipped it shut and spoke to him with the naked eye, satisfied. How I hated her for prying into Florence's affairs. Her manner toward my sister was that of a travelling inspector for a business with many branches. Florence was her special subject. The ledger she was chiefly interested in, to continue the simile, was the one labelled *Amours*. In a way, Aunt Janet was like a cultured Mrs. MacQuilp, superficially cultured. She was always mixing herself up with societies, and was generally elected honorary president to be got rid of—off the committees. It could not be said she called on us—she stormed us. We males stroked our faces as she talked, and changed our attitudes repeatedly, for she gave us physical pain. Then we slipped away and left her.

We had been rid of her for a while, as she had been elected by some society to go to Paris to discover how another society did certain things. I really forget what it was all about, but she returned rejuvenated: a woman who should have been given draughts of bromide instead of draughts of ozone and change of air.

"Who is this Arthur Neil?" she asked after he had gone. "Tell me about him."

Florence, to whom the question was addressed, replied: "Well, there is nothing to tell. He's a friend of John's."

"A friend of yours?" said Aunt Janet, whirling on John. "Where did you meet him? Who is he?"

What John said escapes my memory now, I expect because at the time it escaped our intelligence, he not being eager to respond to such questions. Father asked how she had enjoyed her visit to Paris, and her answer lives. It had a quality of humour that specially appeals to me.

"There was such a beautiful girl on the boat coming over," she said. "Oh, she was pretty. And she spoke French beautifully. Every one envied her accent. I wish you could have heard her, Florence."

I was touchy regarding my sister, and took this for one of Aunt Janet's oblique thrusts, intended to make Florence ashamed of having let her French lapse.

"Was she a Scots girl?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said Aunt Janet. "A French girl. We all envied the beautiful way she spoke French."

Richard came out of his comatose state at that, and did not drift away at once, as he had clearly been thinking of doing. He waited, smiling and hopeful. Nothing more amusing, however, was forthcoming, only an account of how Aunt Janet had been entertained and shown round, and treated with the courtesy she deserved—all except once; and we had to listen to the story of how by her manner she had brought the offender to order. For several days thereafter when Dick smiled, I knew the cause. I

would smile back at him, and he would say: "Oh, no! A French girl!" I often wish that women would exclaim: "Go to hell!" and that Florence could say it to Aunt Janet.

Sister Mary met Neil, examined him, pouted, and treated him somewhat disdainfully. She also was satisfied regarding him, but she did not wish him to know this. And she was annoyed, I believe, because she had not brought him into our ken. He wrote a very well balanced obituary notice of father for the *Evening* — mentioned that the Old Man had preached at Balmoral in that essay, but, unlike Mr. Smart, did not make it the crescendo of the movement. It was noted in a list of the fashionable and formal victories of the late Dr. Grey—terse as "Who's Who." And then the writer passed on to matters of more interest — himself and doubtless to his editor, who was content that such items should just fit casually into a paragraph to appease the public. Though, after all, the *Evening* — was not like the *Weekly* —. The latter was read by the labouring classes, had socialistic tendencies, and used to have such headings as: "Peer Visits Workman's Cottage!—Prince Shakes Hands With Navvy!" Its readers were the kind of people Mr. Dooley had in mind when he countered Hennessey's objection to royalty by pointing out that lacking it there would be nothing for the working classes to read about in the Sunday papers. Personally, I think Neil's article was perfect. It gave a picture of father as conceived in the mind of his flock, fatherly, beneficent, visiting the sick and the troubled; and it did point out that he was not one of that type of cleric that horrify even the irreligious by blasphemy in the pulpit, and smutty

little jokes at weddings. Perhaps there is a point of view from which such a repertoire of droll stories are not atrocious, though even to the average low comedian they would be barred. Certainly father had no such stories in his collection. Jestings regarding men drunken, and jestings around the subject of death, he could crack (such as that one of the squabble he had to settle at a graveside when a man said: "I will not stand there. This is my richt place. I'm the second son, so I'll ha'e the richt leg and Jock has the left leg. Ecky has the heid. I'll ha'e the richt leg or gang hame!"), but he shared with the irreligious, and with such clerics as see Christ as a Great Good Figure in this world, and conceive of a Deity with reverence, a distaste for jestings of the blasphemous order. He was none of your pawky parsons.

Pardon me that I take occasion to cast back and talk of him now. It is, however, in a way *apropos*, as I was telling of Neil's obituary notice. After father was dead I prized him more than when he was alive. Reading Neil's eulogy, I saw that he had managed (though I think, as I have said before, he would have succeeded as a farmer equally well, and with less personal—shall I say, humbug?) to give his flock a sense of the Love of God and the goodness of life without lashing them with the dread of hell-fire. Here again, writing to-day, I write of my feelings as they were at the time of which I tell. When he had gone from us, taken that one step away into the haze that hangs round the coloured world so closely that at any moment any of us may stretch out and pass through, I saw him as lovable as ever, and the air of amusement over him passed from me.

We were all changed by his death. The change

in Florence I attributed at first solely to that loss. ". . . and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty." That empty chair at the table-end where he had eaten! I thought for some time that this was the only cause of my sister's quiet; and then suddenly one day it occurred to me that Neil had not called on us for a long time. After father's death he had come as usual for a few weeks; then the days passed, and no Arthur Neil rang the bell of our new quarters in Huntley Gardens. I wondered, but said nothing. It dawned on me that it might be more than lingering grief that made her cheeks pale, and brought that woe-begone look beneath her eyes. She was as one crushed, as one crushed and without any animosity to fillip her. That broken air of acceptance I did not like to see.

Then, one day, coming up Renfield Street homeward, I met Neil and was impressed, as we drew nearer, by his nervousness. As we stopped dead he seemed at a loss for something to say. He hoped we were all well. I was on the point of saying: "You are quite a stranger at our table now!" but something restrained me, and I think it was pride—pride on behalf of Florence. I had a dread lest, saying those words, I might appear to be pleading for her that he come to see us. There was, as I was thus in the condition of a see-saw, another thought came to me, or impulse. I had the inclination to break out with: "Look here, what the devil is the matter? There is something amiss and you're ashamed. Florence is ill over it; *and* I'm not speaking through any prompting from her." Of course, I did not say that either. A futility or two being spoken, we fidgeted and looked at each other's hands—and then

each pounced on the hand of the other and we said:
"Good-bye. It's jolly to have seen you again."—
"Good-bye. So glad to have seen you again."

I went up Renfield Street in a queer state of emotion. And whatever the reason for the cessation of Arthur Neil's visits, I felt Florence was too good for him.

CHAPTER XI

MY mind was much occupied with thought of Florence during those days. Ever and again she was wont to faint.

"It is terrible," she said to me, "when all goes dark."

I had a great pity for her. I used to say to myself: "Damn Arthur Neil!" as I hurried for smelling-salts. It is odd how a phrase here and there has had an effect on my life. "It is terrible when all goes dark" affected me; I found that I went casier with people who irritated me, because of it. I saw all humanity moving toward a place where they would make a little moaning sound, and murmur: "Oh, how dark!" and sigh with content at the feel of a hand supporting the head falling inert.

Florence's gentleness passed into languor. Sometimes over a book she would take an unconscionable time to turn a page, even allowing that the volume was of the profound or esoteric order, even allowing that it might be one of those ill-written books in which the illiterate, more easily than the educated, realise what the author means. That the books she conned were always those that sent the reader's mind actively off upon thoughts of its own, *apropos*, I could not believe when I found that they bored her. Any book served to hold in her hand on quiet evenings; any book served as a barrier behind which she might

retreat, even in the family circle, and brood. Tom, to my regret, seemed the only one who could take her out of herself. When he came in with his heavy, clumping tread, and cried: "Hallo! Hallo, what are you reading, Flo? Wow! Ho-ho! Out-mod-ed!" or "Hallo, what are you reading? Intellectual! Intelligentsia!" she would look up and laugh back at him.

It hurt me that I could not make her seem so gay, and then suddenly it came to me that she dreaded lest he should pierce into her secret more than she dreaded that any of us should. That he did not ask: "Where's that johnnie, what-do-you-call-him?" was not merely because he had forgotten. I must say, though I did not like Tom, that he was not just the Devil. Even to him the thought must have come that Neil had visited us pretty often, and called no more. Tom had undoubted streaks of decency in him. Even he, who noted so little, and while priding himself on seeing much, generally saw it wrong and got a coggled impression, must have seen that Neil had a special friend in our home—and that the friend was Florence. I verily believe he tried to cheer her in his own way.

It may seem an extreme thing to say, and I may be accused of partiality towards her, but I only once knew Florence even on the verge of "catty." That display came when Mary, who was for ever interpolating her vigorous hate into our midst, grimacing and fleering, was talking about some lecturer at the University who had had a breakdown. She spoke as though she bore him a personal grudge.

"Nothing wrong with him!" she declared. "Nervous breakdown, indeed! Look at all the extra work

he does to make money! Of course he has a breakdown! His wife is worried out of her life over him. She's worse than he is. The doctor said so. He said he wasn't sorry for Brown, but for Mrs. Brown!" She tossed her head.

"Did the doctor tell you that?" asked Florence.

Mary blazed—why, I know not. I merely report what happened.

"No!" she cried out with an air of triumph. "Mrs. Brown told me herself!"

"Oh, I see," said Florence. "I wondered if it was a breach of medical etiquette."

Her face did not change as she spoke, but Mary's did. Her teeth came together with a click, and she gloomed and pouted. But from episodes of that kind, trivial little chatter, as with a smell of singeing to them, if I may be allowed to express myself so, which Mary had a *flair* for (half the time, indeed, I did not know what the fuss was about) I generally fled to my books, or for a tramp afield.

CHAPTER XII

A KNOWLEDGE of something untoward in the course of Florence's friendship—to state as mildly as possible—set me wondering how the future would deal with Marjory and myself. Looking back on that period from just before my father's death to the time of Grey's Select Circulating Library at the height of its celebrity, and criticising myself in relation to Marjory during those years, I am willing to admit that, from one point of view, I was (as Tom often said when I was foolish enough to enter into debates with him) hyper-sensitive. Perhaps all the family was so. Perhaps it was hypersensitiveness that made Richard a painter and John a writer, and kept Florence from accepting, off-hand, any of the men brought to her by Mary or Aunt Janet—for some of these obviously lost their hearts. Perhaps even Tom was hyper-sensitive toward other sides and aspects of life than those to which the rest of us were drawn.

I confess, certainly that the feelings that came to me on father's death were not in the nature of a mood. They remained. And during my sister's illness, or less illness than long period of lack-lustre, I came to have a strong understanding of the spirit that is in those words of Whitman's: "Go easily with women . . ." Thinking of Marjory, I was glad that she had gone back to Irvine that winter of the

visit upon which I touched, before father's brief, final illness. I would have spared her that pain. I had a growing sense of human beings wandering about, making plans and whelmed with uncertainty. Had I known all—had I, that is, been Florence or Arthur Neil—their affair (if I can call it so) might not have increased that uncertainty, but been cumulative evidence toward some definite theory. But I did not know all, and I could not ask. I am interested, but I am not curious and prying. Revelations delight me, whereas inquiries regarding the lives of others seem synonymous with insolence. A dread that life had elements of the freakish did, at any rate, come to me; and it made me doubt if, after all, I was wise to let the days and years drift past, be contented that my dreams regarding Marjory and myself would some day be fulfilled.

Since that evening at Irvine, when I had caught her arm and arranged her lace fall, she had always been somewhere in my mind, at times her image blurring the actual before me, at times as a figure seen through a telescope the wrong way. The pinkness of her cheeks, the cant of her head, a movement of hers in turning, essentially hers (though perhaps a family movement; maybe young men in frilled shirts had mused on that gesture which was also her other grandmother's, for all I knew), these fragmentary notes of her were strewn through my consciousness. On her visit to Glasgow about Christmas time I had danced with her, played chess with her (and lost a knight once through considering her hand as it rested on the table's edge, instead of considering the board of action), listening to lectures at the Athenæum and concert music at the Albert Hall,

generally sitting next to her, though sometimes, not to seem as if pursuing her wildly, letting Dick have the place I really desired.

Once when we were alone, looking out on a creeping blue night enveloping the city and the wintry gardens, lights springing up in windows on the opposite hill that was all houses, tier after tier, I remember how just having her standing there beside me glorified the hour. Changing her pose as she gazed out at the mist with its haphazard blurs of light and two rows of street lamps in definite design, she came closer to me. The fire crackled. The room was still. A hansom passed with a tinkle of bells; they tinkled away with the drumming of the horse's hoofs downhill. I put my arm round her and she turned toward me, smiling gently. A serenity, I thought, suffused her face.

The click of the door-handle brought my arm from her waist as Mary Lennox entered with a taper and lit the gas. Then John came in from a sitting of the Border Ballad Society, and Dick from the Arts' Club, and they fell into debate on a theme of enduring interest to the artist—whatever his medium. The point was how far tradition should be departed from. They were not disputing, one against the other; they argued as though each were Plato *redivivus*. I, an admirer of paintings, caring much for the canvases of men living and men dead, with tastes including Michaelangelo, Corot, Van Eyck, Van Dyck, and Velasquez, and finding not without merit (although they were of my own time and country) Guthrie, Walton, and Harrington Mann; relishing books as diversely great as *The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, listened

with interest. The end of their argument was a decision that those who would listen to nothing and look at nothing that was not at least a hundred years old, were fogeys; but that young practitioners, shouting that they were beyond traditions and rules, were often merely seeking to hide the fact that they could not draw, could not write. I remember I broke in at one point, dashing to the book-shelves to show Reynolds' *Discourses*:—

“Every opportunity, therefore, should be taken to discountenance that false and vulgar opinion, that rules are the fetters of genius: they are fetters only to men of no genius; as that armour, which upon the strong is an ornament and a defence, upon the weak and misshapen becomes a load, and cripples the body which it was made to protect.”

As we three were then all wildly “at it,” the two practitioners and the layman, Tom came dashing in and stood with his neck back in his collar, shoulders squared, a silly confident smile on his face, awaiting the chance to deride. But as Dick and Jack were arguing towards a goal, and not for points, he could not find a place to attack. Finding none, he just listened and laughed. Glancing at her hands, and then at the clock, Marjory beautifully rose and departed. My eyes followed her as she went; and after she had left us I found Tom watching me, bantering. His is the only banter I fall snuffy over. I know—I know quite well—that my face expresses my feelings too clearly; but God knows that what it expressed looking after her was not inhuman feeling. His leer annoyed me. He enraged me, but I made

pretence not to see his twinkle. Blink, blink, blink went those eyes as Dick and John lulled in their discussion because of him standing there. As soon as they were quiet he plunged into one of his talks that we always found disgusting. Even his choice of words was gross.

"I'm tired to-night. I don't seem able to think," he said. "I've found it difficult to dictate letters. My mind is costive."

He grinned at John, as though expecting him to question the aptness of "costive," and ready to call him a puritan if he did. The attitude of his mind made him to suspect that people objected to grossness when they were really rather objecting to his inept "style"! The silly fellow must have been close on thirty-five at that time, and still he liked to do what he called "shocking." His unhealthy flabby cheeks revolted me that night. What I call evil he call's good—and there is the crux of my dislike for him. He gave us a limerick beginning:—

"There was a young painter of Glasgow,
who . . ."

and roared with laughter over it. Dick and John put their heads on one side and considered. They looked at one another. Dick elevated his brows in inquiry, and John shook his head sadly. Then Dick turned to Tom.

"No. Sorry," he said. "No prize for that one."

Tom was not squashed. He sat down, and with his eyes blazing bright began to tell us about—no matter. When I explain that on his shelves he had a life of Verlaine, but had read none of Verlaine's

work; a monograph on Rimbaud; and collected all the lives of, and booklets on Oscar Wilde, and volumes in which he was mentioned, yet had neither *Intentions* nor *The Importance of Being Earnest*; and that he talked to us of some boy's face that "haunted" him, talking in a way that would have been unpleasant were he a young man extolling a girl—you may hazard how it came about that at the end of it Dick, instead of laughing, which generally shut Tom up, allowed his natural disgust to irritate.

"You talk like a sex-pervert!" said he.

Tom roared with joy.

"Why not?" he asked.

Dick poked the fire, looked over his shoulder at him, and made no reply. It seemed horrible to me—all this talk of my eldest brother's—in a room where a few minutes before had been Marjory and that wonderful twilight. Then Tom pulled out his flag of victory.

"Alas, Dick," said he. "I thought you were of those who could say that nothing human was alien to them. However, so be it."

"You dirty dog!" exclaimed Dick. "You will be in parliament yet, and it won't matter a damn to you what side you are on. You are a born dialectician. I thank God that I can't say 'Nothing bestial is alien to me.' I'm human enough to call you an objectionable bounder!"

Mother coming in heard these last words, and—

"Oh, Dick!" she said. "How terrible you are! These bohemian friends of yours! You do hurt me. And Tom is so patient with you."

Up jumped Tom and put his hands on her shoulders.

"Dear *mater*, 'tis nothing," he declaimed.

She patted him as if he were a good little boy in his first pants again.

"Ha! The din-nah gong!" said he. "This long and delightful brotherly talk has made us unconscious of the flight of time."

I have to write the word so: "Din-nah!" There are those of my countrymen who roll the letter R, stress it in a way that amuses such Englishmen as love to tag an R on where there is none, and talk of the Crimear, and the Idears. It is all very pettifogging, but I disliked Tom so greatly that here was another cause for annoyance! He gave us prolonged "ahs." I loathed even his "din-nah" and "sup-pah and "bed-ah" (bed-room). I am prepared to believe that to some he may be a fine fel-lah, a toppin' chap, but—in Mary Lennox's phrase—he is not my handwriting! As Americans say, I have no use for Tom.

At dinner that night I could not shake off a sense of depression. I do not think I was jealous of Tom, do not think I envied him his chief place in mother's heart; but I was horribly weighted by injustice. Dick, to my mind, was so much a decent sort, and Tom so much a travesty of that. This ewe-lamb, this attitudinising Tom, was difficult to understand. He was always, so obviously to me, covering up something with his roar of a laugh and his rapid-fire talk. His twisted and immoral dialectics gave me a doubt in the fairness of the world. I used often to think, listening to him somersaulting, of a phrase in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*: I never object to a certain degree of disputatiousness in a young man from the age of seventeen to that of four or five

and twenty, provided I find him always arguing on one side of the question." That night I was hurt for Dick's sake. I thought how easy it would be for any one to say that Tom got on with his mother—though with his father he was not very friendly, "but you know what the father was, you could see by his complexion." My father was a man. I wished he had been alive then, so that he could have stared at Tom with that Blavatsky look, and made the triumphant grin pass from my brother's face. All my thoughts that evening were thoughts I would have been glad to dodge so as to be happy.

I had been happy in the dusk at that window with Marjory. Tom's arrival and his talk made me feel unclean. I was disgusted with my sex. I know that was very foolish of me, I know I should simply have dismissed his more than erotic chatter—his diseased mind. He was like the Old Man of the Sea on my shoulders then; he had smirched the peace that had followed the twilight; he had spoiled the friendly talk of John and Dick. If he had been a fellow with a tendency for running after the girls of obliging and thoughtless bent, it would have been different. He was not even one of those who, falling, renounce their ideals and say: "I shall have an easier standard of morality in future." He had got hold of the idea that to question was a sign of being advanced, but he did not question like a human creature with a gleam of God in him. It did not seem as though his body got the upper hand of him, and that his vital energy had a tendency to run over at places where, with some, perhaps, it must run over even to their regret. His mind, as I say, was diseased; he was the kind of a man to come running in one day

waving a red flag, and shouting: "Hurrah! Satan has ascended from the depths. Hell has come upon earth! Great day! Satan is a splendid fellah!" I wished he had been dining at his club, and then going off to see for the hundredth time whatever light comedy he was seriously engaged upon. I glanced across the table at Marjory, and could only glance. I had heard too much grossness during the last hour to be able to go near her.

Dick was better balanced than I. He had dashed off to wash at the sound of the gong and, sitting by Marjory's side now, was talking happily as if all the world was always lit with the golden glow that is adrift on that canvas of his called "Beech Woods," and as full of clarity and the clean winds as his "Flowing Tide on Irvine Sands." Tom was right. I am hyper-sensitive. I should have realised that the world was not his world—a sty; I should have realised that he was a monomaniac and that the time had come when he could not cover it up, that his mania—the "something" behind his attitudinising—was getting a grip on him and blatantly showing through. That is the moral of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—not that a man can lead two lives, but that he can't. Jekyll will win, or Hyde.

CHAPTER XIII

AND now as for Greys' Select Circulating Library.

It had been, at one time, father's hope that Tom would become a doctor of medicine, but Tom had done little at school and college, as you already know, beyond learning limericks and self-assurance—or the air of self-assurance. Upon coming down from Oxford he had burst upon mother, with many wild gestures, as of one reciting *Excelsior* and planting the banner with the strange device upon the summit; and eventually she had financed him to carry out the scheme that he laid before her. At times she had been much worried over the precarious future of John, but father always pointed out that he was young, and that if he failed to support himself by writing, he could be introduced, through old Irvine connections, to one of the London publishers and get a post as a publisher's adviser.

All Glaswegians may recall the bookseller's shop in Renfield Street, upon the east side, where now stands a great auctioneering premises, may recall the golden sign above the door: "Street and Rhodes, Booksellers." That was where Tom learnt the essentials of the business. There was really no Mr. Rhodes left in the shop, and Mr. Street was advanced in years.

Some little while after father's death, mother told John and me that she wanted to have a long talk with us regarding our future. She looked so queenly frail that we would have done practically anything for her although we realised that before this private conference with us there had been a long one with Tom.

"My dear boys," she said, "now that your father is not here to discuss things with, I want you always to help me. It is all very difficult. I'm afraid life is hard." I had a lump in my throat in pity for her, and was aware that John sat very stiff. "I have a suggestion to make to you both. Where shall I begin? I think with you, John. You will have to find a profession." John frowned, because he was of opinion that he had found a profession, and mother extended a hand almost pleadingly. "I know, my dear boy, that you are trying, and sending out manuscripts. I know that you had that charming little article in *Quiz*. But I think you would be helped by my idea. Tom is now going to take over the business of Mr. Street—the firm of Street and Rhodes, and I believe there is scope for the three of you. You, John, I suggest, would look after the library; Tom tells me it has lapsed a little of late, and that other libraries are taking away the—er—clients. Bookselling, properly conducted, can be quite like a profession. If you took over the library, made it your special interest, I am sure you would come to love it. Why——" she paused, and then clutched happily at a thought, "it would be something like *applied art*. Think of the opportunity you would have to discover what it is that readers want——"

"And to read!" said John, gaily.

It was clear that the proposition had found favour with him.

"Oh, but I hope you would devote yourself to making it a fine library," she replied. "You would not spend the time reading when you could be assisting Tom to make a dignified and honoured place of it."

"Oh, no, of course not, *mater*. I was only joking. Well, I mean I wanted you to know how jolly interested I am."

"That is such a relief to me, dear." She smiled sweetly. "And you, Harold, you know your mother has often thought you wasted time poring over the second-hand catalogues that came to your dear father——"

"Is there a second-hand business, then?" I asked.

"No, but it could be built up. You see what a splendid dream it is. I believe in such dreams. And, after all, your boyish hobby of playing with catalogues would—er—well, would mean something."

"Is the idea that I would——"

"That you would take charge of a department Tom wishes to start for obtaining rare books for—er—clients. He tells me that constantly the head of the bookshop says people ask for such books, and that there is clearly scope for catering for them definitely."

The conference was not nearly so distressing to the *mater* as I deduced from her manner she had expected it to be. Without any pretence, but in all sincerity, John and I were eager for the next step. I was happy enough in the chartered accountants' office, but my heart was not in the work. If I had stayed there I expect I would have had no enthusi-

asms during business-hours, only in my leisure. Besides, I was there put into a position that chagrined a part of me slightly. Perhaps the part of me affected was the part called Snob. I do not know, and it is a detail in my story. The elderly accountant was an old family friend of mother's, and when we used to visit him occasionally at home I felt unpleasantly his vassal. He was not party to that feeling of mine. I was entirely responsible; for a more kindly, if incomprehensible man, I cannot imagine. He was a collector of all manner of things. I remember seeing at his house an original Mulready envelope. Two of the boys were in the father's business and one was a painter. Dick and he met by accident, unaware of the family connection till later, at a little mountain place in Italy. Everywhere in their house were books and beautiful things, not as decorations, but in daily use. I looked forward to being not a servant on our next visit. This was not admirable of me, but I note it in passing, as I would try to see myself all round as well as the other members of my family!

When Tom came home we discussed the proposition together, all present, Florence included; and so enthusiastic did we become that she broke out at length with: "I wonder if I could do something?"

"Oh, my darling Florence! It is very sweet of you to be interested, but a woman of your station would only enter a profession——"

"But, mother, you say it is as good as a profession——"

"For your brothers, darling. Really, I don't see you as a partner in a bookselling business, however select. I don't like that word 'Select,' but it is dif-

ferent using it about a library, I think. You know, dearest, 'Select Library.' "

Florence's head drooped.

"I see," she said, but evidently she did not, for her head came up again abruptly and she announced: "In America, I believe, women run businesses."

"It is possible. But in America they also wear high white boots. I feel that a daughter's place is at her mother's side."

"Father said once he wished I would go in for medicine. He said that he was glad none of the boys wanted to cure souls, but if any of them wanted to cure bodies he would be delighted."

"He told me that, too," said Tom.

At mention of father, mother's head went sadly on one side.

"Your dear father was always eager that one of his children should go in for medicine," she said. "I know. But I don't think, Florence, that you can bring that forward as proof that he would like you to go into—er—business. And you know, when he sent you to Queen Margaret's College you broke down under the strain of even the preliminary work. I'm afraid it would be too much for you."

Florence looked at her with a desperate and woe-begone expression.

"My dear child," said mother—she always called Florence "child" when she was disputing any plan of hers, "let us leave that question in abeyance. We can discuss it with Mary. She is very much in the midst of advanced movements for her sex. She could tell us if she thought, perhaps, you might go into the place and do a little secretarial work sometimes, just for a change, without any loss to our standing. It

is just possible," she added, "that people would not think it odd. We have the connection with literature already. Your great-aunt was, after all, a patroness of letters and——" she turned to Tom. "Is there anything you can think of that Florence could do, darling?"

"I never thought of it," he answered. "But I shall," and he blinked vigorously. "It would be jolly—awfully jolly. And we'd have a sign, instead of Grey Brothers—the Grey Family. Jolly!"

He laughed happily and mother smiled as though pleased. Florence sat quiet, listening for the rest of the talk.

CHAPTER XIV

I CAN still see Grey's Select Library. Putting my head in my hand, sitting at this table where I write now in the rear portion of my own shop in Buchanan Street, the imminent objects are blurred and I look as through a peephole into the past. We had the legend of Street and Rhodes taken down; the door was of blue, with a thin black stripe round it, according to the design by Dick made *con amore*; and instead of a sign along the top, over the door and window, we had a bulge of brass, a polished shield beside the door, and in perfectly plain letters on it the words:—

GREYS'
BOOKSELLERS
LIBRARIANS

The bottom of the window was covered by a strip of blue velvet, and in the midst of that was a little statuette of Robert Burns, ploughing. That also was executed from a design by Dick. Tom suggested (not before mother) Burns cuddling 'Phemy, and set us all laughing; but he did not really mean it, though he said: "Why not?" when we laughed.

"All right! Why not? I can see it!" Dick cried out, gazing rapturously and diabolically before him as he visualised that statuette in the air.

"Well, perhaps better not," said Tera. "Have him ploughing instead. That would be better. More select!"

We laughed again.

Most people had to be told it was Robert Burns, and so the purpose in Tom's gay mind was defeated, which was that it should be a prelude to recalling the great-aunt to clients. Now and then some one came in and said: "That statuette in the window? A masterpiece! Who did it?" And the wonderful thing became a "bally advertisement" for Dick, as Tom said. But we all, when thus questioned, answered: "My brother Richard," eagerly enough, for various reasons. Three cards lay in the front of the window. Before the statuette was one bearing the inscription *Greys' Bookshop*; to left was one which read: *Greys' Select Circulating Library*, and right: *Greys' Second-Hand Department*. In the shelves behind we kept a fine selection of modern books (biography, travel, fiction, belles-lettres), constantly changing, and between the cards, announcing our triple activities, lay a beautifully-tooled specimen of modern binding, or a rare old First Edition.

At the door we had a commissionaire, who did more for us than anything else, I think, to announce to the world that the premises had blossomed under new auspices. He was an ex-soldier, and a democrat—with a difference, as are most democrats. When a brougham stopped at the kerb he was quick-stepping out to it before it had settled there, had clicked his heels and opened the door. When people walking came in, his speed in placing them was wonderful. I don't think it was so much by their clothes he judged them as by some dog-like sense. To possible sub-

scribers, as well as to subscribers already on the books, he had his heels clicked and the door wide at a moment's notice. Those who looked as though wondering if we sold cheap editions, such as the Canterbury Series, or the Scott Library, glanced at him through the glass panels, and opened for themselves. If ever he made a mistake he put the matter right with a bounty. By and large that manikin was the making of us.

And Tom was wonderful. Mother need never have worried lest the prestige of the family suffered. If ever any "important personage" refused to be attended upon by one of the assistants and asked for the manager, only to find him lacking, and then asked for "Mr. Grey," Tom was in his element. He would talk suavely to the important personage, engage him in conversation, seek his commiseration on the subject of incompetence among the shop-assistants, and pass on to how much better all was in the days of our grandfathers. The link was thus achieved, and on he would go:—

"I remember my dear fathah saying to me once—you will know my fathah's name, but I do not know if you ever met him?—I remember him telling me that—let me see, it would be about the time he was called to preach to Queen Victoria, I suppose, before I was born. . . ."

I never knew an important personage who did not feel better after that medicine. Tom generally made good customers of all these people, and the only difference between them and the others, afterwards, was that when next they called a-shopping at Greys', Renfield Street, after purchasing from the junior assistant, they would step to the manager and inquire:

"Is Mr. Grey well? Please remember me to him."

What with the commissionaire, and Dick's decorative design, his bronze in the window, the occasional reminders that the *pater* had preached at Balmoral, and a rare copy of Burns' poems lying open on velvet in a glass case at the wonderful lines "To 'Phemy," the horrible words *élite*, select, exclusive, were soon showered upon us. People were proud to buy from us, to subscribe with us, to have us hunt down for them the old books, or old bookplates that they required for their collections.

CHAPTER XV

I SAW more of the library than of the shop, because my quarters were at the far end of the library, partitioned off from it by a three-foot high wall of mahogany with a broad rounded top that delightfully reflected the yellow-globed rows and clusters of gaslights on those autumn and winter days when darkness came early. Autumn and winter days were the happiest, the most congenial there. In spring, the quality of the light and the feeling of the air inspired an unrest, a doubt in that life walled round by books, conjured up visions of the first tiny birch-leaves against a cold blue sky. In summer, though books did not seem unnatural, the place seemed a little so. Pictures of corn-fields ripening in the sun, memories of hawthorn scent or of the screaming of gulls over breaking waves occasionally disturbed me. I lived in a world within the world. Sometimes I felt that I lived in a world comprising the world. Cold and dark without, and shaded lights within, made all very pleasing. The place itself delighted. What was made of it sometimes irked; but that is only to say that Greys' Select Circulating Library was like Life.

Near one end of the broad mahogany boundary, between my domain and the circulating library, was a portion that opened quietly and fell back with a mere faint puff of air. I had a table there with a

great blue carpet round it, and on the wall beyond were my pigeonholes for indexing. In each book was a slip of paper; sometimes there were two or three slips. There would be one beginning with the author's name, another with the title first, a third with a subject-name at the beginning. When the time came to make up a catalogue we went round the shelves abstracting these slips from the books, and put them into the pigeon-holes, there being one division for each alphabetical letter. That done, we took sheets of paper, flicked them over with a paste-brush, and made ready our "copy" for the printers.

At first I had for assistant a young man named George Haig, who had so far prepared the catalogues of "Books withdrawn from Library Circulation"; but before long there were three besides myself in that sanctuary beyond the mahogany, for our second-hand business rapidly extended beyond the sale of merely out-moded library books. Within three months, indeed, we had two catalogues to issue: one of Books Withdrawn, another of Rare Volumes.

I fear I have been much of an onlooker in life, often sitting with head on hand gazing out of a window. I fear that often I sat so at my table in the Renfield Street premises, pen in hand, advance sale-catalogues from the auction rooms, or *The Clique*, or *The Publisher's Circular* before me, but considering not my own affairs, considering instead the affairs of others. I never grew weary of gazing beyond the barrier of my department, and watching the subscribers to the library come tip-tapping in like puppets, under the dome roof by day, under the yellow lights of dusky afternoons and dark evenings, when they brought in wet umbrellas or shook snowflakes from

their coats. John had a private room to right of the library, but ever and again he came out to stroll round. Tom, of course, was the arch-priest of the place. It was he who schemed the general attitude of Greys', and in the desire to share the humour of it all with some one, I often thrust aside my natural antipathy to him and went to his room to pass on some incident, as I saw it (John often did not) for hilarity. Pottering with my catalogues, and consulting "Sale Prices Current," annotating and filing away auction lists for future reference, the life of the select library became my distraction, my hobby, much as when I was on the way toward being a chartered accountant the collecting of book-catalogues had been my hobby.

My being there in the public view was thus atoned for: I could see the public! When our second-hand lists were issued, the books noted in them were all put on shelves in the front shop, and one of my staff attended there. Thus the rest of us in this department could get on, uninterrupted, to the attending to out correspondence orders. I sat secure behind the mahogany from unheralded visitors. Questions regarding second-hand books were brought in to my assistants from the front shop, by the salesman there, if he could not reply without advice. Nobody crossed my threshold uncondemned. When the inquiries purported the possibility of a really interesting client in the shop, I would stroll out and look at him after sending a reply; and if on examination he seemed as interesting as his inquiry, I would interject myself with a brief bow. And if, at close quarters, he further pleased me, I would carry him through the shop, into my domain, and give him a chair with his back

to the library lest it should stare at him and make him nervous. Seldom did any enter there who proved unworthy. I don't mean that they were always financial successes to me; but they were always, at any rate, men who could—I had almost said, help the time to pass, but that is not what I mean, for I have never wanted the time to pass—men who could turn time into Eternity for me.

CHAPTER XVI

TO be a member of Greys' Circulating Library was before long one evidence of belonging to what is called the *élite* of the city. There were, indeed, walks of life in which, if some one had not a subscription with us, he or she would be evil-eyed by his or her associates as presumptuous. Many of our members were members only in a fashionable way and troubled us little so long as we sent them, each week, a fresh selection of books bearing the current year's date on the title-page, so that their associates might know not only that they belonged to "Greys' " but that they had the New Volumes Subscription. What the books were, mattered little to such folks. Those who paid for five new books got, each week, a book of travel, a biography, and three novels. We had to be a little careful in the selection of the novels, unless any special taste were evinced. It was safer to send a historical novel than one regarding divorces or eroticism. If Stanley Weyman bored them they could easily come in and give us an indication to that effect, or mark a catalogue here and there to give us some notion of their particular furrow—or seam. Books that treated love, or passion, in a thin, light-comedy fashion, were safe to venture with. An erotic book, nicely veiled, would bring us no irate father or mother rebellious at our choice. The occasional books in which the word lust

was mentioned when the author meant lust, and not love—these could not be sent out haphazard.

"I'm very sorry you sent me this. Please don't send any more novels of this kind. I have daughters. I don't like such books to lie about on the drawing-room table," would be the result of any such *faux pas*.

To which the ripost would be: "Would you kindly give us a list of novels that you want, or take this new catalogue and just a cross at the titles of books you care to see."

On sunny afternoons before tea-time the Circulating Library was a fashionable meeting-place. If the vogue of the moment was to talk in a whisper, then the glass dome overhead hardly echoed the soft feminine voices. If shouting was the order of the day, then the place was like a farm-yard after a hen has laid and disturbed the feathered community. The voices would go on and on, louder and louder, women meeting other women and saying,—

"Oh, you here! Do you subscribe to Greys'?"

"Why, yes, of course. You see me, don't you?"

"How amusing! How are you?"

Nose within two inches of nose they would shout at each other. All over the floor-space would be couples and groups yelling so. Up would go the din to a crescendo, and then suddenly all would cease, save one—the victor; and every head would turn slowly towards her, examining her superciliously from heels to hat. If her victory was to be complete she had then not to stop talking at once; it was incumbent on her to shout a few more sentences without showing embarrassment, and then, with a whoop of: "Good-afternoon!" to sail out. At such moments

subscribers and staff all held their breaths to see how the ticklish *finale* was accomplished—well or ill.

There was one of the subscribers, a young man, whom I loathed. The lines about his nostrils were abhorrent to me. To have known him intimately, I believe, would have been, by comparison, to have made my brother Tom seem a fine fellow. One day he entered during what we called a "slack hour." He was the only client under the dome. In he came, a peramulating sneer, walked up to our chief library assistant and, looking at him as if he was smelling him, said,—

"Oh! I want Zola's latest—not his *Lourdes* or *Rome* sort of book—his latest novel, I mean."

The assistant gave the name of the last Zola volume, and the young man became querulous because he had already seen it.

"Sure he has not written something since them?" he whined.

"That is the last translated," replied the assistant.

The appearance as of finding the place not fragrant increased.

"Well, give me Huysman's last."

It was brought to him.

"Oh, I've read that!" he snapped, and flung the volume down on the counter. "Let me see—I wonder if I have read a book of Hardy's that I've heard about? I'm not sure. Give me *Jude the Obscure*."

"I'm sorry, but we have not a copy in at present," said the assistant. "It is just published and in great demand."

"You don't stock enough copies," he was told.

"If you would care to take out a special subscription for New Books——"

"I object to that. It's blackmail!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said the assistant.

It was at this moment that a fat young woman came bobbing and bouncing in. She tossed a book on to the counter with an air of disgust. The young man of the fixed sneer glanced at her, and then,—

"Give me a volume of Huxley's *Essays*," he said hastily. "Any volume will do. They all stand re-reading."

Hearing his voice, the young woman wheeled.

"Oh, how do you do?" she shouted.

He responded to the greeting with a deep bow.

"How studious you are!" she ejaculated. "Huxley!"

"What have you returned?" he asked.

"*Inde the Obscure*," said she. "I read it in an American magazine, and heard from a friend that the editor had cut out some parts as being too strong. I wanted to run through and see what the difference was. Fuss about nothing! It is most disappointing!" She turned away from him to the assistant who awaited her commands. "Have you a copy of a French book that I want? I pay for new books but this is an old one—*Madame Bovary*. I don't know the author's name. I don't want it in French, but it must be an unabridged edition. I can read French, but it bores me."

"I'm sorry, but we only have it in French," said the assistant.

"How tiresome! Have you *Moll Flanders*? That's not new either. I expect it's silly, but I'd like to see it."

Huxley under arm, the sneering young man now turned and bowed to her again.

"Good-afternoon," he said.

"Good afternoon," she threw over her shoulder.

The assistants, alert to fine shades, *nuances*, were glad she answered in that off-hand manner. They disliked the young man; the young woman they found merely unattractive. No sooner had she gone (not with *Moll Flanders*, which was out, but with a modern book) than he of the fixed sneer returned and threw his Huxley on to the counter.

"Now, give me *Jude the Obscure*," he said. The triumphant manner ill-became his general wizened effect.

"I'm sorry, but I've not a copy at disposal," replied the assistant.

"Nonsense. I have just been across the street, and no one came in after that copy was left by my friend."

"I'm sorry. We have a waiting list for *Jude the Obscure*. It is still one of the books under the heading of New Volumes."

The young man succumbed. What he got eventually to please him I know not. I may have noticed at the time—I expect I was interested enough to watch the incident to an end—but if so I have forgotten. My interest was at any rate deflected from him to two girls who entered just as he was being appeased. I noted that they were having a rapid run of bad luck. They asked in turn, and in duet, in quick fire, for half a dozen novels, all of which were announced as unprocurable with the stereotyped: "I'm sorry, there is not a copy in at present." At last the youth who attended to them came triumphantly back with a volume they had asked for.

"Oh," said one. "We won't have it, seeing it is

in. It can't be any good. We want books that every one is reading."

The other agreed: "If it's in, we don't want it."

That is the kind of remark I cherish. It made me go about gaily all the rest of the day. It made me forget my contempt for the young man with the sneer, and blurred the sense of unpleasantness left by his bouncing acquaintance. I chuckled over my catalogues and reports all afternoon, and smiled many times on the homeward way. It is a *bon mot* I cherish, one of these (like Mrs. MacQuilp's: "Bessie had her tonsils cut . . . and then Nance had tonsillitis,) which have the charm of *Alice in Wonderland* in them, upsetting all the logic of life.

A jovial fellow with a red nose and rolling gait (for whom I used to feel sorry. He was genial, and would soon, I thought, get crabbed, unpleasant, die of a tortured liver) used to bring a thin merriment into the library by always misnaming the titles of the books he wanted. He came shambling in one evening on his way home. He looked as if he had dropped in at a Bodega after leaving the office, and he wore the air of one amused at the world.

"Ha! Good-evening," he said. "Now, what do I want? Yes, I know. I want, for myself, a copy of *The I-rate Pi-rate*, and for my wife a copy of *Jude the Obscene*. She also wants a book about hell. I can't recall the name."

"*Letters from Hell?*"

"No."

"*Sorrows of Satan?*"

"That's it! I knew it was something like that."

I am afraid our assistants were inclined to be gently cynical regarding humanity as exemplified in

the Select Library. Day after day people would come in asking for no more than a "good new buck!" How they looked at the dates on the title-pages! A book published in the spring might be a good hard worker for months, till the end of the year; but a book published in October, unless it was erotic, had only a brief life before it. The first books of the new year would cast it into limbo. I used often to think that half Hall Caine's success was that his books appeared in midsummer, when few novels were published. He was thrust at everybody who came in and, leaning up against the counter, demanded a "good new buck!" For some reason, Hall Caine and Marie Corelli were sent to people whether they asked for their books or not. They were the two writers, *par excellence*, of that period whose books were despatched to subscribers who did not give a list of what they wanted, but only came in now and again to say: "I do wish that once in a way you would send us something that is being talked about." The kind of books that some clergyman advertise in the pulpit, and mention in the annual symposium of "Books I have read This Year," were our box-filers. Odd though it may seem to us to-day, Rider Haggard's *She* was discussed in drawing-rooms for its lesson—and the lesson was the eternal spell of woman over man. Interesting to consider that with-in another decade it was looked upon as a boy's book, not quite so enticing as *King Solomon's Mines*. Hard times the attendants had often. Book after book I have seen held open at the title-page and exhibited, but sometimes a gray appearance suggested antiquity. Useless to point out that it was a little worn-looking because every one in the library had been reading it.

Some of the volumes handed to the damosels on these haphazard visits they had read.

"Oh, I've seen this—years ago! I'm almost sure I have. Anyhow, it doesn't look interestin'. Yes, I think I've read it. What else have you to recommend?"

On one of these wearisome occasions I saw a fellow of the harassed assistant beckon him to a corner and hand him a book that looked absolutely virginal. The young man clanged dubiously at it, shrugged his shoulders, then accepted it, and carrying it to his *belle dame sans merci* opened it, showed her the spotless title-page. She read the title aloud.

"*What Maisie Knew*. No, I don't think I've read that. Is it pretty?"

"I believe so."

"You have not read it yourself then?" But before he could answer she had continued: "Is it in great demand? I've never heard of the author. Henry James? No, I never heard of him before. Has he written anything else? *What Maisie Knew*. It sounds rather interestin'. Do you know anything about it?"

He stole a glance round to see if John was in the neighbourhood. Before he could look in my direction I made myself busy with my pen. He dropped his voice, but I heard him say:

"I have not read it, but one of our subscribers assured me on returning it that what Maisie did not know wasn't worth knowing."

The fair one laughed with delight.

"I'll have it," she said. "But remember, if it's not good I'll never ask you to attend me again."

I smiled over that assistant's reply to the cross-examination, but at the same time I felt aggrieved—for though there is much of Henry James I can't read, there is much that seems great in his work also. My sense of humour was not the only sense stirred as that young lady went off with the book that I am sure would disappoint her. This is the only time I heard a remark of that kind on the assistants' side of the counter.

There were times in that Select Library when the assistants, who had personal leanings toward books, shook their heads at each other and sighed. "We might as well be showing them ribbons or selling powder puffs!" I overheard one say one day. I recall how a three-volume novel did valorous service during one of these periods when our shelves were depleted. We arranged the coming and going of the delivery vans as well as possible, but at the best we had, on two days a week, an hour of scantiness when we dreaded the arrival of clients. A tall, gaunt woman, with a flick of diablerie in her swinging stride, came in on a quiet afternoon and, sitting on a chair, put elbows on counter, chin on hands, and smiled up into the eyes of the assistant before her.

"Give me something," she sighed.

I saw the lad's chest heave. He turned to the shelves and the first thing that caught his eyes was *Love o' Women*. It was a three-volume novel, for we were then in our transition period when three-volume novels and two-volume novels came along with the single-volume ones. He set it down before her, and she read the title. Then she sat back, opened a little silver box that hung from her waist on a silver chain, extracted a cachou, and said,—

"*Love o' Women*. That's an interesting title."

The assistant bowed.

"H'm. I think I will take it. Do you think I shall like it?" she asked, and again put chin on the back of her locked hands.

"I think so," he said.

"You think so. Have you read it yourself?"

"No, but the title seems—as you say—to suggest that it might be interesting."

"You don't even know what aspect of love of women it deals with?"

He fidgeted and blushed. Laughing gaily at him she said: "All right, I'll take it, but if it's not really interesting I'll get some one else to attend to me next time I come."

It was a threat to be heard fairly frequently.

"Shall I send it for you?"

"I'll carry it in my hand," she said, and breathed scent upon him. "Just tie a string round it with a little loop for my finger."

She held up her hand before him with the little finger crooked, as though she were drinking tea with grace, and he slipped the loop on to it; then, over her shoulder, as she swept away, she cast a departing ray upon him. His gaze followed her to the door; he blew out a deep breath as a swimmer coming to the surface, and turned away to enter the book in the ledger.

There was an excessively pretty woman who used to come in and try to excite the assistants. She was a country subscriber, and always when in town gave us a visit to select a load of books for her next box. She paid a "Club Subscription." I believe she was a great entertainer, giving frequent house-parties in

Castle Something or Other, Renfrewshire. Her prettiness was assisted by art, but it was skilfully done. The bloom of her cheeks, the colour of her lips, the brilliance of her eyes, the way in which her coats and dresses were cut, so that every movement played tricks with silk and pink and pearl skin, were remarkable. There was a feline gentleness about the woman. Sometimes her husband came with her: a fat, gross, horribly paunched little man with walrus moustaches, marks of food on his waistcoat, and gouty eyes. He used to sit to one side waiting for her, looking on like a theatrical manager appraising a new-comer desirous of a place in his chorus. He would watch her little ways and chuckle, and chuckle—now chuckling when the assistant remained unruffled before what, though ostensibly requests for “nice new bucks,” were much more like amorous solicitations, anon chuckling when the assistant seemed flustered.

I have known of her being in the place an hour and a half. She would never come to the counter to be attended to, but always chose to have the books for her examination brought to one of the tables in the centre of the domed hall. At the end of the hour and a half there would be a pyramid of books there many feet high. She tossed them about like lace or ribbon samples, and always managed to touch the assistant's hand in taking a volume from him. If he came to her with a selection, and stood opposite, she would say: “Oh, I'll come round,” and her husband would chuckle, his interest renewed. There was one assistant who, at the rustle of her arrival, the first whiff of her scent, used to make a plunge to the nearest shelves, grab out a book at random and

march off smartly with it, as if very busy. He had attended to her several times and refused to do so again. He would go down into the basement, where we stored second-hand books and where the message-boys waited for orders, and give one of them a sixpence to come and peep, at ten minute intervals, to see if she was still there. If she did not see him she would ask for him.

"Where is that handsome young man with the curly hair? Still here? Busy? Oh, well, perhaps you'll be able to look after me. Do you think you will?"

"I shall try, madam."

"You can only try. Now give me a nice new buck — several bucks. Bring me a lot of bucks."

I have seen her depart, despite the moral read into many books of the period, with a slight look of defeat, bowed to by an assistant with a slight air of triumph. It never seemed to me that she quite "played the game," as it is called; for in this country of ours, where people go into a shop to buy things, there is a general notion that the shop-assistants are at least temporarily their servants. I have known, of course, insolent shop-assistants; I have spoken sharply to one myself, but maybe the customer before me had been Mrs. — of —, and he was still distraught. For myself, I like to see courtesy all round, courtesy that is neither touched with condescension nor servility. I used to wish that our young librarians could go to Castle — as Mrs. —'s equals, and let her there breathe upon them, lean her pretty little bosom against their biceps, her nose an inch from theirs. As it was, the poor fellows were handicapped!

There are always more than two views on a subject, even a subject on which it seems impossible that all the world would not hold up its hands together at the call for a show of hands for Yea or Nay. So a truce to my philosophising over the lady whom our head librarian called the Queen of Sheba, except when he mentioned her to the young man who fled at her approach. To him he always referred to her as Potiphar's Wife. Let me get on with my story. It is a queer thing—sex.

And, *apropos* of sex, I have to tell how I watched its action there, in Greys' Library, on brother John, and marvelled. I was too wise to interfere. If I had done so, I am of opinion that what happened would have happened considerably sooner than it did.

CHAPTER XVII

IT was a young lady called Victory Plant who was the undoing and the making of John. Her father was, I believe, a soldier; she spoke of him as "major," but we always thought she should really have said "sergeant-major," and if only she had not believed the world snobbish she might have done so. She was born on the day of some victory, in which he had a part, in Afghanistan.

She was our sole female clerk, and she was supposed to take down letters from dictation, and to type them, for Tom, John, and myself. Actually, I never troubled her. I wrote all my letters, and Miss Plant realised before she was long upon our staff that I was of no great moment, unlikely to be so at any time, and only slightly dangerous.

It was obvious that she was not a favourite among her colleagues. She might have been, the only woman there, the pet of the place, but she aimed rather at being the queen. One reason for the dislike of her required no diagnosing to discover. We had all manner of men on the staff, men from all (I have come to dislike the phrase, but it is inevitable that it must be used) social grades. We had a shop-assistant and a library-assistant who had originally been van-boys in the service of Street and Rhodes. There was a Congregational divine's son. There were young men who had been board school boys, and

young men who had been High School boys. Two had been to a university, and one had a university degree. The point I wish to make is, that they talked to each other as equals—and punched each other's heads, too, the younger ones, as equals, as I discovered sometimes when Tom was in our private lavatory and I, wanting to wash in a hurry before going out to some sale, had to go down to their ablution room. Once or twice I walked into a fist-fight there.

Miss Victory Plant had various methods of speaking, a great subtle diversity of manners—too subtle for me. She reminded me of that French count who ran the gamut at his table, beginning: "Will your Serene Highness do me the honour to try beef?"; continuing: "Will your lordship try beef?"; then: "You will have beef, I suppose, Sir John?"; and passing on to: "Beef?"—or something to that effect. I had a cutting of the full account of that historic incident in my commonplace book but omitted to paste it in, and can't find it now that I want it. At any rate, Victory Plant was like the insolent and obsequious courtier of that story. She knew more about the social station of her colleagues in a week than I cared to know all the time I spent there. A frail, tip-tapping, slightly smiling piece of bones and ivory skin, and capturing whorls and wisps of hair, she was.

It was the glances of the staff as she passed them, and came and went to my brother John's door, that opened my eyes to what was afoot. And then I noted that those who had been sufficiently important or well-born for her to talk to without condescension, had apparently fallen some degrees. They

were condescended to even as the assistants who were originally van-boys. Do not imagine that John was thinking of doing what is called "fouling his own nest," and had any red-eyed design toward a course that would have entailed at least a risk of alimony. He was otherwise lost. Yet I do not regret that Tom and I did nothing, said nothing. I had seen so much pestering of Florence by Mary and Aunt Janet with potential spouses that I did not wish to meddle with John even in the other way, and try to constitute myself a buffer between him and a potential spouse.

One of his occupations was searching for verses about books to quote on the front of the Library Catalogues so as to make them different from all other catalogues in town. Victory Plant flung herself eagerly into the quest for these decorations. Every month she had made the discovery of some appropriate lyric, quatrain or paragraph. By accident I learnt how she did so.

One day, wishing to discover where a quotation that haunted my mind came from, I called to Corner, the shop-manager, who was then passing, to send me whatever dictionary of quotations he might have in stock, and he replied that he had just sold the last.

"Oh, all right," I said.

And then Victory came tapping over from her little alcove with the blue curtains, and thrusting open my elegant barrier (I can see her yet. What gestures, or rather what movements, the girl had!) brought me a copy of the desired reference volume to look at.

"That's very kind of you," I said. "I'll send it back presently."

"I'll come for it," she said.

Having found the quotation I desired to verify and trace to its source, I set the book down. It fell open at the page headed "Books," and I saw little ticks at the texts that had already been used by my brother. He had told me once that Miss Plant was wonderful; she was so widely read and had such a marvellous memory. It appeared that she was constantly leaving a book on his desk, with a slip of paper in it to mark just the quotation he wanted. Looking at that page with its pencil marks I wondered why she did not introduce John to the dictionary, and have done with it. I also wondered why he had not thought of resorting to a quotation book himself. It amazed me that she had been so thoughtless as to lend it to me. There seemed a lack of efficiency in both. Glancing up, I saw her staring across the length of the library as one startled by a sudden memory, her mouth slightly open, a dainty hand raised. Our eyes met. She swept away again. Perhaps she had only paused so forgetting something, trying to recall it; but it struck my mind that she had suddenly remembered her pencil ticks and hoped I would not see them. She need not have worried; for, rightly or wrongly, I would never have dreamt of carrying the book to John and saying: "Consider the significance of this page, my boy!" But I could not resist, as an aid toward fathoming Miss Plant, leaving the book open at that page to await her return for it. She came at last to ask if I had finished with it.

"Yes, thank you," I said, and looked along the littered desk.

"Here it is," said she.

I glanced up at her as she abstracted it from the papers that half hid it, and it seemed to me that as her eye fell on the page her expression was one of alarm. But she caught up the tome, tip-tapped away, carrying it as it were a child in the crook of her right arm. Then I told myself I had probably imagined the look of alarm.

It was a few evenings later that I thought mother was ill. She seemed ten years older when she came in to dinner, and John was also very much strained.

"Are you feeling out of sorts, mother?" I asked.

She looked wanly at me and said: "Out of sorts, dear? No. Yes. No, I don't feel very bright."

After dinner when I was smoking in the study, John came in, hands in pockets, and strolled up and down, looking mightily worried.

"I'm engaged to be married!" he blurted out.

"Never!" I exclaimed. I looked up at him, and as he tramped to and fro staring at the carpet it struck me he had the air of a man engaged rather to be executed. "Do I know the happy girl?"

"Miss Plant," he rapped out, and then stared at me.

I said: "Well, well, you do surprise me"; and I heard my own voice as a voice in a vault.

"Had you any guess?" he inquired, still staring at me.

"Well——" I began; and again: "Well——" and stuck. A third time I tried. "Well," I said, "you do surprise me."

"I'm glad," said he. "I wish you would tell mother so. I wish you would tell her I surprise you, Harold." (I suppose on the stage such a speech would bring laughter, but the ludicrous was in abey-

ance for us both in that study). "She says she is sure Victory made a *dead set* for me, as she calls it. It's horrible. It's not true. You can assure her you never saw any hint, never saw anything that could be, even by the most cynical, called that!"

"I could see mother was troubled," I murmured.

"It's horrible," he repeated. "Victory is a wonderful girl. She supports an infirm mother by her salary from us."

"We three, of course," I pointed out, "support two women between us."

"Well, why not?" he demanded, much more reasonably than on the occasions when Tom was wont to use the words.

"Oh, I quite agree," I said.

"A girl isn't supposed to have to work like that. She's wonderful! Never a complaint. Her father ruined himself by speculation after he came out of the army." (I imagined a little "pub," and the major sampling his stock with too great zest.) "Look how beautifully she bears herself. Mother says she is not of our sphere. I hate the phrase. I hope you don't think there is the slightest justification for mother's remark about a *dead set*?"

"How could I?" I asked.

"I'm glad you feel like that," he told me, woefully serious. "If she speaks to you about Victory, do say what a fine girl she is," and then he paced to and fro again like a tiger in a cage.

I drew at my pipe and considered the polish on the bowl.

"You don't think I'm an ass?" he asked abruptly.

"My dear fellow!"

He looked at me as one not entirely satisfied, and,

wheeling in his walk, trod again the length of the room, gnawing his underlip. But instead of returning he marched out of the door.

"Poor chap!" I said to my pipe, and wondered if I should have shown him the dictionary of quotations instead of leaving Victory Plant in doubt as to whether I had seen the marked page. I doubt, however, if the sight of it would have made much difference. I refused myself such backward glances of self-censure. All my life I have been prone at times to look back and wish I had acted otherwise.

I opened the book I had brought down to read, and conned the lines: "Tears for my lady dead, Heliodore . . ." but they belonged to another world. I closed it on a finger, and sat looking absently at the fixed reflection of the gaslight on the brass shovel and tongs, on the brass rail of the hearth, the big, comfortable vacancy of the saddle-bag across the rug from me. The clock ticked on—tick-tock, tick-tock.

"Poor devil!" I said. "He's—been—and—gone—and—done it." And then: "Oh, I expect she'll be all right. She's just got to keep on managing and arranging and not let him know. Poor devil!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THEY were strained days that followed. Odd to think that it is all over years ago.

It was in the Renfield Street premises that I had my formal re-introduction to Victory Plant. I had felt all day (the day following the evening of that obviously not hilarious announcement) that it was coming; or perhaps "felt" is not the word. We often say we "feel" this or that when really we have made deductions, hardly consciously by an assortment of frail spots of cumulative evidence. Perhaps there were such fragments of evidence during the day, glances in my direction from Victory, manner of expectancy, glances half-friendly, half-triumphant. Perhaps a sudden halt John made near my territory, when the library was having a lull period, and a turn of his head toward me and then to Miss Plant crossing stage left to rear (in conjunction with other as slight but numerous hesitations or actions) prepared me for what befell.

Six o'clock came. The assistant librarians had all gone. To Cochrane, the senior, who generally waited until my brother departed, I heard John say: "All right—you need not stop. It's after six. I'm just going." My chief assistant, George Haig, was drawing on his coat beside me, mentioning something that had to be done in the morning. John retreated to his room but left the door open. I heard Tom's

tramp passing away in the outer shop, and his boomed "Good-night, Smith. Good-night, Cornah." I heard Smith and Corner reply. In his usual formula, Haig said: "Well, you don't want me any more."

"No, no," I said. "Good-night, Haig."

The commissionaire came in from the front shop, the two medals on his chest clinking, and nearly collided with Haig at the entrance to the library. They grunted apology in unison, and the commissionaire, seeing me still there, went back again into the shop. Then the bell tinkled in Miss Plant's alcove, and she came pit-patting into the library. Simultaneously John appeared, swinging from his room. I knew something momentous was going to happen. I had known it, been increasingly certain as the day progressed, and that was why I waited. I had already put a cross beside a note in a pamphlet on second-hand books regarding the fact that the so-called first edition of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* is not actually the first edition printed, that it had already been set up, and that the "pre-first edition" copies are scarce and valuable. John swung open my low door and Victory entered. I lifted a pen and went over my pencilled cross slowly again, in ink. I had no more to do. I was self-conscious and wished to appear as if taken by surprise.

"I say, Harold," said John.

I glanced up.

"Hallo!" I said. "Not gone yet?"

"I wanted, Harold, to get your congratulations," he said. "I mean, I want to tell you that Miss Plant is going to marry me—to—well, to re-introduce her as——"

He paused, and she looked at me very sweetly as

he began to mumble the last words of the speech he had commenced with a tremendous definiteness. I think the culmination was "my wife to be," but, as I say, he mumbled. I doubt if he knew himself what he said. I doubt if even Victory was certain, although she was the least perturbed of the trio. I leapt to my feet. Now and then in my life I have suspected that my heart is not very strong. There was a feeling of constriction about it then, and I confess (although it was one of the tenets of the creed of our family that well-bred people are never nervous) that I was ridiculously nervous. That horrible suggestion of being in a false position somehow or other caught me. I raised my head and looked from Victory to John. I thought it was absurd to shake hands with him, he having already told me of his intended *mésalliance*, of the quandary he had got himself into, of what he had allowed to befall because of Miss Plant's infirm mother, her entangling hair and wonderful nature. I turned to her with my hand held foolishly before me. I wished John had not spoken as if here was his first notice to me of the engagement.

"Absurd!" I thought. "She must know—or have a fair guess—that he has already told me."

She looked at my hand, then glanced at John, and I, too, turned to him; but his eyes seemed blurred, as though seeing us indistinctly. Then at last Miss Plant seemed aware of my hand and gave me her finger-tips.

"Oh, yes, yes," I said. "Congratulations. Congratulations, I'm sure."

Immediately the thought occurred to me that here was a *faux pas* with a vengeance. Why, I rebelled,

had my brother used that ridiculous word? Congratulations! Now I had only congratulated her—not him! Victory giggled, put her head this way and that. As she had nothing to say for herself I said again: "Congratulations." At that point I saw that I had dropped my pen, stooped, picked it up, and had a rush of blood to the head. They went away then, looking over their shoulders and smiling, John back to his room, Victory to her alcove. She drew on her coat, and stuck the pins in her hat. I thought that her wrists and hands were like swans' necks and heads. I tidied up my desk, put things carefully away, one a-top the other, that should have gone a-top something else, the papers in drawers that should have gone on files, and then, as I stuck on a file a letter that I should have left under a weight, I realised that I was "off my head," and, leaving everything as it was, snatched up my hat and coat and fled. All this distracted behaviour was due to the fact that I felt as though I had been compromised as well as John.

"I hope to God he'll be happy," I murmured to myself.

As I reached the counter, Miss Plant came from her niche.

"Good-night—er——" she said.

"Good-night—good-night," I replied, and turned back as though I had forgotten something.

She disappeared slowly into the shop as John made exit from his room. The commissioner again quick-stepped into the library.

"See you later, Harold," John called to me. "Good-night, Smith."

The commissioner had stepped into Victory's

recess to put out the light there, and I heard his feet scuff together, the heels click.

"You can put out all these lights, Smith," I said.

He put them out carefully, marching along the counter while I stood at my desk, trying to keep calm. I had an impulse to wring my hands! I had a desire to go and get drunk—to forget temporarily a sense of being exploited, coerced, put upon. 'Tis better to have loved and lost, I think, than to have not loved and been won! I had not forgotten my brother's manner of the previous evening, and I, vicariously, suffered with him. Jet after jet went dark; the incandescent mantles retained their incandescence a few moments, glowing without the gas. All the library was dark then before me, and I was aware of Smith standing side-wise—waiting.

"You need not wait," I said.

"You have your own key, have you, sir?" he asked. "The wicket door don't slam very well. It's better to close it with a key in the lock."

I searched all my pockets.

"I expect, sir," he said, coming nearer, "that it is in the first one you tried. If you try again——"

"Why, yes!" I exclaimed, beginning again as he suggested. "Here it is."

"Ah!" said he. "It is all simple enough if you are not absent-minded. A gentleman thinking about other things never knows where his latch-key is. Thinking about all those ancient books naturally makes a gentleman absent-minded."

"Well, really," I said, "I think there is nothing to keep me. I may as well go after all," and I stretched up, tiptoeing to turn out my own light.

Smith came doubling to my side.

"Allow me—allow me!" he cried out, and, snatching up one of the little ladders, set it under the bracket, tripped up two steps, and turned off the tap.

It may all sound very ridiculous, but I dare say we are ridiculous sometimes. I was grateful to Smith. His deferential friendliness, and smiling familiarity, seemed to mollify for a sense of misery that had fallen over me. I felt as if I could face the dusk-blurred streets with all their crowds of dim faces then. I marched down the empty shop with the dust covers over the cases and the tables where books lay, the commissionaire in step behind me, went out through the wicket, he following, waited till he had locked the door and pushed thrice against it with the flat of his hand. An insane impulse came to me to invite him to have a drink, but I caught hold of myself then—tightly. I said good-night, with as near to a parade rasp as I could get.

"Good-night, sir," said he.

I had never been so distraught and uncomfortable before, never so self-conscious. As I hastened away I knew that Smith was staring after me. I believe he thought I was drunk. I crossed the street at a run, leapt on a Kelvinside tram coming uphill and, climbing to the roof, sat down, very much aware of the stickiness of the streets and the stickiness in the night air.

CHAPTER XIX

I WAS worried as much over the question of marriage as over John's marriage. That was the conclusion I came to eventually. I had seen Victory Plant in Renfield Street; I had seen much more than the annotated dictionary of quotations, had seen the smile on her lips when she went into my brother's room in response to his ring, had seen the little toss of her head as she came out. "Things are going very satisfactorily," was what she reeked of. I do not like these one-sided love-affairs—do not like to see a man pursuing a girl who does not want him; but I like less to see a one-sided commercial raid, a girl pursuing a man until he does not know whether he wants her or not, and thinks that perhaps he does! But even in affairs that are love-affairs and not, more accurately, designs (one way or the other), the choice that men I know make for their wives, and women I know make for their husbands, often puzzles me, and when the element of puzzle is done away with, dejects me. It is, of course, a good thing that all our tastes are not similar in such matters, or we men would all be running after one woman. As it is, the scheme of things is obviously better. I try, in writing these memoirs, to recover the thoughts and feeling of the times to which I refer; I have said so already, but repeat it again lest I seem a vacillating instead of progressing

person; and at the time Jack sprang upon us his Miss Plant, we were all woefully depressed.

"But I can't think what he sees in her," said mother, after Victory had responded to an invitation to spend an evening with us. (It was Mary who advised mother to bring her much to the house. Mary had not seen her, but she damned the girl at a venture. "Invite her here, and keep on inviting her," she urged. "Don't go against it. That's fatal. Let him see her among his own people.")

"No, I can't think what he sees in her," said mother, when John had gone off homeward with Victory on that historic night. "She sings and plays, but all girls sing and play—and he can't have heard her do either in the library! It is different with men. Only either very proficient or very conceited men sing. That is nothing. She sings and plays passably."

Conversation had certainly been difficult, but we all tried to make it easy for Victory. When she lost her way we changed the subject. When she lost it again we took refuge in music. We tried to simplify for her, all shuddering inwardly, and Florence said she liked her frock ("if you will allow me to say so") and so awakened the light of enthusiasm over a talk of Sauchiehall Street. And then we had another song.

Tom roared with delight at mother's views upon the voice of her future daughter-in-law.

"But one never does see what the fellah who is going to marry the girl finds in her," he told her.

"Darling Tom, don't jest about this. It is terrible."

"There were moments when I pitied her," said I.

"Pitied!" exclaimed mother. "John pitied her—and now you see the result. Her smile! Oh, that dreadful smile!" Her lips twisted. "And yet I have to admit that her dress was very tasteful," she added, and locked her fingers round one knee, gazing before her. "No, no—the dress won't atone."

But affairs, as always, took their own course. A week or two later, John came into my department late one evening.

"Busy?" he asked.

"Not frightfully," I replied.

He sat down and began to draw squares and triangles on a slip of paper.

"I've finished my novel," he said. "And I've made a very good arrangement with Hardwood the publisher."

"Hardwood!" I ejaculated, for Hardwood was just beginning, and making a very brave show of names. I was delighted. Not a writer was on his list but that one who really cared for literature could respect. Hardwood, in these early days, was his own representative to the trade, came for orders and showed us his dummy copies to that end, his visits definitely business-visits.

"I saw you talking with him the other day when he called," said I.

"Yes, I took him out to lunch," said John. He made some more designs and then: "What do you think of my going in for literature and chucking this?" he asked.

I considered that if his novel sold to no greater purpose than the other novels on Hardwood's list, the emoluments would be small. At the same time I knew that this publisher's imprint stood for merit

among those who could find books as well as learn what "new buck everybody is reading." This, however, was my brother's affair, and he only could decide. As I did not answer, he continued.

"Other men have embarked on literature with less hope," he said. "I've had stories in——" and he rattled off a few magazine titles. "Victory thinks I should stay here till my book is published and we see how it sells."

"I was looking into his eyes as he said this, and at that comment dropped my gaze from his so that he could not read my thoughts. Then he did astonish me.

"I don't think I want to marry her," he said in a very low voice.

I was astonished at the confession, not at the fact. I had to look up again at that announcement. John then evaded my eyes.

"We had almost a row about it," he told my blue carpet. "I believe that if I were to chuck this now, I mean at once, before the book is out, I believe that—I believe"—I could see that his face was twitching—"it would be a way out."

"Can't you tell her you don't want to marry her?" I suggested. Impossible to believe that so recently I had stood up here and made formal, if nervous, congratulations! I had been right in my surmise, my tapping of it all. But for a moment I was ready for him to leap up and exclaim: "What do you mean?" Of course he did not. He merely shook his head.

"No," he said, and kept quiet a long time. "I think she knows," he brought out at last.

"Then tell her how you feel, if that's the case, and she'll release you."

There was another dreary pause.

"You seem rather pleased to hear about it!" he said suddenly, in a changed voice.

"Well, candidly, I have never——" I began.

"Oh, she's not a bad sort," he interrupted—which was as near as he came to leaping up combatively and asking me what I meant. "But——" again his face twitched. He was distraught. "God knows," he said. "I don't."

He rose, stood a moment twisting his lips. It was the very movement of mother's mouth when she discussed Victory on the evening after that painful visit. I wish I was not so sensitive to troubles of other people. I feel at times sorry for the whole bunch of humanity, good and bad, half-and-half! There he stood, twisting his lips. Then he marched away into the shop, and after about a quarter of an hour had elapsed Tom shoved his head at the entrance to the library.

"Harold!" he hailed.

I rose and followed him into his private room, noting in his lithe tramping movement ahead of me announcement of triumph, and on his face, as he swung open the door and held it for me to follow, a look of suppressed hilarity. Inside the room John paced to and fro, not wildly, as I had seen him pace at home, but with a slow step, heavy for him.

"Take pews, take pews," said Tom joyously. "I say, Harold, John wants to chuck it. He says he's got to chuck it sooner or later and that he'd be happier if he chucked it now. He tells me he is going to publish a novel. He's half thought of——"

John interrupted, turning to me like a man ashamed; and I "jaloused," in the old Scots word,

that he had not told Tom all he told me. I could guess that. But I think the astute Tom had his own shrewd guess at another reason for John's desire to leave us.

"I've just been trying to make Tom see that I'd feel more manly if I chucked it now instead of hanging on like a coward till I know if my book was a success," said John to me.

"Dashed mysterious reasoning," Tom bellowed, and laughed happily. "I don't believe you're being frank with me, brother John," and he dashed up to him, slapped his shoulder, then grabbed it and shook him in his mock-playful fashion.

John made a faint wriggling movement to escape this ironic display, threw himself down in an easy-chair, thrust his legs out before him, stuck his hands deep in pockets, and looked at me sidelong, almost pleadingly, from under his brows.

"I think I see the point," I said and, strolling to the hearth, leant a shoulder against the mantelpiece.

"You do?" Tom shouted. "Oh, well, that's two to one!" He could not dissemble his inward eagerness to see John go. His talk of "two to one" was what, in the years I write this there is a slang word to describe—namely, *camouflage*. "I think it rather wild, but all geniuses are rather wild, always getting into all sorts of scrapes that other men avoid, and that sort of thing."

Without apparent reason, John took out a fountain pen from his waistcoat pocket and tapped on the arm of the chair with it.

"I want to go to London," he said. "I want to devote myself to literature. I want to chuck this

before—before—before my novel comes out. If it is a success I should go at any rate.”

“Quite! Quite!” Tom whooped. “Well, all that remains, seeing you irrevocably decide, and that Harold has no objections, is for the thing to be done in order. I suppose you will want to take your share out of the concern?”

“I expect it will be handy for a little while,” said John, looking at his eldest brother with disdain.

“Right—as you wish. I hope Hardwood may be able to sell more copies of your book than he seems to be able to sell of most that he has published so far.”

Just for a moment John looked as though he had a reply to that sally, opened his mouth to speak, then laughed and rose. I thought he had a private thought regarding the subject, but what it was I could not conjecture.

CHAPTER XX

SOME time ago I went to a music-hall for relaxation, to get away from thoughts regarding Marjory and myself, they having taken a depressing trend and I being unable to turn off their flow. I was feeling elderly and, for the moment, not content with being so. I looked back on my life, regretted that I had left undone things that I might have done, and done things perhaps I should not have done. I was depressed. Even my false teeth depressed me! I had had to get two more teeth added to a plate on which were already four, and what Dick (who had by that time been to America, where he painted some fine portraits and whence he brought back some risible slang) calls "store-teeth" gave me the hump with their innuendo. In that condition (I thank God I am not often thus pettily melancholy) a music-hall seemed the right corrective. I went to it half-hopeful, half-adread; for I have known such places plunge me into the deeper depths. They are like certain drugs of tricky action—sometimes effective, sometimes worse than the disease for which they are alleged cures. I expect I had a touch of liver trouble at the time, too!

At that music-hall was George Graves (a name probably familiar to many) with a most ridiculous cough, and complaints regarding age. He told us

how he creaked in his bath, and I laughed gaily. If I remember rightly, he appeared in some sort of short play, such as is performed on the music-hall stage, and one of the characters asked him about an old "affair." He coughed again like a hoarse seal, seemed perturbed, and we all, on the hither side of the footlights smiled and waited. At last he said: "Oh, dear, oh, dear . . . that comes under the heading of A Dirty Business . . . it was a long and streaky story. . . ." I put up my head and bayed with the rest. What we laugh at in music-halls is often our own troubles. I had a little rest from my own tangled personal theme; but that remark which I quote (to the best of my memory) recalled to me the affair of the Select Library of John and Victory Plant. On the way home I murmured: ". . . under the heading of a Dirty Business . . . a long and streaky story," and my mind went back to those old years in Renfield Street.

I gathered, or was given data from which to infer, during the days that followed the brief conference in Tom's *sanctum*, that John had told Miss Plant he was going to leave the library and embark on the frail craft of journalism in London—I believe that is the way to phrase his intentions. There was certainly a coldness between them. There is a way in which a woman can wave the back of her dress, and send a swerving motion from her hips to her neck, the head completing the tremor with a flaunt, like a flower on a wind-tossed stalk. She did these things during the succeeding days. The staff observed them and wondered. Greys' Circulating Library was less primarily a library than a place where Miss Plant flaunted. John had stopped ringing his bell for her.

I noted the cessation of its buzz, but was uncertain what to make of that.

"For myself," I mused, "I certainly could not push a bell to summon my wife to be."

Yet I wondered if there were deeper reasons for John not requiring Victory's presence as much as formerly. When she went to my brother's room, she went with a face like a mask, lips tight shut. When she came out she seemed now indignant, anon contemptuous.

"Do the staff know that they are engaged?" I wondered. "Or do they think she is going to be 'sacked' for her insolent manner?"

To me the position either of Miss Plant or of brother John would have been intolerable. I would have pawned my watch and emigrated. At home mother continued to look aged, but took the information regarding John's determination to storm London with a thoughtful placidity. She even said that though she had considered it would be wiser for him to make his assault after the publication of the book, perhaps from another point of view it would be better for him to go at once.

"It would be much nicer, after success comes, to feel he had not waited for it—but dared," she told Florence. She looked before her, her gray eyes cloudy. "I hope," she added, "that Miss Plant—I mean Victory—is in agreement regarding his going. I hope——"

She paused. She was John's mother but she was also a woman. I often wish I could have got right inside and seen her—the hidden She. There is a saying that blood is thicker than water. As I looked at her I thought: "Is mother-love stronger than

the feminine pact?" What was in her mind I cannot tell you. I can only put down what she said. To us—Florence, and mother, and I—entered then John, and I believe he guessed that his affairs had been the subject of conversation—or, I should say, of mother's monologue.

"Hallo, people," said he. "I've just had a letter from Hardwood, mother, and he says he will be glad to see me in London before the book is out. He'll have me *met* and introduced, as he says—show me off."

Mother nodded her head slowly.

"I see," she said. "You will not forget that exquisite little poem by Robert Burns to Euphemia Clouston. I think that might be in the nature of a *cachet*. Does he know of that?"

John gave a cynical grimace.

"He must have seen the volume of the Irvine Edition in the case of rare books," said he. "It's open at that page. And he's heard about father having preached at Balmoral."

"Oh, you told him that?"

"Well, no—I didn't, but I heard Tom—I mean I heard Tom speaking to him about it."

"I expect he knew, at any rate," said mother.

"After all, it is my book that matters," John remarked.

"And these things, too," said she, with a little definite nod. "Also your personality matters. I really can't advise. I wish your dear father was here. He was so worldly-wise at the same time as being so simple," and she sighed.

She missed my father still. We all did, indeed, except, perhaps, Tom. Our home had lacked cohe-

sion since his death. He was all that I have told you, but he was much that some had not the capacity to see, and that, as the years go by, and I get to know life better, I look upon as not contemptible.

When, a month later, the Saturday came on which Jack was to leave Greys' for good and all, there was a change on Miss Plant. She did not flaunt all that morning. Passing the assistants to go to John's room, with her pad in hand for taking down letters to dictation, her manner did not suggest that she had contempt for him. She had an engagement ring on her finger, but though I am capable of seeing a ring on a woman's finger, and not realising whether it is on the right or left hand, or of forgetting on which hand and which finger the engagement ring is worn, I do not know if the staff were such dullards. They may not have thought that she was engaged to my brother, of course. They may even have thought (as her manner during the last days might have suggested) that he had done what is called "attempting the familiar" with her.

On that Saturday she was charming. She smiled to everybody on arrival. Her graduated salutations abruptly ceased. To Corner she was nothing short of engaging, as I noticed on going out to see about getting some shelves cleared in the shop for a new display of books I had catalogued. For the daily work goes on, despite all the passions and pains, the tangles and disentanglements. The routine continues, with the charwomen let in at eight to scrub a portion of the floor daily, and every evening the dust-sheets spread like shrouds.

CHAPTER XXI

THERE was a look of determination on John's sensitive face as he moved to and fro, engaged upon his final clearances and tidying. Miss Plant was not the only one with a smile that day. All the staff gave the impression of having some masonic understanding and being gay over it. Yet I was sure they were not glad to know John was leaving them. It was Tom (despite the fact that he was, at about this period, dallying in socialism, and going down to Motherwell and Hamilton to test his oratorical powers in lectures and debates with colliers and steel-workers) who was the creator of suspense in the place, and made all feel at times an insecurity in their tenure of office; although I must say, realising, too, that my dislike of brother Tom is almost comic—we human beings are comic, tragic, pathetic, and all the rest—he was not consistently terrorising with them. Were any one ill, he would observe, and send the ailing one home, telling him not to hurry back till he was well, talking in a queer blend of equality and condescension. I do not pretend to see all through Tom any more than I pretend to see all through anybody, myself included. I merely try to draw his portrait here for all who may be interested.

I left early, but when John came home he showed with great delight, a monster fountain pen which

the staff had presented to him, an anti-cramp pen like a little black sausage. That was their secret.

"It will hold enough for a novel as long as one of Thackeray's," said Florence.

John was very gay. He held the weapon before him exhibiting it to us.

"You seem buoyant at the prospect of going away," said mother. "Are you glad to be leaving us?"

"Oh, it's not leaving us," said Tom. "It's leaving the Select Library that delights him. Eh—what?" For, that conversational tag was then very much in use, its origin being, I was told, in the deafness of some royal personage. Courtiers imitated it, and it leaked downwards for the west-ends of all cities, and then became comic on the stage before it died. In the same way came a fashion of shaking hands with arms held high in air—the origin of that being a boil in the arm-pit of another (or perhaps the same) royal personage. I often wish I had gone to hear my eldest brother lecture to working-men. It must have been a great spectacle.

"I'm not delighted," Jack declared. "I found it very difficult to say good-bye to them. I've got to like those chaps."

"Ha-ha!" laughed Tom. "Is the coming author inoculated with the equality microbe?"

"I felt horribly maudlin," said John to mother.

"Why horribly?" asked Tom.

John was suddenly deep in private thoughts.

"There is something in that," he said. "I believe my book is too restrained." His mind had switched off to consideration of his craft.

"Oh, let it rip!" cried out Tom. "Restraint is rot.

Let yourself go. I hate sterility. Give yourself."

"Your good self or your bad self?" inquired John.

"Yourself. If the weak-kneed are to take hurt, no matter. They're not worth considering." He grabbed John's shoulders, spun him about, and kicked him gently behind.

"Don't do that!" said John.

"Oh, dignity! Dignity, my lad, is impudence."

"And so is familiarity," replied John; but with mother present there ended the pleasant 'ragging,' as Tom would have called it.

"Miss Plant—Victory—did you say good-bye to her?" she asked.

"She's coming over to supper to-night," John answered, "or after supper—to coffee. She says she can't stay too long away from her mother."

"I think the times must be changing," mother murmured. "When I was a girl your father came after me."

"I wanted to be at home with you for the last night," he explained.

"There's filial piety!" Tom broke out.

"Oh, chuck it!" I said, forgetting our usage in such silly moments, which was not to interfere. I was glad he did not say we were two to one, but succumbed for once and merely blinked rapidly several times.

CHAPTER XXII

VICTORY arrived just as we were rising from dinner, and I knew by my mother's glance that she was pleased with the pictorial effect of John's wife-to-be. There were times when Victory was inclined to be what is called "loud" in attire, but that was only when she dawned upon us. As time progressed her taste seemed to have been clarified. That night she was exquisite and right. Neither of the epithets vulgar or loud could possibly have been applied to her. Mother's eyes swiftly scrutinised the girl; she called her "my dear."

"Ah, here you are, my dear, for the farewell supper. But why didn't you come earlier?"

"I've dined," said Victory.

"Well, you're in time for coffee. Florence, do help Victory to take off her hat and coat. Off you go, my dears, and we'll have a comfy evening over the fire."

To us in the drawing-room, as we gathered there, arrived Dick, very jolly, his cheeks puckered in a smile.

"Been to the Arts' Club?" Tom asked, when we were all arranged round the fire in the way mother liked. "There we are now; all together, just ourselves, and no strangers!" she was saying.

"Yes," replied Dick. "Why?"

"I just thought so. A kind of intuition."

We knew what he meant, except, I am sure,

mother. There was a frisky glamour in Dick's eye, a dancing gaiety. He was arranging for his first one-man show in some art gallery in Saint Vincent Street, and had been entertaining the owner at his club.

"There's still some coffee left, Dick," said Florence.

"Thanks," said he. "Thank you, old dear."

"Oh, Dick!" cried mother.

Florence, having passed the coffee, bent to Victory and asked if it had been a busy day at the library.

"Not awfully," said Victory. "We were all too excited about John's departure." She never used his Christian name in a way that suggested to me that she was born to do so, that she was destined to continue to do so. There was always either a hint of diffidence or of determination in the accents. "I suppose he told you about the presentation?"

"The pen? Oh, yes. I think it was so sweet of them," said Florence.

"It was sweet of you all," said mother, who had turned to listen to the conversation of the girls. "I feel rather worried about my son embarking upon such a doubtful career. I think he should wait until he saw how his first venture went."

Victory spread her hands before her, looked at their backs, then stroked her dress.

"But, after all," mother continued, "he has a long time ahead of him, I hope . . ."

I thought Dick was getting worse instead of better. I had a fear lest he might say something extravagant, and make public his condition, not "keep his thumb" on it. So I lured him into talk over the first subject that came to my mind. There was to be a raffle toward aiding the inauguration of some free scholar-

ships in a girls' college in town, and the object raffled for was an album of paintings and drawings by celebrated artists. Dick had nothing in it; indeed, few Glasgow painters or etchers had, except those who had left the city. A prophet is not without honour save in his own country. He had, however, been one of the young artists who volunteered to turn over the pages of the album where it was on view, laid on a monstrous velvet cushion on a table in one of the art-dealers' shops.

"I must come in one day," said I, "and see that album."

"It's great fun," said Dick gaily. "You've bought a ticket, have you?"

"No."

"Oh, allow me to sell you one," and he fumbled in his pocket. "Haven't a book of tickets here. Left it in my coat, I expect. Never mind, anon, anon."

"Is it a good collection?"

"Not so dusty. One or two of 'em have given their muck, but most of them have played the game and been artists as well as commercial. What I say is—if they give anything they should give their best, whether they are paid or not. If they object to giving to charity, then let them give nothing."

"A great many titled people have shown they have artistic leanings, and have given something, haven't they?" asked mother, who had overheard part of our talk.

"Oh, yes," said Dick. "It is primarily a book of snobs. The people who are represented are primary prom—primarily prominent," he enunciated carefully. Florence looked at him with worried eyes, and Victory smiled. "Primarily prominent," he tried

again. "A painting princess had as great prestige to be approached for such a project as a painter. Oh, dear, what a procession of p's!"

We all laughed.

"Didn't the princess give something?" I persisted, trying to extricate him. "What was it like?"

"That!" he ejaculated to all, although I had tried to get him to turn to me, and make the talk, instead of general, just between ourselves. "Oh, as long as herself and as long as a jackass."

"Oh, Dick!" said mother. "Where do you learn such expressions?"

John rose and went over to a seat beside Victory, and Tom—so as to prevent mother realising what was the cause of Dick's manner, blend of *distrain* and delightful—inveigled him into talk. I heard Dick answer a question: ". . . yes, oh, yes, of course you know him. Fine fellow. Yes, they were married yesterday, before the sheriff." But I think mother disliked *tête-à-tête* talks when there were several present, preferred a general discussion. She turned from her own *tête-à-tête* with Florence at these words.

"What is this you say, Dick?" she asked. "Married before the sheriff! Do I know of whom you are speaking?"

"A chap called Moir—Martin Moir. He's very clever, and his girl—his wife—is a dear."

"Moir? I know the name. Is he any relation to Ebenezer Moir, the manufacturer?"

"Yes, his son—that's right."

"Oh, dear. I knew Mrs. Moir in the old days. She was a Sinclair of Colintrae—Rachel Sinclair. You must have heard Mrs. Stroyan speak of the Sin-

clairs of Colintrae. Dear, dear, how it will upset her."

Victory's eyes were downcast, and the corners of her lips held the pucker of a smile.

"Married before the sheriff!" said mother sadly.

I longed for Tom to ask: "Why not?" but he did not.

"I think it is such a flippant way," she added.

"Oh, no, mother, surely not!" exclaimed Dick.

"It is really quite impressive when the sheriff comes in wearing his wig and gown and begins to read, and the people stand and respond, and the witnesses hold up their hands, taking the oath." It struck me that he had probably been one of the witnesses at that ceremony. I cannot think that the inference did not occur to mother also, but she did not interrupt to inquire how he knew the procedure. "It's fine! And he doesn't come down and make jokes afterwards—I'm sorry, mother."

These last words were because she had shaken her head as one grievously hurt.

"But you know father used to say," broke in Florence, "that he disliked a certain kind of joke some clergymen think it necessary to make at weddings."

"Florence!" said mother, as she might have said:

"*Et-tu . . .*"

"Why shouldn't one joke?" asked Tom.

"Quite, quite," said Dick genially, and "Quite, quite," again, so very genially that everybody smiled except Tom, who looked furious. Dick's tone was as though calming a child, or kow-towing to a lunatic. The little edge of something else, hardly tipsiness but something not in the manner of a perfectly unalcoholised Dick, was secondary; and I think none noticed

it save John and myself. After our joint smile was over, John gave a shrewd glance at Dick, and chuckled deep in his chest.

"When I get married," said Dick, "I shall get it done by way of the sheriff." (Victory's head turned stiffly and she stared at him.) "Why have it in a church?"

"It is usual," said Victory, before mother could reply.

"Oh, yes," he agreed. "It is usual. But why?"

"Well, why not?" demanded Tom.

"Shut up!" Dick snapped.

"It's usual," said Tom, repeating Victory's phrase.

Dick spread his hands before him with a gesture of woe.

"That means nothing—it's usual!" he said.

"Don't you know that only among the lowest savages is the reason 'it is usual' given in response to inquiries regarding their rights and ceremonies? People in a higher condition can always at any rate tell why they do this or that. That is no answer. You might just as well say 'Bow-wow' to me."

Florence bit her lip. John chuckled in his chest again, then looked at Victory, as if suddenly fearful lest she was offended.

"Richard, you forget that Miss Plant used the words," said mother.

Dick executed a beautiful bow.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I did forget. I forget that it was not only Tom who said—I beg your pardon." His second bow had no mockery in it.

But Victory was firm and serious. She seemed indeed afire, ready for white-hot combat.

"You object to convention, then?" she inquired, and raised her head, showing Dick the under part of her chin. A little quivering crease was on either side of her nostrils, and her lips curled up at the corners.

"Not necessarily," he replied. "No."

"You object to what is usual!" she told him, holding her pose.

"Do I?" said he. "I did not mean to say so."

He looked troubled. Mother's training had always been very definite on one point: we were not to argue with ladies. I think, indeed, it was greatly because of that clause in her credo for us that Victory had an engagement ring on at that moment. Dick considered the design of the carpet, thrusting his head back in a way that reminded me of father.

"No," he continued. "I don't object to all convention. I don't object to convention in the abstract. Many conventions, I can well believe, are the result of cumulative proof, down the ages, of their wisdom. Regarding a church marriage—I think I may say that I do not see the necessity for that convention. That's all I meant."

"It's not a convention," said Victory.

The anti-climax came from John.

"Convention or not," said he, who had been sitting with arms crossed, one leg flung over the other, leaning back in his chair, a grim expression on his face, "convention or not, usage or not, I agree with Dick that the other ceremony is fine. Look here!" he flung out a hand and we all listened; for, after all, he was nearer the brink than any of us; "there is no need for marriage at all where there is love. All this talk about honour is too much overdone. If people love, they never think about honour."

"That's quite true," murmured Victory gently.

For a moment John looked amazed.

"Er—yes, marriage," he said. "There is no need for it when people really love." He blushed furiously. "But if there were no marriage laws the selfish men would forsake women. The children? Who are to look after the children?"

Mother seemed pained, and moved the fire-screen between her and the flames.

"The state will look after the kids!" whooped Tom, defiantly.

"Yes—yours, perhaps. Not mine. Not the kids of people who love!" John replied, also defiantly. "To those who love, the binding, the service in church, and all that, is trivial. They are already betrothed to each other—because they love." His voice choked. He cleared his throat rapidly, and went on: "Such people are bound already. They don't need any tying up."

It was safe to steal a glance at Victory, for she was all intent on his face. Hers was pale and her eyes very bright.

"The beauty to me of the other marriage," he finished, "is that one goes before the sheriff merely to announce to the world—'We're married.'"

"Why get married at all even like that?" said Tom in a sly tone.

"Because if the marriage-laws were discarded the rotters would take advantage of their absence and leave the state to look after the kids," said Jack. "People are not married"—he stressed the word—"in a church. They were married when they first acknowledged caring for each other. There is too much fuss about it. I like the notion—as Dick does

—of just stepping into the registrar's and saying: 'Put it down in your books that we were officially united before Sheriff So-an-So this morning.'"

"There is too much fuss about marriage," said Florence quietly. I wondered if she knew she had spoken aloud.

"I must say," said mother, "that I think these very strange views for the sons of Doctor Grey."

"They are father's own views," Dick told her. "I've heard him say very much the same thing himself."

She heaved a sigh.

"I'm afraid these marriages before the sheriff are the thin end of the wedge to thinking nothing of the marriage service at all," she announced.

"Don't you see what Dick means, mother?" asked Florence. "It's not the thin end of any evil wedge as he and—er—John look at it."

"Ah, I like the church service," answered mother, and smiled beautifully.

Victory said nothing. A silence fell. Then she rose and said she must go, as she had told them at home she would not stay away long.

"Do remember me to Mrs. Plant," said mother sweetly. "It seems so discourteous of me not to have called on her yet . . . my sciatica . . ."

"And mother's rheumatism has kept her from being able to see you," replied Victory.

"Quite," said mother, and kissed her in the middle of the forehead. "But now that John is going, I shall feel that I must get so far."

I noticed Tom blink-blinking. I think he was trying to puzzle out the *mater's* process of reasoning. John departed with Victory, and we separated to

our individual relaxations or small duties for what remained of the evening.

I saw my brother on his return. He was pallid and as if he had been running. Beads of moisture were on his forehead, but his chin, wontedly somewhat weak, betokened a fierce resolution. Something more than a tender farewell had been between them, I thought. It did not occur to me that maybe he had tried to break off the engagement—and failed. Some incident with tensivity of emotion and spiritual (if one may call it so) upheaval had taken place. I knew no more than that.

CHAPTER XXIII

DICK'S first public success came while we awaited John's. About three weeks after the latter had gone off to London, Dick held his first "one-man" show. With a great spirit of elation and anticipation I slipped away from my duties in Renfield Street about tea-time, and so down to Saint Vincent Street to see the exhibition. It was very quiet in the dealer's galleries, which had on me the effect of a world within the world. The walls were of gray canvas up to a strip of oak that was round the top, about a foot from the ceiling; and on the floor was a soft gray carpet that greatly interested me because it seemed perfectly clean although many people from the gluey streets must have walked on it. At the door was a silent commissionaire, to whom I surrendered my private view card, which he laid in a tray stacked high with many others. In a farther small room to rear, the door half-open, and the room half-hid by a curtain, sat a man in black at a desk heaped with letters, and atop the desk were one or two figurines in bronze, crouching panthers and the like.

But it was the central gallery and a small side-chamber where Dick's paintings hung, that arrested me. I was unaware of that little rear office at first glance. There they hung, Dick's pictures, smoulder-

ing with the colours of old summer afternoons, dim with the coming of twilights out of the past. There were one or two that were souvenirs of his Italian days, olive trees and bright-lit walls, light that drifted through vine leaves. There was one of a steamer-deck called "Going to the Canaries"—deck-planks, a perspective of state-rooms, a cabin door with a circle of opaque glass, the sun twinkling on a brass catch, people sitting in chairs in the foreground, and in the distance a group engaged in some deck-game. There was enough of my mother in me, some tiny protoplasm of her, for me to think that these paintings would be as serviceable to Dick, from one point of view, as mentioning that father had preached to Queen Victoria might be useful to John in London. For myself, I am not thus influenced (and if a reader cannot understand what I mean—then God bless him, let him go on his way giving thanks, and not try to. It is neither here nor there), but I know many are thus influenced.

The Scottish pictures greatly enthralled me. That one of "Flowing Tide on the Irvine Shore" (now in the Metropolitan in New York) caused me, after walking close to see how it was done, to move backward and sit down on the circular velvet couch in the chamber's centre. There was some yellow bent in the foreground, and a flick or two of the spots of sea-pinks. The muffled sound, in that place, of the roar of the city's traffic outside, I did not realise as what it was. It was to me the roar of that homing tide. I cannot understand why galleries of New York and Philadelphia, Vienna, and Leeds should have had examples of his work so long and Glasgow have nothing, except in private collections. If I say



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(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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it must be because he is a Glaswegian, there are some who will call me cynic, misusing the word.

The other people who came in to look were not people who disturbed me. I was very happy for Dick's sake, yet my tendency to look on and listen then was in abeyance. The pictures held me. Some, of course, I had seen in process of completion, but most were new to me as I saw them there. Dick had been back to Irvine several times since our holiday, eight or nine years before, and on one of these visits he must have painted "Roofs of Irvine." That church spire near Waterside, tapering up into a sky of blue like the inside of mussel-shells, with just a flick of gold on the base of a little pink cloud; these houses with a suggestion of huddling together for warmth; these convivial and canty roofs—how that picture took me back to a certain evening in the Waterside garden. I am no church-goer now. I marvel that any man wants to go to church, or to have any one between him and his God. That spire does not suggest the church to me at all. I thought then, as when I see it in actuality, how many people must have seen it, coming and going on the bridge, how many people all over the world must remember it; for we Scots are a roaming race as well as lovers of some corner of heather and hill, a falling burn, rooks and sea-gulls behind the plough. I like to watch the pigeons careen round that spire. It is the outside of the edifice that sets me dreaming. I like the slender soaring. Only at the end of all other thoughts that it arouses, comes a memory of those in the church, kneeling and praying—for there are some who still go to church to pray as well as to show a gown, or to see other gowns. I feel sorry for them.

And the primitive clangour of the bells—when will we renounce that? There are times that I think their din might almost create the devils they were supposed to frighten away, or that the medicine-men told the people they would frighten away.

I think it was as I sat there that I first consciously became a *case*. I use the word now in a different sense from that in which its originator (applying it to book construction) used it. The story of Jack's affair is, in a way, a *case*. Allow me what is, perhaps, my pawky Scottish humour! Allow me what is, perhaps, as a smile covering a faint regret! I was a *case*. I wished father could have lived to see this show. He had no favourites among us; he would have been delighted—humanely, largely, and simply happy—to see this exhibition. He was pleased when Dick won the *concours* prize, the travelling scholarship, but his pleasure had nothing of the spoiling order in it—though, to be sure, I don't think praise and success could spoil Dick. He was never satisfied for long with his own work. He destroyed much. But in vain to wish father was alive. He was not. There was no more to be said.

The sunlight and the twilights, the long early morning shadows on these canvases kept me meditating a long while. I do not know many of the *clichés* of the studios; I have heard my brother speak of a sea-painting he did, before destroying it, as "not waves but broken dishes." A few such phrases I recall, and, of course, I have seen him at work. But as I sat there, though I realised the craftsmanship, and was enraptured by the technique, I felt very much of a layman, too. His determination never to go on painting any scene when the change of light

perceptibly altered his view, gave to them all a feeling of capturing a moment. A little of the emotion of *Eheu fugaces* . . . crept into my heart. What a wonderfully coloured, exquisite and robust world it was, but how life slips away, I thought. The pictures blurred round me, and I remembered in my early days seeing an old lady asleep in a chair, and tiptoeing out, awed. That is all I can recall of my paternal grandmother. I wondered what father was like as a boy. Then I came back to consideration of the paintings, and looked at one of a long winding road, winding up and down a bent-tufted foreshore, with the sea running on the beaches. I consulted my watch and found I had been away from Renfield Street for over an hour. Next morning it hurt me horribly to read in the —: "Mr. Grey's pigment is a little muddy. There is a tendency to thickness in his sunlight, which, perhaps, if he heeds our admonishment, he may yet rectify."

"Muddy be damned!" I said. "I expect that art-critic has just heard the word applied to paint in some studio where he has been lurking, and used it on the first occasion, heedless of applicability."

I wanted everybody to praise Dick's paintings. I had forgotten that on no subject under the sun is there unanimity; on no subject even merely two views, but views innumerable. Also one man may have one view to-day and another to-morrow. There is no doubt that I was then already on the way toward being the apparent quietest I am to-day. I say *apparent* quietest, for beneath the surface I grow more and more ecstatic with the wonder of life.

CHAPTER XXIV

MUCH as I had thought Florence was subdued, two years earlier, by the passing of father, did she jump to a conclusion regarding me.

"You've still got the hump about John going away!" she announced to me as we sat alone one evening, about a week after Dick's show had closed. She was sewing, and I pretended to read a book, but gazed over its top into the core of the sputtering fire.

"I don't think so," I said. "For his own sake it was certainly very wise of him to go. Hardwood's representative came in to-day with his new list."

"Has he got a representative now?"

"Yes. It was only at the beginning he came round himself."

"Was John's book in it?"

"Yes."

"Had he an advance copy?" she asked eagerly.

"No—just a dummy copy," said I, "showing the size and the first few pages printed."

"Oh, how interesting!" And then, after a pause:

"Was it dedicated to anybody?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"I should like to see it. I've never even heard of dummy copies before. Who was it dedicated to?" She pressed the point instead of guessing from my silence.

"Just 'To Victory,'" I said.

Florence took two or three more stitches.

"That depressed you?" she asked.

"No, why should it?"

"I wondered. He told me before he went that he thought he would dedicate the book to mother—or to me. He said he had dedicated it to Victory, but thought that it should really be to one of us. I wondered if he had changed it. Are the dummy copies left with you by the traveller?"

"No. He has only one of each book on the forthcoming list to show what they will be like."

"Oh, I see," said she.

I knew that neither Corner, the shop-manager, nor Cochrane, the chief library assistant, had seen the dedication. I did not think Tom had. If he did, in flipping the pages, see it, he hid the fact well. When I noticed it I shut the book and put it back into the traveller's case. It was not taken out again. Corner and Cochrane went back to their duties after the representative had booked his orders. Tom shook hands with him, and I walked with him to the door—but I did not tell Florence all this.

I was, as a matter of fact, if not depressed, disturbed during these days. Let me be frank: I was too much aware of the other sex to please me. I remember how one afternoon early in that week—perhaps on the Tuesday—I had dashed up Bath Street for half an hour at about four o'clock, to have nominal "tea"—which was, as it happened, coffee and ginger snaps—with Dick in his new studio, and how he glanced through the evening paper (five o'clock edition), reading aloud, as he sipped and snapped, sentences about some girl who had got into what is

called "trouble." Her case was calling forth many letters of sympathy. I don't suppose either of us would have glanced at the column if it had not been that the correspondence brought the painful affair into the lime-light. It was a case much like the one that set Florence into violent speech to me once when Mrs. MacQuilp of the Galloway Inn in Irvine had been haranguing us.

"Oh, God, what a business is this sex!" said Dick. "Have some more coffee."

The subject was dismissed. Our coffee over, he came down the street with me as he had an appointment to fulfil, and I went back to Renfield Street wishing I could always be in the ethereal mood that I had known looking at his pictures. I was plaguily conscious of the feminine. I bought a copy of the evening paper for myself to read, just to see to what trouble that side of us may lead. The letters ranted and gushed about the stirrings of mother-love, and seemed to me all sentimental side-slipping. They were all about what I call lust, and what John in his later novels calls love. Queer how men change! And yet I don't think his views changed, but he had decided that he had to cater for a certain market to get his flesh-pots of Egypt. Of that you will hear later, however. The correspondence struck me as mawkish and missing the point.

When Dick came home later in the evening I found that he, too, had evidently been reading the letters. He bumped into the bathroom after me. I had my face over the basin and was splashing.

"Hallo, old boy," he hailed. "Why don't you lock the door, you bounder?"

From the midst of the towel I looked out at him,

and he smiled with the intensest geniality. I shook my finger at him.

"Dick, say 'primarily prominent,'" I began; then suddenly recalling a more distant evening with Father Ambrose, I added: "Or, better still, say 'biblical criticism!'"

"Finished with the basin?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Thank you," said he, and repeating a certain speech accredited to a Lord Provost (not of Glasgow), 'Aprez vows; you see I havena forgotten my Latin,' he turned on the tap.

"Say 'biblical criticism,'" I said.

He paused and eyed me as the basin was filling, still smiling. Then he turned off the flow and gazed at the circle of dancing water.

"I can't," said he. "I won't try. It's a curious thing I can't. That is all there is wrong with me. I can't say bi-bi-bib——" he went off into peals of laughter, and plunged his head into the water. "You observe," he said, looking up with his hair all dripping, "that I can relish the humour of the situation. There is nothing whatever wrong with me, but I can't say bi-bi——" and then very carefully he enunciated: "bib-li-cal kisism." He whooped over the final breakdown. "Have another wash," he said to himself, and plunged his head again into the basin.

As he wore his hair cropped short he could do this with impunity and towel it dry in a few minutes. In the midst of that employment, rubbing his head and making a hissing sound like a groom currying a horse, he suddenly paused.

"I say, I don't think port is good for full-blooded

youth," he said. "I feel the stirrings of father-love, and it was all I could do not to acknowledge the most inviting smile of an exquisitely gowned lady in Sauchiehall Street on the way home to-night."

"You be careful," I said.

"I am," he replied. "I said to myself: 'Don't be a fool. Halt here at this shop and look at the *lingerie* in the ladies' window. That is safer.'"

Having dried his head he plunged it for a third time into the basin. I thank God for a sense of humour. Dick's phrase—" . . . the stirrings of father-love . . ."—did me more good than reading the wisdom of Solomon regarding the lusts of youth and the instincts that lead us to those "whose feet take hold on hell." But I have to tell of a facet of this subject which hurt me. Caught by desire, I thought of Marjory. Those other women or Marjory— which was it to be? That was the thought that came to me, and I did not feel pleased with it. I was very fond of Marjory, but I objected to some demon inside me, who seemed only half myself, spinning coins and saying: "Heads we go and propose to Marjory, tails we . . ." I kicked the demon out. Marjory could not be an alternative!

That evening on which Florence commented that I seemed depressed, Marjory had come into my mind all herself, and not as an alternative. I did not know what I wanted of her. I certainly would have been in the seventh heaven of thankfulness if Teeny (the parlour-maid who had taken the place of Mary Lennox, the latter having married and left us) had opened the door and announced: "Miss Stroyan," and she had come smiling in upon us on an unheralded visit to Glasgow. Funny world! There was John

distraught because he found himself engaged to a girl and hers for life, and here was I, distraught (looking over the top of my book instead of reading it) by a sudden dread lest Marjory might pass out of my life. The night seemed very hollow. I wished she would come. I wished and wished—and looked at the pages of the book, instead of over the top of it, so that Florence would not know I was lost in private thoughts. When it entered my head that she was watching me, I was cunning enough to turn a page now and again.

The clock ticked on, and Florence stitched, but the hope was not realised. I imagined the distance from Glasgow to Irvine, the fields and the farms, the ploughs rusting in the rain, and the little villages in the dark. I pictured the gas-lamps up and down the Irvine streets, and Waterside with the lit windows, and Marjory. I recalled the evening I walked home with her after the episode of the golf-club in the vestry, and the sound of the tapping of her shoe-heels came back to me, went into my heart. To have that tapping by my side—"till death us do part"! I heaved a sigh. Looking back now, I believe the trouble in me had been working away subtly from the moment I saw Dick's "Roofs of Irvine." That was all on a Friday night.

On Saturday I phoned to the office and told Tom, who had started off early after a rushed breakfast that he devoured in a preoccupied manner, and my chief assistant, Haig, that I would not be in that half day, did not think it worth while. I had to go to Irvine. The journey was imperative. I had to see Marjory for her own dear sake, and because the years went drifting by so.

CHAPTER XXV

I WAS in a delightful mood of leisure and content, as the rushing train carried me through the country beyond the last stone villas, past little villages, suddenly swerved, showed the flat gray of a reed-edged mere (Lochwinnoch, I think it would be), left it behind, swerved again and disclosed to right the waves swirling in and out of each other, and crashing on the beaches.

At that stage a trepidation came into the midst of the ease, but I expelled it. It had dawned on me, leaning back in the carriage corner, that I had been working hard. I believe overwork, and a certain amount of tension, were the chief causes of my unrest. Having rushed off in this way, at a moment's impulse, there was almost an ecstasy in the feeling of freedom. There are times when we need some one to come along and casually mention: "What you need is a sleep. . . ." Those dubious Scottish parents who object to their progeny taking up this or that employ "because it is a lazy way of living," are dread lest in leisure there be dissipation. But of much work, especially if tensity of any kind comes into it, they should be equally doubtful. I had not rested for long, all intent upon building up that second-hand department. This was what I wanted—to lie back in a window corner of a comfortable carriage, my arm thrust through the looped and padded

strap intended for that purpose, I presume, and spin along in a steady rush as if for ever, through the fallow fields and the gray-green resting world.

The trepidation came as the train ran between the shore and the low fir-plantations, through that belt of sand-dunes and bent. But it was due to the change of scene. There were the sand-dunes that extended to Irvine and beyond. They recalled days with Marjory, and I asked myself what I was hurrying to see her for? On the bent there was a peppering as of spindrift, but when I looked to the other side I saw that on the low hills there was here and there whiteness also of snow. I was enchanted at the idea of being again in Irvine. I did not know anything of its gossip or its tittle-tattle. I knew only its comfortable feeling—I was going back to the *auld toon*.

It was much colder there than in Glasgow. That was my first impression on alighting. I buttoned my greatcoat and paused to look over the bridge, on to the heads of the passers-by below. The platform of Irvine station is partly on a bridge, the railway lines along that flat country on the edge of the sea running either level with the fields, or on an embankment, rather than in cuttings. In the town itself the embankment breaks abruptly, and a street is leapt by an arch—and there are all the people at their doors, or at their shopping, or driving past in gigs. I stood and looked at the life of the place a moment before going down amongst it.

"Well, I may as well get into the High Street instead of standing here," I mused, much as I have sometimes jogged myself to open a letter instead of turning it over and conjecturing upon the caligraphy and the postmark.

With Irvine, of course, I knew what awaited me—or thought I did. Much there will never be changed, topography forbidding. God help us all! How we do go striding through our lives here, and off again! And yet I have lived to be old enough to go back to Irvine many times. The place changes in a way, but in another is unchanged. Dogs rise from the pavement; and bark under the muzzles of the horses as the farmers swing to their traps and grab the reins. Under the bridge, seaward, men in jerseys cluster and talk, leaning against old wooden bollards that are frayed or polished by many a hawser. When one of these at last wears out, a steel one may take its place. That is typical of the changes. Red and white heifers go slipping past on the cobbles, followed by muffled and hirsute ruffians; the hotel brakes rattle by, with the boots in mufti, all save his lettered cap. The smell of the town is agricultural and marine. Why I love it so I cannot tell you to my satisfaction, any more than I can tell you why I love Marjory.

CHAPTER XXVI

I DID not, after all, go directly to Waterside, as I thought perhaps the dusting, and so forth, might not be all over at that hour in the morning. I went on across the bridge that gives the street an effect as of leaping across the river. It was a "burly" river that day, occasional snowflakes came down, fluttered to its surface, and melted on the instant. The church spire seemed stiff with cold. The houses had more than their wonted appearance of huddling close, like a flock of sheep when the wind is keen. The smoke from the chimneys told of broad hearths and snug interiors. There came upon me a comfortable thought that I had all eternity to live in, and potter through the town. As I drew near the corner of the High Street, a man in earth-coloured coat, with his trousers tied below the knee, and far gone in liquor even at that time of day, beamed on me.

"Everything is going splendid!" he informed me.

"I am very glad to hear it," said I, which rejoinder caused him to halt and hold out his hand. We shook warmly, and having saluted one another, he lurched on and I turned the corner, went along the High Street and into the Galloway Inn.

The cobbled close was unchanged, but the three steps down into the hallway were done away with. One entered the place on an almost imperceptible

slow slope. The antique effect of those steps had been sacrificed, perhaps because of the customers who had sprained their ankles there, not seeing them. It used, indeed, to be a trick with yokels, bringing a stranger through to the taproom, to say: "Mind the two steps." The stranger would thus fumble down the two steps, move on easily—and find another; and the result of the jar was a test of his capacity to enjoy a practical joke.

Mrs. MacQuilp was not in the den beside the taproom, only a rouged and powdered young woman reading a novelette, one hand stroking a purring cat, the other feeling as if subconsciously among the backward coils of her elaborate coiffure. I had a sherry and bitters for an excuse to stand and look out of the window, down the street, and see the old houses with their shallow steps, their narrow pillars supporting a door-lintel. A little milliner's lower down interested me. I turned to the barmaid.

"Wasn't there a photographer's in that shop that is now a milliner's?" I asked.

"I don't know. I'm a stranger here," said she.

"Quite," I replied, and sat down on the window settle.

As I sat there, listening to the tall clock ticking in a corner, Mrs. MacQuilp, a trifle garishly dressed for her years, came into the room. I knew her at once, although she stooped slightly over an ivory-headed stick, but I could see that I was forgotten by her. I was in two minds whether to recall myself to her or let her go, but as she hovered in my neighbourhood, I rose and saluted.

"Mrs. MacQuilp, I wonder if you remember me?"

"Ah!" she cried. "The face seemed familiar a wee. The voice I know. But, man, I just can't be certain. I see so many."

"Mr. Grey," I said. "Harold Grey. Son of——"

"Well, well!" and she held out her hand, a white-gloved hand. Under the kid, as I took it, I felt an array of rings. "And how are you all?" she asked. "I was really sorry to see that your father had gone to his lang hame. I sometimes see your brother down here, at his painting. He told me, a year or two syne, that your mother bore up weel. How is she?"

"We are all very well," I replied. "I have just come down to call on old friends—the Stroyans—but I'm taking a look round the *auld toon* first."

"Ay, ay," she said, "but pray be seated, Mr. Grey."

She drew a chair for herself as she nodded toward the window-seat from which I had risen. Then she glanced quickly at my glass, said: "Just a minute," and tripped away, tapping with her stick, to the alcove where the girl of the wondrous coiffure was then polishing tumblers. A few minutes later back she came, the barmaid behind her, with a salver on which were two "goes" of some special tippie.

"Have another refreshment with me, sir," said Mrs. MacQuilp. "It is wonderful to see old faces. They pass away—'like snaw aff a dyke,' as Rabbie says."

It occurred to me it was not "Rabbie" who had said that, but I made no critical footnote. To Mrs. MacQuilp "Rabbie" was responsible for all tags of verse and all adages in the Doric. As we sipped the tippie she chatted of herself. I thought how shocked my poor mother would have been to see me here im-

bibing a tot with Mrs. MacQuilp, the feather in her bonnet bobbing as she became confidential and laid a finger on my arm, telling me that her second daughter had married and was nominally mistress of the house.

"Her husband has bought it from me, ye see. The fixings are all mine, and some of the furniture. He has the licence and the guid-will. But I arranged for all my furniture to remain. I had it all done properly by a solicitor. It's a hold on them, you see. If ever they thought to turn me out it would be a trouble to them, for I'd take every stick with me."

I doubted if she would. I thought her bark was probably worse than her bite, although I recalled, dimly out of the past, her views on the marriage-contract.

"But, surely," I said, "your daughter would not dream of——"

"Oh, you never know!" she answered.

It struck me that she was chary of all affection, not only the affection that leads to marriage, but as greatly dubious of the constancy of filial piety. She was a woman who liked to know that things were all in order upon parchment in a little tin box on a shelf at the solicitor's. She took off her glove to shake hands with me on parting, begged me to give her compliments to my mother, with a moistness in her eyes, and gave me a little diffident fraction of a slap on my shoulder as I went out of the door.

I walked up the street, past the doctor's brass plates, and closed windows with the hyacinth bulbs on the ledge inside, crossed the road, and by a short cut through twining alleys, bounded by garden walls and gables of tool-sheds, with glimpses of unexpected

workshops—of wheelwrights and coopers—came again to the bridge; and thence I went to the house on Waterside, the snow coming down more definitely, less like late stray fluff of cottonwood. A parlour-maid who was new to me opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Stroyan at home?" I asked.

She examined my appearance.

"Please come in," said she, and when I stood in the hall, as she closed the door—"Did you say Mrs. Stroyan or Miss Stroyan, sir?" she inquired.

"Well—either."

"Miss Stroyan is not in, but I expect her any minute. Please step this way. Mrs. Stroyan is not long up—she is resting. What name will I tell her?"

"Grey—Mr. Harold Grey. Don't trouble Mrs. Stroyan, as she is resting. I will wait."

"Please take a seat," she said, opened a door for me, and left me in the room to look at a flicker of firelight on the brass dogs of the hearth, and listen to the subdued ticking of a Sèvres clock on the mantelpiece. Upon my word, when I am very old, I shall come to appreciate Longfellow a little for his verses on the old clock with its *Toujours—jamais, Jamais—toujours*.

A copy of that day's *Forum* lay on the window seat and I took it up. There was a review of a new volume on eugenics by my brother-in-law, Mary's grim professor—"Hammerhead," as John called him. I saw the words: "I do not find it easy to say why this book is not first-rate. . . ." and I chuckled. That was Hammerhead all over. It would never possibly dawn on him that if he could not tell why a book was not first-rate—give a reason for the belief that was in him—perhaps it was first-rate after all!

Nor could it occur to him that if he could not tell, he had better say nothing until he could. I read on, just for the fun of looking into his mind. There was an antidote to his last example of bland self-assurance on another page, where I found a criticism not merely meaningless, and no mere exposition of the critic's brain—though all criticism is also that, of course. That antidote I found in an article on the annual exhibition at the Grosvenor Galleries in London. Two pictures which Dick had sent thither were both specially mentioned over initials that carried weight.

As I was reading this, happy instead of superciliously amused, the door opened, and Marjory came in. She was in a tweed costume of the blue that I have seen in some Persian kittens, a pale blue with hints of a brown or red thread here and there, and she wore a pale blue hat. Of course, at the moment it was just the whole of her that I absorbed.

"How delightful!" she said. "How delightful! I've been thinking of running up to Glasgow, but I don't like to leave Gran."

Odd how I felt no tendency to smile when she said that, and yet reports of such solicitous remarks by Victory Plant regarding her mother made me always cynical. I suppose the difference in my attitude was due to the difference between Marjory and Victory; but I did wonder, recalling her for a moment then, if I was entirely fair to Victory.

"We are all sorry to hear that Mrs. Stroyan is failing so," I said.

We held each other's hands. We stood so. Then Marjory said: "Well!" and withdrew her hand gently. "Now, just let me go and tell cook we'll have

another to lunch," and she turned to the door. "I won't be a minute."

I closed the door and walked up and down the room, thinking how good it was to see her again. It was different with her from seeing a relative; and yet she was as near to me as a relative. She was a relative I had found for myself! When she returned, I spoke out of my heart to her. I said: "It is good to be here and to see you!"

"It's good to see you," she replied.

I looked at her face, considered its contours that I knew well. Her cheeks were bright from walking smartly through the sharp day.

"You dear!" I said. "And how are you? You look splendid!"

"I am. Florence told me in her last letter of John's book being announced, and Dick's show. I wish I could have come up to see the pictures."

"I wish you could," said I. "Some of them were wonderful. It is not just because I'm his brother that I say so. There was one of the tide coming in on the shore, on the way towards Troon, that just finished me—reminded me of Irvine and you."

"I saw that when he was doing it," she responded. She smiled into my eyes and briefly laid her fingers on my arm, then said: "Come and see Gran."

Going across the hall, I had a queer feeling that although in years Marjory was, according to the time we had lived, two years my junior, she was in other ways older. The way she touched my arm made me realise her as full of sweet understanding.

CHAPTER XXVII

MRS. STROYAN did not look ill, but her face was changing. It recalled to me, although the face of an old woman, photographs I had seen of a certain type of features that often crop up among the male Amerinds. The Amerind is not a subject on which I have specialised, and names escape me, but I have seen heads of Chief So-and-So with much the same contours. Put a blanket round her, and a feather upright at the back of her head, and she would look like some old Sioux chief. Her eyes were wide, her face was raised to mine. But a stab went through me when, as I advanced holding out my hand, she turned to Marjory and said: "Do I know this gentleman?"

Marjory had not warned me of this. She told me later she had not expected it, as Gran had been very clear that morning. But there she was, drifting away again.

"It's Harold Grey," said Marjory gently.

"Eh? Grey? Oh, no, not *Harold*. You're thinking of Harold Durie. The Duries are connected by marriage with the Greys; but there is no Harold Grey. It is Thomas Grey, is it not?"

"I should have said Mr. Grey," interrupted Marjory.

"Yes, you should have said that—you were going

to be too clever. I know all the family histories. You're just home from Glasgow now, are you not?'

"I've just come from Glasgow," I replied.

She looked, as it were, through me, as I were Pepper's Ghost; and it hurt terribly that she did not know who I was. Even as I stood, doubtful what to say next, Marjory came to the rescue.

"Do sit down, Har—do sit down," she murmured.

"Hallo!" I said. "The snow is beginning to fall in earnest now."

The old lady stretched out and touched my knee, peered in my face. I wondered what she wanted.

"You're changed," she said. "It is the study that does it. Still, you could not take your degree without some bending over the books. Sybil Clouston looked in the other day and left us a long epistle of your doings to read—I mean the circular one, of course. I expect you sent her a little *billet doux* just for herself, besides that," and she beamed coquettishly.

Of course I realised that she was talking of my mother, and thought she was talking to my dead father. She leant back in her chair, mused a moment. Then to Marjory she said: "Will your gude-man be coming along soon, do you think? He would like to see Tom."

Marjory, in the Scots word, "favoured" her mother, was facially much like what she had been. Gran imagined that she was talking to her dead daughter-in-law instead of to her grand-daughter. I was glad that her wandering mind could find rest so, and that, having decided that I was father, after having asked if she "knew this gentleman," she did

not worry as to Marjory's identity. I plucked that solace for the pathos of it all.

Before Marjory could frame a reply, Gran added, to me: "I don't believe he'll recognize you at first." Then she made herself more comfortable in her chair, and seemed to doze. The reflected hues of the falling snow played tricks in the room. It was filled with a fluttering and subdued light. Feet went past on the pavement beyond the narrow front garden, their tread muffled by the speedy fall. A dog barked outside.

"Is that Bruce?" said Gran. "Perhaps he wants to get in now the snow's begun."

Bruce was a dog that even Marjory had not known, except in stories of his cleverness, told by her father. The dog barked again. It barked a third time.

"No," said Gran, "it's not Bruce. I know his voice too well. I expect he is in his kennel. I've just been sitting here smiling to myself, thinking of that day when De Quincey came to see Robertson. But I've told you of that often, Tom."

"No," said I.

"Haven't I? I thought I told you the last time I saw you, when we were speaking of the old divines. Yes. De Quincey came all the way from Edinburgh to call on Robertson, and the maid said Robertson was not at home—took him for a mendicant! De Quincey wrote afterwards to say he was so sorry Robertson had not been in Irvine when he came, and the girl was questioned about it. And yet I think there is more to pity than smile over in the incident. Not but what," she added, "the best view of life is the smiling one."

To most of us, as we grow older, that is the view we adopt. I confess, whatever may be thought of me, that I felt little of the smile at that moment. I swallowed with difficulty.

"George Barclay has gone to India," she told me. "Young MacMillan has gone to London. They all go to London."

Like a fool, merely anxious to help in the conversation, I said (and bit my tongue the moment I had spoken, realising how I must upset her chronology): "John has just gone there."

"Oh, he went just after you were here last!" she said.

I was glad that John was so common a name, and need hardly say I did not ask what "John" she referred to.

"Talking of Johns," said she, "how is Professor Nichol? Perhaps you don't see much of him. You know that sonnet he wrote on London? Ah, well, nothing will deter them from going to London. I hear young Leechman is doing very well there. He walks from Hammersmith to the city every day, to and fro, to keep fit. His firm is going to send him out to Ceylon soon. But he was no great sonneteer." (I presumed she meant Professor Nichol.) "In his *Pictures by the Way* there were some very good intentions, however.

'I love, but it only makes Death more drear
Tu-tu-tu-tut (I forget that bit) I love in fear
'Tis not the love that seeth clear. . . .'

There is minor music in his work."

The effect of thought tired her. As she spoke I could see that Marjory was worried. The old lady

closed her eyes, and her grand-daughter laid a rug over her knees. Then by the window we sat and talked quietly for some time, and the sweetness of that dear girl's face struck me as sacred.

"I'll just go and tell Mary not to ring the gong for lunch," she whispered suddenly. "She might do so, seeing there is a vee-sitor," and she smiled. "She doesn't, as a rule, for Gran sleeps a deal."

As she rose, Gran opened her eyes and saw me.

"Well, well, well!" she exclaimed. "You young rascal! Slipped in while I was asleep, did you, Harold? This is a pleasant surprise. Are you all here or just you alone?"

I went over and took her hand. She held it in both of hers, clapped the back of it affectionately.

"I've just run down for the day," I told her. "I've been overworking, I think, and want a rest."

Marjory stood watching us. The maid came in and announced that lunch was ready. Gran rose, and I offered her my arm.

"Na, na!" she said. "I have a stick. Look—I've put a rubber tip on it; and it's not meanness that makes me do that either. I lean so heavily I mark the carpets."

Over lunch she did my heart good, being again in the present and her mind very clear. But into me had come a gripping sense of the long chain of lives, the moving belt of them. The snow flurried on the windows. In pauses of our talk, or even amidst the talk, I looked out and saw the flakes come down, spin in eddies, and whirl and fall.

"Like life," I thought, "like life."

It all seemed too transient to touch, to tamper with.

CHAPTER XXVII

GRAN, hearing I was staying till tea-time, asked me to excuse her if she took a siesta after lunch. Marjory convoyed her to her room to see her comfortably tucked up, and the snow having abated, at least temporarily, though there was a yellowish warning of a further fall over the dim-lit roofs, we went for a walk.

We turned seawards. The wind blew keen beyond the railway bridge. My memory of that part of the afternoon is of much tilting to the gusts, of plopping of water along the bleak wharfs, coal-grit flying about us as the big tip-buckets at end of the cranes swung between wagons and the moored. Making smacks, and of a sense of cosiness, tapping in passing, in the interiors of the little quayside stores with their windows full, as it seemed, of marine flotsam—ships' lanterns, gimbals with their brass screws, oilskin coats, yellow and black. Bunches of the latter swayed from pegs just inside the doorways as the wind eddied and plucked.

Head back, and hand to hat-brim, as she was that day, I see Marjory again as I write. She told me of her doings, but I told her more of mine and of fresh humours in the circulating library. John's engagement she did not mention, and it did not strike me until afterwards that when we spoke of him we only

touched on his departure and of our expectancy regarding his first book. I found, with her there, that I had nothing deeply personal to say. We were together, and I was satisfied. It seemed unnecessary to speak. She knew I had come to see her more than the old town—I am sure of that by the way she looked at me as I told Gran of my impulse to run down for the day; and my desire to see her she took naturally and easily. I was entirely at home with her; but the emotion (or thoughts) aroused by Gran's wanderings—here is where you see me as a case!—affected me with a sense of the pity and brevity of life, and did not make me ardent to clasp Marjory and cry out: "Be mine, always!" It was, perhaps, a fatalistic mood that—I was about to say restrained me. That would be wrong. I was not restrained; I was just myself, very happy with Marjory, and aware that she was happy with me. Gran had, I think, somewhat subdued us. It was all so good, the being with her in the keen wind, with the sea beyond the little harbour's end, that I took the moment's happiness and left all else to the destiny that made the sea and the exultant wind. And how beautiful she was!

"It is a great world!" I cried out as we came to the sand-dunes and the full roar of the sea leapt at us.

"Great!" she called back to me and, head canted, responded also with a blithe glance of her eyes into mine. My heart leapt. I might have told her then all that she meant to me, but I did not. The moment was passed. It was as if I had closed a door, and I was aware of the wind shrieking shrill over the bald foreshore. I remember how the Panyards

as a lonely-looking sand-pastioned wooden house (coast-guard house perhaps) slat-slatted wildly against the flag-pole.

Gran was her natural self at tea-time. After tea Marjory said she would come with me to the station, for I glanced at the clock and thought of my train. I begged her not to, but she refused to listen and ran off for her cloak. The old lady held my hand in hers a long time as I said good-bye. She seemed unwilling to let me go, looking long in my face, searching it over, as one going on a far journey may look at the friends who come to the quayside to say *bon voyage*. With a sudden brightness of her face she lapsed into the vernacular, as those do at times who love their country, though their own natural speech is not so.

"Haste ye back!" she said in the parting phrase of what is, for some reason called the people.

"I will," said I.

We smiled at each other, she to hide the thought that she might not see me again, I to hide my thought of how finally frail she looked. Marjory had returned and was gazing dismally at a pair of goloshes.

"No—I won't put them on," she said. "The doctor said I was to wear them on such nights, but these brogues are strong enough."

I took her arm at the crossing, the snow falling again, but not lying well, turning to slush, and the way being slippery. I did not renounce it on the pavement, walked along holding it, through the world of flakes, lit up here and there by the yellow lights from shop-windows, or now and then, abruptly, by the opening of a door. People came out of entrances and gathered their coats, ran on errands.

Out of the immensity above the snow came relentlessly down.

"I don't object to this weather," I said.

"I don't," Marjory ratified my remark. "With an umbrella it bores; but with just a jolly big coat it is grand."

I gave her arm a pressure and released it as we came to the pavement before the station, where we arrived with a few minutes to spare. Climbing the stairs from the booking-hall, where people grouped in a draught, and in an odour of wet clothes, took up a little while. The porter on the platform passed down the track bawling: "Glasga train!"

"I have enjoyed myself," said I.

"Feel better?" she asked with her head on one side, gazing in my face almost solicitous.

I was aware of my brows going up. I had not been ill. I had not said anything to cause her to make that inquiry, surely. I had suggested nothing more serious the matter with me than overwork.

"I feel very happy," I replied, and then: "May I come down again like this?" I was not "faint heart," but all seemed well—and I did not wish to touch a lever. I wanted just to go on. She was nearer to me than ever. It would have spoiled the day to say: "I love you," for I was sure she knew.

She, in her turn, opened her eyes wide at my inquiry if I might come down again. Just for a moment I wondered if she did not, after all, understand all that lay behind the words "*like this.*"

"Why, of course," she responded.

The train had come to a stop, the locomotive sending a swirl of down-beaten steam over us, and with

my left hand I opened the carriage door while holding my right to her.

"Of course," she repeated, giving me her hand. "Any time you have the mood to, please rush down—if you care to run the risk of——"

The guard blew the whistle. The train was moving off. I closed the door, and, lowering the window, waved to her as she stood there in the wind, the snow fluttering about her, and the row of platform lamps yellow blurs in a dimming perspective.

CHAPTER XXVIII

I RETURNED, in the Shakespearian phrase, to "a sea of troubles." Tom came at me on my arrival at Huntley Gardens, dashing into the hall, with his "Stand from under!" rush, like a centre-forward about to score a goal, and said,—

"Here's a dam' fine business! Do you think I can run the whole place alone?"

I objected to his bullying manner. The sea-wind was still in my heart and the reaches of roaring shore, and these made human squabbles seem petty. I was more bored than enraged by his approach, though sufficiently human to reply: "Why not?"

He was so angry, or so intent upon appearing angry (for there was that about him which suggested he was playing a part) that he did not realise I had presented him with his pet phrase. Then his crassness suddenly irritated me! I wanted to explain that when I said "Why not?" I was mocking him, but to do so would be like explaining a joke! I remember an Englishman once saying to me: "Scotsmen have no sense of humour. I am going to tell you a really funny story as a test-case to discover if you will see the point." I roared with joy at that, and he, wondering why, lost his temper.

This matter of losing of temper is most upsetting. Before I well knew, Tom and I were glaring at each other and indulging in acrimonious repartee;

but all the while he had an elated look which I could not understand. There seemed to be a thought held in abeyance. I told him I was running the second-hand department, not the shop. He told me I might look after the library as well, now that John had gone. I told him the chief assistant, Cochrane, was entirely competent. He said I knew John was not there, and that seeing I could spare time from the second-hand department to take a day off ("Half a day," I said) he thought an unctuous person such as I would see it as fair to devote my spare time to the library instead of going off for a mad mid-winter "half-day, then" in the country. I pointed out that he had been quite happy to see John go, and had been jocund enough over the arrangement by which John took his money out of our venture. He told me John's little monetary addition had been neither here nor there. I told him that if he looked at it so, then he should do John's share of the work, and that, as he had considerably more money in the business than I, he should do more work than I. At that he looked entirely triumphant.

"Good!" he said. "All right. I shall!"

Then he dashed off to the study, whence he had come, driving down his feet like a man about to storm a bastion. I hung up my hat and coat, and went upstairs for a bath, wondering to whom might belong a silk hat, with a woollen scarf depended from it, hanging on a peg above a long gray ulster in the hall. At dinner I discovered, when mother introduced me to a tall, elderly, well-done, worn and worldly man, a Mr. Simson.

Mother was almost girlish in her manner to-

wards him. She called him Harry. Tom paid little attention to him. By his manner my eldest brother struck me as not knowing whether he was supping mulligatawny or tomato soup, whether he ate lamb cutlets or mutton. He just ate and brooded, and when brought into the conversation, beamed and looked intelligent, made sounds rather than responses, then fell a-brooding again. Florence was pleasant and, I thought, slightly dignified. She, of course, knew more of this Mr. Simson—this well-groomed, elderly Harry—than I did, having assisted in his entertainment before dinner. That Tom had not helped also (whether he had been home long before me or not) I knew, because he, as well as I, was introduced in the dining-room. "And this is my dear eldest son, Tom. Mr. Simson, Tom, a very old friend of mine. And this, Harry, is Harold. . . ."

There are things that one can, in the Scots' phrase, "jalouse," or in the slang phrase, "tumble to." What I had jaloused, or tumbled to, I refused to believe. I told myself I was ridiculously fanciful, for the thought persisted: "This is some old admirer of the *mater*, returned after many years." His grave politeness to her, her titillation, the brightness of her eyes (the certain glamorous brightness in them that made me consider she must have been very "fetching" in her 'teens and twenties) set up a deal of circumstantial evidence. I knew Florence saw what I saw, and Florence had probably witnessed the re-union. Dick was not at table, so what he thought does not enter here. He was off to visit a painting friend on Loch Lomond side, whom he had met in a mountain town in Italy—the son I

have already mentioned of that chartered accountant under whom I began my endeavour to be self-supporting. He had a commission for a picture of Highland cattle and snow, and this weather was propitious. That he would not, as he dreaded, make it like any other pictures of Highland cattle and snow, all ready for the calendar to be affixed to the bottom and the legend: "With the compliments of Messrs. —, Tea, Sugar, and Provision Dealers," I was sure. That he would not, having done one, do twenty, I was equally sure.

To do his first, at any rate, he was off to that house by Loch Lomond. Florence and I, for Tom was obviously not interested, were the only onlookers upon this episode of Harry Simson and Sybil—no, not Grey, but Sybil Clouston. As I heard them talking I glanced at mother, and continued to marvel at the change on her, to see her as a girl again. That, from the look on Simson's face, was how he saw her, too. But what I did not entirely relish was the way in which his gaze rested from time to time upon Florence. The tender light he cast upon mother did not pass from his face as he turned, talking, to my sister. The one expression sufficed for both.

"You remind me, I cannot tell you how," he said to Florence, "of your mother when I first met her. When was that, Sybil? Let me see—in the year—well, no matter. That was in Irvine, dear old Irvine."

I wish people would not gush!

"Yes. They were happy days," sighed mother.

"Ah! Happy and disturbed. That is the way when we are young."

"But you are not old, Harry," said mother. "You are a year or two younger than I am."

"We are as old as we feel," he replied. "I still sing in my bath." He shot his cuff. "A little rheumatic nodule in my wrist. That is all I have to mark the calendar. And," he looked from one hand to the other, "it is so small I can never recall which wrist it lives on."

As we drew near to the stage of coffee, mother said: "Now, Harry, what do you do? The times change. Will you stay here and get to know my boys over coffee, or shall we have it in the drawing-room together? You can smoke there. Florence does not smoke, but since women have taken to the weed I know a movement *en masse* is often made."

"Oh, as you please, as you please. I believe the drawing-room is limited to cigarettes. I think I have only cigars; but, to be sure, I am not so woe-fully addicted to smoking that it would attract me more than——" he smiled meltingly from mother to Florence, and then again beamed on mother.

At that juncture Tom felt in his breast-pocket, produced a silver cigarette-case which he flicked open and presented to Mr. Simson, not looking at him, as if acting sub-consciously, one hand heavy on the table, a puffy hand, with short podgy fingers. There was a half-absent, dreamy expression in his eyes that announced the plotting Tom. Mr. Simson took a cigarette and, turning to mother, held it up between stiff first and second finger.

"Your son settles the point," said he.

So we rose and moved towards the drawing-room, but Tom paused on the threshold, clapped his side-pockets, mumbled and turned away, charging off as

if in haste to look for something. He did not return. We four wandered up and down the room for a few moments, then, one by one, sat down. Coffee arrived, and Mr. Simon smoked his cigarette, I supplying the light. He said, "Yes, yes," and blew smoke.

"I think we have discussed all the old friends," said mother, coffee-cup daintily upheld. "How goes all now with you?"

Mr. Simson laughed.

"Temporally, spiritually?" he asked.

"In general," said mother.

"Well, I think my lines now fall in pleasant places," he told her. "I have business that runs itself. I am become a drowsy, if not utterly a sleeping partner. I potter about and look at my roses."

"Oh, you go in for rose-culture?"

"Well, my chief gardener does. I merely look on. I am happy—yes, I suppose I am happy."

Mother gave him a tender, an almost commiserating glance in which, to my horror, I thought I saw something reminiscent of Marjory's look upon me at Irvine station a little earlier that evening. I told myself it was not the same. No, no—not the same! I looked back at mother again and thought she had the air of one fluttered. Marjory was not like that. Besides, Marjory and I were young.

"Do you remember Eileen Barbour?" mother asked.

I never had heard the name, and as they talked I felt again subdued by the thought of the drift of generations.

"Eileen! Ah, yes. I remember her. I remember thinking that Peter Stroyan was—well——"

"Pursued by her?" said mother, and laughed pleasantly as one come to an age when she could make admissions.

"I was going to say somewhat smitten by her," said Mr. Simson. "But, no—I don't think he was."

"He was a very handsome young man," mother remarked. "I think she might be excused."

"Do you ever hear of Stroyan?"

"He died long ago, and his wife too. Their daughter, Marjory, spends occasional holidays with us. She is a dear girl. She has all the sweetness that her father had."

Mr. Simson shook his head.

"I am the only survivor!" he declared. "The only one whom no one—the only bachelor of them all."

He looked about for a place to put his cigarette ash. I saw a book lying on the couch—not my sister's for certain. Tom, I think, must have been looking at it. It was a book on the gospel of forging ahead by throwing oneself at people, by F. Carnegie Smith, or some such name. I laid it down beside old Harry, for him to use as an ash-tray.

"Oh, not a book, Harold!" exclaimed mother.

"So it is," I said. "I didn't notice. I had not thought of it as a book."

Florence pealed a laugh. Mr. Simson held up his hand. He was like the man in that absurd print of Mr. Heath Robinson's called: "Hark, Hark, the Lark!" He stared at mother. I thought he had a sudden pain, but she understood.

"Yes, it is," she said. "People tell me so."

"Oh, it is. It is your laugh, Sybil—your laugh as I recall it."

The way in which he looked at Florence angered me. That is why I write about that gesture of his in a fashion that may seem callous, unfeeling, to some. My sister remained very much her normal self, was just a shade more erect than with her familiars, with a little of "company manners," as we used the phrase, a touch less than haughty, a trifle more than calm. Mr. Simson glanced at her again, and then ducked slightly as a rabbit does, missed by an inch.

"I must go," he said, and rose, tossing his cigarette-end in the fire. "I had no intention of staying to dinner. I came about five!"

"Well, I hope, now that you are in Glasgow for a little while, we shall see you again before you return to Campsie?" said mother.

"Thank you, thank you," he responded nervously. "You must come to Perthshire. You must see my place, or rather, my gardener's place."

After he had gone I felt—God knows how I felt! I was at a loose end. Gran Stroyan fluttering between a dim to-day and a bright yesterday. Marjory in the snow, the *fracas* with Tom in the hall, this queer time with Mr. Simson, a strained suggestion in the air after he had gone: what an inventory! I do not like days that come to a close with the effect that this day's end was having upon me. I like to be able to shake off their influence before going to bed. So I took upward with me, to my room, a very nice panelled calf copy of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* to read, propped in bed.

CHAPTER XXIX

IT appeared to me in the following days that Tom was in training to be one of those meek who shall inherit the earth. That was the phrase I used, foolishly, to myself at the time, noting his behaviour. He had taken me at my word, the word of our wrangle; but he did so in a mean fashion. I and my second-hand department were side-issue. When a publisher's traveller arrived on the Monday, my brother dashed in to call the head assistant from the library to confer on what books to stock. Formerly, we had all—Tom John and I—joined in these discussions, with Corner and Cochrane at our elbows.

The staff saw, and talked, and glanced at me. "What the declined is," says Shakespeare, "he will as soon read in the eyes of others as feel in his own fall." But it was not contempt that was in their glances. I told myself that perhaps the earlier usage had been a courtesy only; yet on the other hand my money was not in the second-hand department only, but in the firm as a composite whole. Maybe I should have risen, gone out and joined in the conclave, at least been present, but this I did not do. It was not worth while, somehow.

When, as the days passed, I found that the head of the library consulted directly with my man, Haig, regarding the withdrawn books, I realised that Tom

had gone a step further; but I said nothing. It was only a trifling formality, I tried to tell myself, that had fallen into desuetude. As I was considering so, Haig left Cochrane, after a long whispering, and came over to me.

"I suppose this is all right, sir?" he asked quietly. "Cochrane tells me that Mr. Thomas says you don't want to be worried by us over such second-hand work as relates partly to the library?"

"Yes, that's all right," I said. "You know all about it. You can gauge the condition of the volumes—original published price—demand—and so on."

"Quite, sir; but I thought I'd better have it from you. Mr. Thomas did not tell me himself. It was only Cochrane who mentioned it, and—well, we thought it would be better to—er——"

"Thank you very much indeed, Haig," I said. "It was quite right of you to come to me."

I liked Haig. He was a reader as well as a bookseller. Books were his vocation, inside and out. He had a feeling for them, a zest for title-pages and spacing. We came to have discussions after that incident which in a subtle way brought us together, made us more friendly.

On one such occasion our talk was ended by the arrival at my side of Miss Plant. She came to my table and set down some catalogues which I suppose Tom had asked her to leave "in passing." Her head was held high, and she was like a queen out of those old days when queens trained themselves to that pose by balancing a little stone on their heads. Her manner irritated me. I had always treated her, I think I may say, what is called "de-

cently." I wondered if she was annoyed at being asked to leave these things. I wondered (for I have seen a lot of snobbery and its bye-products in my time) if she felt it incumbent upon her to adopt a different air to me because I was obviously having a friendly man to man talk with Haig. Such causes seemed too paltry, but I could think of none deeper at the moment. Then it struck me that she might think I should go and chat to her sometimes, she being my prospective sister-in-law, but John had never gone and chatted to her in the public gaze and it had not occurred to me to do so. She left her manner behind her after she had gone; it is the only way I can express my feelings. I watched her cross the library, interested in the way she managed to convey "to hell with you" in the cant of her back and the flip of her frock. When I turned back to Haig he said what I do not think he would have said had we not been in the midst of a conversation when she arrived, and he in talking mood.

Said he: "Now that she is leaving, I can say that I have always felt her out of place among books. It does not seem her *metier!* I am sure she would be more at home in a quack dentist's, or a fashionable photographer's, as a receptionist."

I almost cried aloud: "Now that she is leaving!" Also I thought to myself: "Then the staff does not know she is engaged to John—or Haig would never have said that." One thought tumbled after another. "Tom has not mentioned it to me. I wonder if he has told the *mater.*"

But I could not ask Haig when she resigned, when she was going; for he took it for granted that I knew.

CHAPTER XXX

THERE was a letter from John awaiting me at home that night, and I opened it with an additional interest, expecting that it might explain why Victory was leaving "Greys'." As I inserted a paper-cutter, an heirloom of dad's, I thought that maybe the coldness on her side regarding his embarkation in letters was over, that maybe the disruption I had scented behind that discussion on ways of marriage had been cast to limbo, and that she was leaving us to be married, to join him in London. Geniuses act oddly and, though I had heard nothing, I was prepared to hear now that the wedding would soon take place. If so, I considered as I withdrew the letter, Haig would feel unpleasant anon, recalling what he had said to me about her.

But in John's letter there was not any reference to Victory. It was a letter much like many of those that father had written home to his folks as he climbed the ecclesiastical ladder—letters which I was yet to have the pleasure of reading. It told us of receptions at Hardwood's house, and gave the names of those he had met there. Some of them, in turn, had invited him to their places.

"... I mentioned casually to — that father had preached, etc. . . . as I thought it would be

the best introduction. He whispered it to his wife, and she promptly told me I must come to her informal—I nearly said infernal, but she is useful—Saturday evening. Hardwood showed some proofs of my review to Lady Kensingore, and said he would like to know if her views tallied with those of his reader, 'the nephew, you know, of Lord Upriver,' as he told her in his inimitable way. I wish you could see and hear him. The result is I had to read some parts in her drawing-room last week. She is really a great dear herself. I have quite taken to her. Hardwood says that she will talk and sell five hundred copies. I met also the editor of *The Rambler*, and he wants to see me again. Hardwood suggested that I should join a club, so I am put up for his club by the *Rambler*, and I am to have a series of short stories in his pages, number one to appear in the same week as the book is published. Hardwood has got hold of some shekels, and is making a sudden jump. I am thinking of buying some shares myself. His manager is a queer bird. He said to me: 'Of course we all like your book, but I think that to be really a financial success you will have to apply more of what I call "the jelly pedal." Still, you may atone for the lack of that by being seen. I think, however, if you will be guided by me you will remember what I say. As a publisher for years I know what makes a seller.' "

Not a word about Victory!

I had been unable to have speech with Tom after that unexpected announcement of Haig's, he having gone off somewhere for the evening direct from the Renfield Street premises. The *mater* and Florence

had the letter to read in turn, and expressed no comments *apropos* of my thoughts, said nothing of Victory not being mentioned. Mother was delighted to know that John was mixing with people worthy of his sphere. I went to bed before my eldest brother came home, and over breakfast did not wish to open the subject of Victory. If mother had called on her mother—we had not heard of it.

Tom and I seldom went down to business together, and I was not so intensely eager to hear of the reason for Miss Plant's departure, of when she had resigned, and of when she was to leave us, that I cared to suggest we should do so that morning. His coat was still hanging in the hall when I departed for the day, so I was first at the shop with the brass shield by the door, and the man at the plough in the window. A railway van was outside, and the carter was dumping down a great heavily packed parcel on which I recognised Flardwood's labels; and in the basement the head of Smith, the commissionaire, showed, as he affixed the shute for the carter to cascade the bundle to him.

As I walked through the shop toward the library and my quarters, I saw Victory and the manager, a tubby bachelor, chatting. She was putting her head now this way, now that, looking up at him from under her arched brows. First her weight was on her left foot, only the heel of her right touching the floor, the toe twiddling in accord with the twistings of her neck; anon the right foot took the weight and the left foot made the designs. By Corner's twinkle, and her coy manner, they seemed to be indulging in a little friendly persiflage. Sud-

denly he saw me and grew serious. I acknowledged his salutation. Victory swung round and made the end of one of her parabola movements before him turn into a bow to me.

"Good-morning," I said.

"Good-morning," she laughed rather than said. I know purists object to novelists who write a speech of a character's, and end it with "she laughed"; but I admit it is possible to laugh a "Good-morning," or at least I admit there are times when to describe the sound of it as "said" is inadequate.

Victory seemed very happy. After divesting myself of hat and coat, and sitting down to my desk, and the little pyramid of correspondence awaiting me, I asked one of the boys to go down to the basement and see if Hardwood's parcel was being opened, and if so to find out for me what had come. As he was hastening off in response to this request, Corner came with his rolling, stomach quick-step from the shop. I always expected him to halt in his trots and hitch his trousers, then take two jumps of a hornpipe. He looked like that. He was all jollity as he ballooned along to me, with a volume in his hand, his face beaming.

"I've brought you a copy," he said. "It has just arrived."

"Thank you," I replied. "That's all right, you, kid," I called to the boy. "You need not go down."

I took the volume from Corner's hand. He turned away slowly, rolling side-wise, watching me feel the tissue paper jacket (the picture wrapper was not then in vogue) and remove it. I looked at the cloth cover.

"Very nicely done," said he, over his shoulder.

"Yes," said I.

He had gone thus as far as my barrier, had hand on the top of the low door. I held the book very gingerly, as if it were a fragile thing, and turned the pages, greatly pleased with it.

"Nicely spaced title-page," I said.

"Very nice," agreed Corner, and his smile broadened, then was suddenly shut off in a way he had when returning from asides to his duties. With a little bow he pattered smartly away across the library floor.

My finger, plucking the pages, had opened first at the title; I turned to the next page and read:—

"TO LADY KENSINGORE."

I closed the book and sat looking at the crinkly tissue paper wrapper that added to the effect of it.

CHAPTER XXXI

SHORTLY after Tom's arrival, having given him, as I thought, time to open his correspondence, I went to his room. He had spectacles on his nose, thin gold ones. I had never seen him wearing them before; he gave me the impression of always springing something fresh upon the world. The way he wore them was as if they were an idea he had hatched out. The lenses accentuated the slumbering red glow in his eyes and intensified the whiteness of the heavy drooping lids. He was sitting very erect, puckering his lips over a letter. I sometimes wonder if my natural dislike for him makes me somewhat unjust. He seemed to be, as he sat there, acting again, playing another rôle. I always felt that the real Tom was never fully exposed. Glimpses I had occasionally of him, as of Saturn through its rings; but his exterior was either a diversity of whims or a diversity of masks. He looked up as I entered.

"I'm very busy," he said. "I can't speak to you."

I stood still and pondered what answer to make to that salutation, decided to make none, and departed, acting neither as one crushed nor as one indignant. I left him looking worried, and I do believe that he thought I had come to tell him something of moment to himself, and went away meanly without trying to speak. I have had many indica-

tions that thus would he act in such postulated circumstances. He came running after me.

"Is it anything urgent?" he asked.

"No, no—nothing," I replied.

"I can spare a minute," said he.

"It is nothing really of interest to you," I told him. I admit I was not encouraging him to show his best side then, but his brusquerie irritated me. "You won't lose anything by not giving me a moment," I added.

His brows went up as one surprised; then he laughed, a short laugh.

"I only wanted to know," said I, "if the rumour is well founded that Miss Plant is leaving."

"Oh, yes," he responded. "I think she feels that she is not wanted, and also that she has not been treated very well. You don't avail yourself of her services, but write what letters you have to write by hand."

"By Jove!" said I. "I did so from the first—before—er—before there was any——"

"I slackened when I found she was so greatly occupied with John's work," he confessed with a gay laugh. "Now, since he's gone—well, I don't seem to have many letters to dictate."

I had a feeling that we had both acted rather meanly to her, and there came the inclination to rush back to my department to see if there were any letters requiring an answer that I could promptly dictate to her.

"What did she say when she resigned?" I asked.

"She resigned by letter," he told me. "Left a note on my desk. Regretted that she would be unable to remain longer in our service as she had

been offered a more lucrative post. I replied that I readily understood she would, of course, wish to better herself, and thanking her for her interest during the time she had been with us."

"It was too late to offer her an increase?"

"The tone of her letter seemed final."

He twinkled into my eyes so infectiously that I smiled in return; and we parted quite good friends. The thought of the dual position of Miss Plant—employee resigning by letter, and prospective sister-in-law—gave me a feeling that I can only describe as in the nature of an inner "goose-flesh." When I passed her on the way back to my quarters, I proffered her as pleasant a smile as possible, although to be sure once our "Good-mornings" were said we did not grin at each other as a rule. She swept round as I smiled.

"Oh—er—Mr. Grey, could I have a word with you?" She seemed diffident.

"Why, certainly—er—Miss Plant," I stammered, wondering if I should call her Victory. "Yes, come now."

I had never been able to use her Christian name, nor had she ever used mine in her visits to our home. We had called each other nothing, to evade the issue; and here we were now at "Mr. Grey" and "Miss Plant." I led the way to my table and there gave her a seat. John's novel lay before me as I sat down. Whether she knew that it was his book or not I cannot say. I found myself staring at it and she, following the direction of my gaze, stared at it also, but it was in its tissue jacket, so the title was obscured. Then, seeing that she did not speak, although it was she who had asked for a word with

me, I said: "I'm sorry to hear you are leaving us. I have just heard about it from my brother."

"I have had the offer of a post, a very good post," she answered, "and having mother to support, I thought I should take it. As things are here—well, I could not have asked for more money and so—well, I have accepted. This morning a letter came from my new employer asking me, just for formality's sake—I suppose it is usual—for a letter of recommendation."

"Oh, how unnecessary!" I said. "Do you want me to write something?"

"If you would," she responded.

"I can't think why he should ask for it, having seen you," I said, and seized a sheet of paper, and wrote:—

"Asked by Miss Plant for a letter of recommendation, I feel that to write on her behalf is almost an insolence, so definitely has she interested herself in her work."

There I stopped. My inspiration had evaporated; and also the thought intruded itself that no one leaves an employment without a reason. Between the lines of any recommendatory epistle would be the inquiry: "Why did this excellent person leave?"

"I wonder," said I, "what I should say about your going from us? If I say you leave to better yourself, it looks as if we were stingy; and I believe you did not ask for an increase——"

"I think my salary quite fair," she interrupted graciously.

"I'm glad," I replied, "but on the other hand,

then—what about a reason for your leaving if all is so satisfactory?"

"It is only a silly formality," she declared. "I expect there are shareholders, or something like that, people behind him whom he has to show the letter to."

I nodded my head and wrote on:—

"We admit that the sphere we can offer her here is only limited, and realised that we could not expect to have her with us indefinitely. She leaves us with the regret, I may say, not only of the heads of the firm, my brother and myself, but of all the staff.—HAROLD GREY."

I dried the note and handed it to her to read.

"Do tell me if you would rather have me say anything else," I said as I stretched for an envelope. "If that does not quite please you, do tell me."

As she read I gazed anxiously at her face. A brightness showed on it. She looked up radiantly on ending.

"How sweet of you!" she exclaimed. "It is so good-natured of you to say such nice things."

"So good-natured of you," was, I believe, a phrase of the period, taking the place of an earlier: "so jolly of you," and anon to be succeeded by: "so charming of you." I did not ask her the name of her new employer. I did not wish to seem curious, and I fear I seemed, instead, uninterested. She, on her side, did not tell me to whom she was going. I was certainly a strained prospective brother-in-law—horribly strained; but that was doubtless be-

cause I was aware of how strained a prospective husband John had been when I last saw him. I noted that the ring was still on her finger, so, having committed myself by that letter, I found it easy to proceed pleasantly.

"But, of course, though you leave the firm," I pointed out, "you don't leave us—er—I mean the family."

She rose, obliterating her eyes by the droop of her lids, and the smile on her face was like Mona Lisa's. It could mean anything.

"It is sweet of you to say so," she replied, putting the letter into an envelope which I held out. She whirled on her heel, cast me a smile entirely friendly and departed.

I was greatly relieved.

"Everything will be all right," I thought. "We will get to know each other better. She is really quite delightful."

But when I looked for her on the following Saturday (the day on which she was to leave us) I was told that she had gone already. My thoughts at that may be imagined. I had wanted to say good-bye to her. In "affairs" of others we seldom know all the details. I had often considered, looking on at married people I knew, that they did not know the whole truth of their own affair. I mused over it all, and imagined upon what data I had, and made many theories: she was being discarded by John, perhaps, and taking it splendidly, having loved him sincerely; she was—but I need not continue in this vein. The reader can theorise as well as I, for I have given all the evidence I know up to this point.

I confess I was much less self-conscious in my place of business after Victory was gone. No suggestions came from Tom to have her post filled. Now and then some dapper assistant went behind the curtained alcove where she had been wont to sit, and the typewriter tick-ticked in spasms. Otherwise there was no reminder of her. At home she was never mentioned, and she never called. I think mother had a dread, almost superstitious, that to speak of her might bring her to the steps, a faith that not to mention her might in some subtle way aid toward her obliteration.

But John's book filled mother's thoughts at that time more than John's marital future. It was a book I greatly enjoyed. To me it seems he has never equalled it. He has since written books that have had greater sales—much greater sales, but from book by book, as he continued, there departed slowly, a little more with each production, what is called "quality." That first volume won him the regard of the critics. His second awoke their doubt and sold more. With his third the sales were so great that the critics could only, in between the lines, as it were, or in asides, drift toward their readers a hint of their personal disappointment. There was gold in his first novel; now there is only tinsel, but the subject matter and the cogglings win him a wide public. Mother was delighted over the dedication. I do not think the consideration ever crossed her mind that it might have been dedicated to her; and from what Florence said to me in a conversation I have narrated, I believe it was only to my sister that he mentioned his uncertainty whether it should be dedicated to Victory or to one of

them. That other name upon the dedicatory page helped to recover for mother a sense of prestige that had been misted over by that unfortunat e betrothal. The knowledge, essential to her ease, of having good connections as well as of being a good connection, was rehabilitated. That she had most of the rooms re-decorated at that time, and the grit of the weather burned from the house-front, was not unconnected, I fancy, with her mood of prestige recovered. There seemed something symbolic in having the slur of the weather removed from the fa ade, and the top of the area railings re-gilt.

The days slid past in their poignantly swift way; weeks changed to months, and we never mentioned Miss Victory Plant, nor did we see her. She was like the lady in the song of Thomas Haynes Bayly—“Oh, no, we never mention her.” We did not even mention her when, near Christmas of that year, we saw her marriage announced in the columns of the *Herald*: “. . . to Charles Fearson, artist. . . .”

XXXII

AT Renfield Street I found time fly. At school it had seemed to stand still, as in that old story of how Joshua cried: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." In my early youth there had been often afternoons that gave me the impression of pleasantly dallying, letting the sunlight splashes rest instead of hasten on the scene. But at twenty-nine a change had come. At Renfield Street, if I happened to look up in the middle of a letter, considering what to write, and my gaze fell on a sunslab on the barrier, I would suddenly be smitten with almost terror at the spinning of the world, the flying of the days. I was immersed in my work, if one can say so without being accused of using a *cliché*! Though what are some *clichés* but the final perfect expression?

Tom presented no consistent exterior to me, and I did not care. Myself—I have many moods, but I attempt to give my quintessential or average self all the time to those with whom I work and live. He sometimes treated me as though I were a *savant* whom he honoured, or flattered, or smiled at! I could never be sure which. At other times he treated me as though I were an objectionable message-boy.

One day I saw a man, who seemed familiar to me, wandering round the library shelves. He selected a book for himself, held it up to one of the assistants, nodded, and quietly departed. Another day I saw him come in, lay down a volume without a word, and wander round the shelves again.

"Do you know who that man is?" I asked Haig.

"Why, yes," he told me. "That is Mr. Smart, editor of *The* —."

"Well, well," said I, and rising, walked into the library, close to him. We looked at each other obliquely, expectant. Then we shook hands.

"I thought I recognised you, Mr. Smart," said I.

"How do you do, Mr. Grey?" said he.

That was all. He seemed not a talkative man and I don't think that I am; but I am certain he was pleased to be remembered, and I was certainly pleased to shake hands with him. It gave me a feeling of *chez moi*, of being in *my ain toon*; it gathered my life together somehow just shaking hands with him. We nodded one to another and I strolled away, while he went back to his meditative walk around the walls. After that, if our eyes met when he came in, he would give his head a little jerk at me, and I would respond with a jerk of mine. He comes into my own shop now, in Buchanan Street, about once a month. When he is going he walks up to me, sticks out his hand, and we shake; then he ambles out. We never talk, and yet I feel as if he is an old friend. I almost dread the day when we shall talk—I think so does he. We leave it like that.

The year wore on to its end. Mr. Simson went back to Perthshire to my great relief. Marjory

did not spend Christmas, nor see the New Year in with us because of Gran's failing health. The new year came; and by the time I had ceased making mistakes in its number, in beginning letters, and saying: "Tut!" or "Damn!" according to my mood, nigh a month of it had passed. Sleet scurried in the streets and beat down soot and made the pavements greasy. Then came frost. It was one of the winters when Loch Lomond froze over and Dick (whose vocation, happy man, allowed of a great blend of work and pleasure) was there both curling and painting his "Curlers," which appeared in the Institute Exhibition in Glasgow later, at the Grosvenor in London, and then was bought by an American.

The sunlight of early spring soon brightened the library walls, and flung that travelling yellow splash on my mahogany partition. Crocuses were in their rows in the flower-beds at Kelvingrove; thin airs rattled the park-tree leaves that looked like smoke-grimed tinfoil. Now and then the play of the sky and the clouds over the city sent my mind far beyond its suburbs to places where the sea would be breaking, or the first birds nesting.

At the end of March, John married Lady Kensington's niece, and it was a very formal, fashionable wedding. Florence was one of the bridesmaids, and went to London for the occasion with mother.

"The church was packed," mother told us on her return. "I do wish Dick could have seen Ethel in her wedding-dress. She looked beautiful. And at the reception in Lady Kensington's house, John and his wife stood under a huge bell made of flowers, and decorated with the most lovely satin ribbon.

It was a choral service. I don't think I've ever seen a prettier wedding."

Recalling John's first engagement, as mother gave us her account, and recalling, too, a long family talk on the subject of marriage when he expressed his views, I found myself lost in a reverie on how the opinions of men change, and how at times they compromise with their opinions. I felt, thinking of him then, as I often feel regarding people: I wished I could "see inside his head." I wondered if he would be as happy with Ethel as he might, after all, have been with Victory Plant; I wondered if either of them was the woman for him. I hoped he would be happy after the church service, the tasselled awning, the confetti, the press photographers, and all the rest of which mother's voice murmured on. From my reverie over John I passed into a consideration of how the years slip into centuries. Whether a man (in the Scots adage) "mak' a kirk or a mill of it" with his life, he is not here very long. I expect mother also thought of Victory then, and was glad she was lost in the past. I had an impression (gathered from something of triumph in her voice) that she remembered John's earlier heretical views and was thankful that they were discarded.

In the studio in Bath Street, Dick completed his "Curlers" from a multitude of quickly-snatched sketches. But he was not by any means always to be found there. While I was collating first editions in Renfield Street he could put down his palette and go off for the day, to Irvine, to Eaglesham, or to the moors that run to the Solway. Tom never seemed to tire of the city as I did, ever and again,

heartrendingly and restlessly tire. He might look puffy and putty-like at times, and tell mother he was working too hard, but it was not the country or the sea that called him then. As always, he would go to the same light comedy twenty times in a season. Our attitude to each other may be roughly explained by saying that I left him alone, and that he laughed at me. Everything seemed interesting, sometimes slightly, sometimes greatly; but as I grew older, I found nothing worth getting frantically excited over. I would not rail against anything except inhumanity. To my eldest brother everything was ridiculous, a laughing stock; but he often went about in a state of prancing excitement, that got worse as the years went by.

The spring always troubles me, but I do not find it an utterly happy trouble. I understand the meaning of Bliss Carman's: "The old eternal spring again, Comes back the sad eternal way." In russet and yellow autumns I am restless but content. I was glad when full summer came. We had to arrange our holidays so that we were not away at the same time from Renfield Street. Florence and Marjory (old Mrs. Stroyan having suddenly taken a renewal of youth, even to the discarding of her spectacles that she had worn for forty years, and ordered her grand-daughter away for a change) went to Paris together, and on to Venice, and came back (I may mention here, though they did not return until after my holiday was over) with some rings that made me think of Byzantium, with prints of Rodin's statues, then looming into fame, and with a selection of Tauchnitz editions. Tom went to London in June, but did not see John, who had gone

to Devon with his bride. There is something to be said for the life of a writing-man, as for an artist—painter, etcher, so forth—even for one whose work is not a gold-mine; and John's work was. He can go anywhere with his fountain-pen and write. He is the descendant of the broadsheet hawker and broadsheet maker. There was a photograph of John in *The Rambler*, showing him sitting on the rocks with a pad on his knee, Ethel gracefully reclining at his side, a lace sunshade held over her head. He wore a loose Norfolk jacket, a Tyrolese hat, and well-creased duck trousers. "Mr. John Grey, who may yet write the English novel," was the legend beneath that picture.

"Oh, Dick, if you would only make a portrait of John and have it in the Royal Academy," said mother when she saw this picture in *The Rambler*.

"Splendid!" cried Dick, with kindly accent. "Splendid combination! I must think of that."

I had for long wanted to go back to Irvine, but with Marjory away it did not seem so attractive. So when Tom came home from London, more puttyish in the face than when he went away, I departed to the Island of Arran. The *mater* was visiting old friends at Lanark-Mains; Florence was still on the continent with Marjory; Dick, in that wild way of painters and writers (I suppose it is what is called genius), could not be dragged away from Glasgow. He had suddenly seen the glory, and glamour, and wonder of Bath Street on summer evenings, and had to attend to its representation.

I had not been back to Arran since we were all there together (Marjory included) before father

died, but in memory it had seemed a wonderful place. I found the enchantment did not flee at close quarters. There it was, with the waves on the rocks, the steep leaping burns, and the high heather hills. But I was often very lonely.

On the earlier visit that I but mentioned, and no more, when condensing the years around my twentieth into this book, adread of being garrulous we had lived in a house at King's Cross which looked out on Holy Island and the Ayrshire coast, and across Lamlash Bay to the pyre of Goat Fell. This return visit, years later, was in the nature of a sentimental journey.

Do not mistake me; I do not mean a mawkish journey! All journeys, of those in the dust of whom is a breath of God, are touched with sentiment on the way. I had in early years seen the island often from Irvine. Later I had landed upon it and found it, under my feet, as good as it had seemed when gazed at across the firth. I went back to it now and found it, again, as good. That I could not secure a room in any hotel, nor hear of any lodging in the neighbourhood of King's Cross, was perhaps as well, because I was lonely enough where I did find a roof (in the inn at Blackwaterfoot), and I would have been lonelier at King's Cross. In moments of no particularly concentrated thought I should have been constantly meeting the ghost (or my memory) of father with a fly-hook or two in his hatband.

I suppose most of us are victims, more or less, of our temperaments, and I need not tell the reader who has followed me so far that I am of those who are puzzled by life, one of those to whom this

planet is more of a section of a long journey than the promised land in which to build the final home. Not only the ghost of the dead (my father's human personality) might have troubled me, round King's Cross, with vain conjecture, with wondering to which there is no answer, but the wrath of one living, of Marjory, as well, might have set me in a ferment.

I loved her. I loved her deeply; but with no trace of that passion that to all French writers I have read, and to such English writers as my brother, seems the only meaning of the word Love. As I have said before, I can never understand John's view of love in his books. It clashes with his spoken views; and I sometimes wonder if he thinks there is no public for a view of love other than that which sees it (and without any hint of regret, entirely satisfied) as in the nature of a stalking in the jungle. I am no Meredithian, but a phrase from one of Meredith's poems—"I cannot be content with love upon a mortal lease"—expresses somewhat of my feeling. The words "surrender" and "capitulation" are to me out of place where love is.

Indeed, I find talking of love not an easy matter; it is too sacred for speech and rather to be proclaimed by reticence. "One word is too often profaned for me to profane it. . . ." I was always glad and content to have Marjory in the world with me; her letters were amongst my greatest treasures; and what I wanted was this—that some day, inevitably, in the scheme of things, all life would fall together into a pattern that should put us together. There was in me also, I think (I say "I think," because it is more difficult to see oneself

objectively than to see others so) a streak of diffidence. With Graham of Gartmore I might have said:—

“Then tell me how to woo thee, love,
Oh, tell me how to woo thee.”

There were times when, absent from Marjory, I decided to try and tell her all my heart at the first meeting. But when we did meet all would seem so good that I dreaded to spoil perfection. On that visit to Irvine of which I told, it was less the perfection of the moment that restrained me from talk of the future—her future, my future, our future—than a sense of the evanescence of life which silenced me. Also, I never felt good enough for her. Perhaps that thought was mawkish! I write of these matters, at this part of my book, because during that holiday alone in Arran I was much exercised over the meaning of life, what it was all for. Swimming in a pool by Bennan, fishing in a burn that comes rub-a-dubbing down out of Ballymeanoch Glen, among the purples and blues of the island, I tried to make a plan for my life, to be my own organiser. I envied Tom his breezy manner of going into the world like a centre-forward. I envied John his commercial and algebraic side. He is what is called “an artist,” but he was not an artist who required any advice from those called “the Philistines.” He had his head screwed on rightly. He could always exploit himself. He not only writes his books but organises for their success, makes friends with those who can aid him on his way, forgets them when they cease to be stepping-stones

for him. In a way he has snared success. He "arrived" differently from Dick, who attracted the success that eventually came rather by gaiety and good work than by designs upon it.

"Harold is not very practical," I once heard mother saying to Florence.

To myself I thought: "Neither is Dick!" And I liked Dick, as you know. Those who are spoken of as "practical people" appal me! And as for those who try to arrange the lives of others (such people as my sister Mary and Aunt Janet) I simply gasp and stare at them. I have never been able to arrange my own affairs according to any system for the simple reason that I don't know what life is for. If I did! If I did, then what a schemer I would be! The secret is, I believe, to use a saying from Dick's world of the studios, that my canvas is not sufficiently limited. It is easy to be practical within a small frame. One whose dream is only of a town-house, a country-house, a yacht, and a car, can get all those. They whose thoughts go beyond, brushing the Pleiades, may get—what may they get? God knows!

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN the late autumn of that year, when the leaves were flying and showers of green and crinkly yellow discs billowed away from the trees, Gran Stroyan went suddenly dreaming again back into her youth, called Marjory "Maggie"—Maggie Barclay that was, a sister of the Rev. George Barclay, of whose departure to India she had told me. She was a little fretful that dead Duries, vanished Robertsons, Leechmans gone over the sea to Ceylon and California, and MacMillans gone to London, did not call, did not write. She listened for the postman's knock; and one day, listening, fell asleep—wakened, to Marjory's great joy, with eyes that knew her again, and then closed them for ever.

So Marjory, somewhat quieted, came to live with us, for my father had been her guardian and left very definite instructions in his will. His death I never had forgotten; Gran's death, for all that she died merely of old age—perhaps all the more because of that!—affected me deeply. That visit to Irvine of which I have told, that visit to see Marjory more than the old town, had made an impression upon me. I had seen how not only in death may we lose touch with life.

"Life," I had thought, "is what we see it. We all see it with shades of difference in our vision, but despite the very definite pavements that tire our

feet, the definite trees that delight our eyes, and so forth, by the fact of the tenuous hold on it all, it seems as a dream-place."

And now Mrs. Stroyan was gone for ever. I have known people, touched by some mood, run about holding upon their faces the expression that came there on first feeling it, and saying: "I am changed! I am changed!" I had said nothing to them at home about the old lady's wanderings. I had come back to Glasgow, marvelling at myself and jeering at myself, too. It was almost as if I revelled in that half-pleasing melancholy, as though I were a taster of emotions! Looking back, I see that these things—my father's sudden death, that wandering talk of Gran's—had a lasting effect on me; and when Marjory was able to tell us of Mrs. Stroyan's last days, and of that listening for the postman's knock, I was deeply moved. I fear that from my manner she thought me callous—I was so deeply moved. All she said was shaping me; every word had its effect. I do not say whether it was an effect for good or for ill. I cherished the love of friends, and grew not to care if Tom and I failed to see eye to eye in the running of our venture—though to be sure it was no venture by that time, but a good going concern. I would rather he "had it his own way" than dispute. When I happened to be passing Glasgow Green one Saturday afternoon, and saw the debating crowds there, and a cloud sailing high overhead, I wondered why they argued. It was not worth while. As my eldest brother practised more and more the gospel of "Throw Yourself at People," I drifted in the other direction. Thus it was that when he planned

the disruption of "Greys' " I was not inclined even to suspect a subterfuge.

To be sure he approached the subject very pleasantly at home, one evening in the study, by flicking open his cigarette-case and offering me a smoke.

"Have one, old sport," he said.

When I had lit up he sat down, and told me he had business to discuss.

"Won't you smoke yourself, then?" I asked.

"No." He shook his head. "I wanted to say to you to begin with that I really do not see how you can manage to do more than attend to your own department. I'm afraid I was a bit shirty some time ago on that subject, but let bygones be bygones."

The change so greatly pleased me that I extended my right hand, but he ignored it, not wishing, I surmised, any show of sentiment. And it struck me he was right, and I rather effusive—perhaps mawkish.

"I've noticed," he continued, "how it grew, and I've left it all to you. When John went to London, he took a couple of thousand out of the venture. I have a suggestion now, and it is this: that your portion you sink entirely in your own second-hand department, for it is yours. You have done it all."

We had, of course, separate sets of books for shop, library, books withdrawn from library, and the second-hand department, though the two last were directly under my supervision. I saw Tom's suggestion as very fair, and very well-meant.

"It is very good of you," I said, "but I'm quite contented."

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "It is not good of me

at all. It is only business. If I was not related to you I'd suggest it just the same."

"But," I said, "do you really want it for yourself as well as thinking of me? For, personally, I am quite content to wag on." And then another thought came to me. "After all, perhaps I should have thought of it myself. You have far more money in the business than I have. Yes, I should have suggested it."

"That's all right—so long as you are satisfied."

"I'm entirely satisfied," I told him. "The business, of course, to begin with, was yours. I think it was very decent of you to let us both come in as we did."

His look then I could not understand. The eyelids went blink-blink.

"Right!" he said. "We'll have it arranged so," and not till then did he light his cigarette. His slow motion on dropping the match into the ash-tray was like a "finis" to the conference.

As decided upon that night, so it was done. Being thus as it were newly set up in business, and all legally in order (for my brother said we must treat the matter as though we were not relatives), with my original contribution to the firm put entirely into the second-hand department (that department now only an adjunct, not a part of the whole), I was again the new broom of the adage. I was full of schemes that I did not need to talk over with Tom. A catalogue from Dowell's sale-rooms in Edinburgh inveigled me greatly, and I ran through to that city on a Monday morning, to be present at the sale, which lasted three days. Many were the treasures I secured, such as a first edition

of John Campbell Shairp's *Kilmahoe*, an inscribed copy, and Alexander Smith's *Dreamthorp*, also autographed, and a fine copy of James Ballantine's volume containing "Castles in the Air," which I always think inspired Alexander Anderson to his "Jenny with the Airn Teeth," as "Wee Willie Winkie," by William Miller, may have inspired his beautiful "Cuddle Doon." But I forget myself. I have to tell a story, not to write the musings of a bibliophile.

When I returned to Glasgow I found that carpenters, or joiners, as we more commonly call them in Scotland, had been at work in my three day's absence, and had already erected a partition through my segment of the big domed chamber. Formerly the library had occupied three-quarters of the space, and the second-hand department the remaining quarter; but when I walked in on Thursday morning, just arrived from Edinburgh, to tell Haig of my purchases that would follow, I saw that I had but an eighth part of the place, my quarter having been cut in two by that partition. Half of the mahogany barrier was gone, and where the lost half had been was a counter, behind which an assistant named Waterson was installed. On the shelves at either side of him were neatly printed cards with the words thereon:—

"BOOKS WITHDRAWN FROM LIBRARY
CIRCULATION."

I entered my shrunken territory. Haig, and my other assistant, MacLean, looked up and bowed good-morning.

"They've got it all done, then while I was away," I said.

Haig beamed as one relieved. I think he had a suspicion that Tom had been stealing a march on me in my absence, and was set at ease by my remark, which told of preparedness for the change. Actually I had an unpleasant feeling that Tom had been stealing a march on me, yet it was surely foolish to think so. The new arrangement had been discussed in an entirely friendly spirit. All was in order. That the department for the sale of books withdrawn from the library was set apart there, rather as an annex of library than of the second-hand department, seemed entirely sound. If I had not, when by aid of our legal man we drew out and signed our new agreement, visualised the change to the eye that it would create, that was my fault and bespoke only my lack of imagination. I did not think, though, that I, in Tom's place, had he been in mine, would have given orders for all that reconstruction without a word to him. At any rate, he might have delayed it until I came back from Edinburgh, but then it struck me that perhaps he gave the order before being aware that I was going away. I only mentioned my intention to go to Edinburgh on the Saturday evening at home, over the auction-sale catalogues. This mental fidgeting over the pros and cons bored me, and I dismissed it with the consideration that it takes all sorts to make the world, and that my brother was by nature a dashing, energetic fellow, not hypersensitive regarding other people's feelings. An inexplicable dislike of any one, I mused, is apt to lead toward smirching oneself.

"I must really get over this tendency to see sub-

feruge in brother Tom," I said, and drew forth my memorandum book to discuss with Haig the new treasures about to arrive.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT was during that period (I look back on our lives in octaves, as it were, a span—a span, the first span dim in fading memory, as the last span is “in the air,” just beginning now) that my mother, Florence and Dick paid a visit to Mr. Simson’s home in Perthshire. I don’t say paid a visit to Mr. Simson, because back in Glasgow he reiterated invitations were always in such phrases as: “And when are you coming to see my little place?” or “Now, you must come soon and see my bachelor’s home. Come in time for the chrysanthemums, seeing that the roses did not tempt you.”

Mother frequently tried to get Florence to consider the visit. Florence was now very beautiful indeed. She was no longer quite a girl (two years my junior, you remember) but she had no lines of bitterness, of acrimony, on her face. She was a little more plump than she had been for long. Although we had constantly visits from many friends, and many acquaintances, I think it was good for her to have Marjory with us. They were almost like sisters, friendly sisters. I was happy to note that there was less of the expression of one badgered on her face. Aunt Janet had given her up as a hopeless case; Mary had, by then, removed to St. Andrews’ University with her husband, and so could not treat Florence as a hobby with a view

to marrying her. Florence's cheeks were now full and well-coloured, her eyes bright. A blend of gentleness and determination was on her. She had a cheerful worldly-wise and yet innocent front for the world.

Well do I recall the giving and the acceptance of Mr. Simson's final invitation to go to Perthshire. Unaware that he had called, I being upstairs when he arrived, I wandered into the drawing-room and found there that old family friend, Florence, Marjory, mother and Dick.

"Ah, Harold!" said Mr. Simson, and rose, grasping my hand in a side-wise fashion that I disliked. I wished he had the natural courtesy to observe a man when shaking hands, but it was not important—though the gushy salutation, and the oblique handshake annoyed me. I have a side, I must confess, that ruffles over little breaches of natural courtesy. He had been interrupted by my arrival, but speedily continued at the point at which my coming had made a break,—

"Then you will come down on Saturday?" he begged. "I shall tell Mrs. Porrit to have all ready for you."

My mother's elderly cheeks were girlishly rosy, and her eyes had a melting, luminous quality.

"The train? Let us fix the train," he said gaily. "There is one leaves Buchanan Street at 2.15. I know that one. Saturdays only. It arrives at 3.40, and—"

"That would suit you, Florence," said mother.

A little upright pucker showed between Florence's brows. I did not know her lips could suddenly go so straight.

"That would suit me," she agreed.

"You will not have a sermon on Sunday such as your dear father used to preach," Mr. Simson told her, leaning forward, lowering his head to peer into her eyes, "but it is a dear old church. There lie Lady Adela Stuart and Grant of Garioch in effigy, with hands on heart. There is some fine old stained glass, too."

"You are rather keen on those old places," said Florence to Dick.

Dick was sitting as a navvy sits at a cottage door in the evening, all humped up, elbows on knees wide apart, his workmanlike and agile hands locked, considering the patent tips of his house-slippers.

"Tremendously keen!" he announced.

"Most artists are," said Mr. Simson.

I saw a flicker of light in Dick's eye.

"Any old thatched houses?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. We have some."

"Dick," put in Marjory, explanatory, is looking for a row of thatched cottages for a picture he has been brooding over for a long time on—er——"

"Rob Roy's Return," said Dick promptly.

Florence glanced toward Marjory.

"Marjory is going to see friends of hers for the week-end, dear," said mother, pleasantly. "You remember she told us, so you need not worry about leaving her alone."

I kept a decorous silence, arranged my necktie, laid my hands before me restful, one on either forearm, and looked empty. No one can say that there is a lack of understanding in our family—at any rate regarding Florence, Dick and myself. And Marjory understands us all very well, too. Wheth-

er mother scented some combine of play or not I know not. I could never entirely fathom her, because, I suspect, there were parts that were abysmal. But certainly as definitely as she had entrapped Florence to acceptance of the invitation did Florence force Mr. Simson to invite Dick. I was, at this time, in the dentist's hands, two front teeth having been taken out. I was to have a little plate with two front teeth on it and two backward molars. As I saw Mr. Simson's smile of invitation to my brother, I decided to ask the dentist to be sure to give me teeth a little less virginal white than snow. I once saw an out-and-out rogue in the dock being heckled by his adversary's legal man, and once he smiled—and made me sorry for him, and shudder lest I ever stood in a little square box such as he stood in and looked like that. I had to quash mock-sentiment, watching that case, and remind myself of what the fellow was. In Mr. Simson's porcelain smile there was something reminiscent of that man who, though standing quite still, humming and hawing, gave the effect of going slowly back against an invisible wall. Just a hint in Mr. Simson's expression recalled him. Mr. Simson was no heavy villain of melodrama; he was only, I think, rather a foolish old chap.

"Could you possibly, Richard, could you possibly spare the time to come down?" he asked, showing his teeth in an unhappy smile. "If you can't come on Saturday, if the notice is too short, do come—do come some other time—and see if the scene is what you want. Delighted!"

"Let me see. Saturday. It is very kind of you," Dick responded.

"Don't let me put you out! Any time, my dear boy, any time."

I expected Florence to suggest that mother and she might defer their visit till the three could go together, but she did not. She had realised that the acceptance was coming, but that the incorrigible Dick must have his private amusement with Mr. Simson. Mother's eyes turned to her old admirer.

"Oh, but Dick, are not you going to begin your portrait of Marjory on Saturday?" she asked, perhaps in some sympathetic spell.

"N-o," he said, and shook his head.

"Besides, she is going away for the week-end, you remember," said Florence, and looked at mother with a glance in which was at least a little horror, much astonishment, and some pain. Emotion had entered into the *mater* with its clouding effect.

"Yes!" Dick cried out. "Yes, I can come, Mr. Simson. De-lighted!"

I noticed that Mr. Simson had been holding his breath. He now gave a deep bow that hid his eyes a moment.

"That is settled then, all three," he said; and by the time he raised his head he was able to show us a countenance of great pleasure—that is, as far as we could see upon his face, which was bearded.

I was not clearly the only one who thought that mother had come by the romantic desire to see her daughter an old man's darling. I was not the only one of our family who had discovered, with a slight shudder as of a spider on the spine, that we were in contact with that specimen of the human-kind called

"the lover of two generations." I wished again, as I did often, that father was alive. He would have seen and understood, without pointedly showing he understood, save for a backward fling of his head (a gesture that was growing more and more common with Dick), and a twinkle that would have seemed as much in the glass of his pince-nez as in his eyes; and he would, in some apparently innocent and accidental fashion, have arranged affairs so that Florence might be free to be herself. I don't mean that I had any dread that, in going to Perthshire, she was taking the first step towards being Mrs. Simson, with that old house and all its cucumber frames, rose lawns and potting sheds for hers. I made sure she knew the old fellow's designs; I made sure she suspected mother's emotional connivance. I knew he was going to have his way in so far as a visit was concerned. But I did not see why Florence should go to Perthshire to say no. Had father been alive he would have looked at her to discover her private views. Had she wanted to go he would not have interfered. Seeing that she did not wish to go he would, with genial diplomacy, have so negotiated the affair that she would have remained at home. There are men who are roguish humbugs—autocrats, self-seekers, miserly, posing as philanthropists. My father was a bit of a humbug because he was not in his true sphere, not because he was by nature a humbug. Though a touch selfish in small matters (have you forgotten the sweetbread patties?), in the larger matters he was quite the reverse. There may have been an element of laziness in his geniality, but coercion he abhorred and the robbing of any one's personal liberty. This is no special plea for him.

As I grew older I realised what we had lost in losing him. That serene sense of largeness had gone from the household since he went.

So Florence went to Perthshire against her will.

CHAPTER XXXV

THERE is a saying, "Troubles never come singly," and another of the same genus, "It never rains but it pours." These adages come to our minds at times, and we even repeat them, although they are really ridiculous; we quote them, usually, because of a storm in the brain, some momentary bias towards pessimism. These comments are not relative to Florence's troubles. She went to Perthshire with mother and Dick, and came back with them on the Monday, looking better for the change, and with her head more inclined to toss back, while a gay smile of "Touch me wha dar' " showed round her eyes. It was not regarding my sister that I said, "It never rains but it pours."

The days passed by as they pass for average mortals. Dick had painter's colic, and Florence had what at first was thought to be small-pox, but turned out to be a kind of chicken-pox brought to us in brigs and tramp-steamers from Spain. Mr. Simson sent her flowers from his garden, or sent them to mother for her ("Cannon off the red," said Dick), and Tom had bronchitis. I had periodic stiff shoulder, that sometimes I blamed on a draught from a window in Renfield Street, at other times blamed upon sleeping on a pillow, or at other times again for sleeping without a pillow, just with a bolster, and that one doctor told me was a strained ligament, and that an-

other declared to be rheumatism. Thirty-one—and rheumatism! I hoped that at fifty-one I would not, like Mr. Simson, have a rheumatic nodule in my wrist. I did not want to be, in any particular, like Mr. Simson.

When Florence was ill, Marjory nursed her, held her hands to keep her from scratching her face in delirium. When she was better we all chaffed her for having chicken-pox at her age. The days wore on, and the months. John's wife gave birth to a son while they were in America. After John cabled the news to us, we took to calling mother "Grandma" for a little while and she seemed proud of the title. We lost friends that we thought were friends for ever; we made new friends charily. We grew older. We went to the Renfield Street shop, Tom and I, daily. We rented a house at Loch Lomond, to have it for mother to go to when she cared, as the doctor said he thought she would be benefited by frequent change of air. Her heart had been causing us some anxiety recently. Tom and I squabbled less, partly because, with Marjory living with us, I did not want to seem a disagreeable person before her, partly because Greys' of Renfield Street was now two establishments in one. To my great astonishment, one day, Marjory broke out, when we were alone, after one of Tom's inane attempts at an inane exhibition of intellect, full of his usual incongruous twists.

"If one did not know you all, one would think Tom was the darling and you the boor!" she exclaimed. "It is horrible. It is unjust. Why don't you answer him, Harold?"

I did not say: "Partly because I want to make a good impression on you!" Had I done so, perhaps

—but it is useless to regret. I said: "Because he is not worth answering." But I was delighted by her interest, although dashed by her censure.

"Oh, that's it! Then why don't you laugh at him, the way Dick does; twinkle at him and tell him he's amusing?"

"Because I don't wear eye-glasses, like Dick. He does it with his pince-nez."

She laughed. I think she pictured Dick as I spoke. That twinkle made him so much like father, without father's portliness, with what I can only call a dapper bohemianism in place of a rubicund sacerdotalism.

But as for "It never rains but it pours!" and "Troubles never come singly!" The occasions for the two quotations came like crashes of June thunder. Tom poked his head into my section one day and called: "Harold!" I looked up and he beckoned me, so I rose and went after him to his room.

"I say," he said, "I've sold the business."

"Eh?"

"I've sold the business. Oh, don't look worried! I'm going to London."

I stood staring at him. I had a vision of Irvine suddenly before me, and did not know why. Looking back on the scene I think it was probably because his words recalled Mrs. MacQuilp: ". . . as soon as a lad gets on he goes to London now . . .", and also old Mrs. Stroyan: ". . . ah, well, nothing will deter them from going to London. . . ." I saw Irvine, and myself there, twenty years of age again.

"Going to get married?" I asked.

"Not likely! I'm going to London. I've been negotiating for a business there. I've learnt all of this and it bores me now. I'm an active person.

Must move. Of course you are all right. I did a good thing for you that day I suggested you taking the second-hand solely and *solus*. The people I've sold to won't touch that. It is just bookshop and library they are after."

It was one of these moments when one wishes to rush off to the men of honour whom one knows, and see them, hear them speak, so as to be able to remember that it is not such a bad world after all.

"Do you mean they won't have a second-hand—er——" I stammered. "Do you mean that I am to be an adjunct of another firm?"

"I will be delighted to give you an introduction to them," said Tom, grinning at me.

The primitive man rose. I could have hit him full in the face. I stood and stared, recalling Marjory's words.

"No," I said, "I will not trouble you for an introduction. When do they take over from you?"

"In two months."

"Good!" I replied. "I suppose you see the position you have put me into?"

"What position? What do you mean? Did you not say yourself that you thought it very decent of me to take you and John in as I did?"

"You took me in, all right," I said. "You blasted fraud!"

He threw up his head and roared gleefully.

"My dear fellow! Do you expect me to handicap myself because you like to pore over duodecimos—rare prints—ancient book-plates?" he asked.

I turned and walked out of his room, back to my own quarters. I sat down and pivoted to and fro on my swivel chair. Then I opened the letter I had

tossed down when Tom called me. Suddenly I looked up at Haig.

"Haig," I said, "if I were to leave here and open elsewhere—purely a second-hand shop—rare old books, first editions, and so on—would you come with me?"

"Like a shot, sir!" he answered.

May I wear my heart on my sleeve? May I say I was deeply moved by his tones? I murmured to myself: "They are not all B swine in this world." It was good to be genuinely liked. Then I looked at my watch. I think I have some lack in me. I am more like Florence than Tom, or John. There is a book called *Tact, Push, and Principle*. I have not read it, but the title suggests it is one of those volumes on how to make the best of both worlds. I think John was Tact, Tom was Push, and I was, if not Principle, a little aloof from that world in which no sense of eternity enters. I am not brow-beaten and cowed, but others pass me in the race. The race to what? That question I ask writing now. I am content. At the time of which I tell, my thought was not of the vanity of the race, only that others passed me—some by methods I could not adopt, but did not decry, others by injustice. I fell into the generalising state of one who has just received a blow. I looked at my watch again, for I had forgotten what time it announced, and put it back again without noticing. I set a paper-weight on my letters.

"Well, Haig, I'm off early to-day," I said. "I am going round to my brother's studio. He wants me to see a portrait he is doing."

I wanted to be with a member of the family who

was not like Tom. Calmly, now, I realise that he was within his rights in what he had done, but there are some "rights" that have a nasty smell about them. There are those who may ask: "Why not?" over his action. No matter now. I went up Renfield Street and turned into Bath Street, its breadth accentuated by the steady afternoon light. I climbed to Dick's studio—a new studio, farther up the street than his old one. His steps came lightly in answer to my ring.

"Hello, old boy!" he said.

That was better!

"Give me a cup of coffee," I said, "six ginger snaps, and some of your Algerian cigarettes."

"They are yours," said he.

I was confident that I did not look "pipped," or he would have wanted to know why I was so pale and wan, or something to that effect. He swung into the studio, and I stood looking at the portrait of Marjory, which at long last he had finished, while he was busy over his coffee-making.

"You like it?" he asked.

"I do. It's great——" I was on the point of saying: "But there is something amiss."

"Congratulate me," he said.

"I do," I replied. "But there's——"

"No, no. You don't understand, old man," he cried. "She's—we're going to be married."

My lips moved. What I said was: "It never rains but it pours," but the words were inaudible.

"You don't *look delighted!*" he remarked, and suddenly he stood tense in the midst of a movement. On his face there came sign why he surmised I did not look delighted.

Quickly I said: "I am! I am! But—er—Tom has just played me a dirty trick."

On the instant that look passed, the surmise behind it dissipated.

"Oh, you selfish bounder!" he whooped. "I must tell Marjory that."

So the situation was saved.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“**A**ND now tell me,” said Dick, “what is this dirty trick of Tom’s?”

“Oh, I don’t know if it’s dirty after all,” I replied. “It depends on one’s views. He has sold the business, that’s all. But you don’t want to hear all about that just now—if ever. I really did not mean to let it out as I did. I had to explain my lack-lustre manner about this jolly news of yours.”

“Did he sell it without consulting you?” Dick asked in response to my speech.

“Yes. Of course it was his business. I don’t see that he really had to consult me. If I was sure that he was meditating the sale when he suggested that arrangement some time ago by which I took my portion out of the general account, and put it entirely into the second-hand business, I would think he was a trifle designing.”

“Give him the benefit of the doubt,” said Dick. “Say that he was considering the sale then.”

I laughed.

“The benefit of the doubt according to his own *credo* of Look After Yourself,” Dick explained. “Pooh! What a rotter he is. Do you know what I think?” he inquired wildly.

“No.”

“I’ve just been reading an article by Hammerhead on eugenics, and I believe the *mater* must have been

frightened by a greasy pole at a fair when she was in an interesting condition over Tom. The mark of it is all over him. I wonder if you can do anything—fight it."

"I don't want to. I am going to look for premises of my own, and get in, bag and baggage, as soon as possible."

"Don't play into his hands," warned Dick. "He would be delighted if you did that at once. I can hear him saying: 'One brother left me to go in for literature; the other brother went off to a start alone in the second-hand line, so this was forced on me. I could not carry on such a large business alone,' and he would laugh like an optimistic gentleman in the face of a callous world. You wait till he goes before you strike out. I know one thing I'm after now. Finished your coffee?"

"Yes. What's the idea?"

"I'm going to go and collect my Man at the Plough. He has made many a change in the window, but that has been his chief feature—and it's going now!"

"But he'll say: 'And my other brother came along——'"

"Oh, don't give me back my advice!" shouted Dick. "Advice is to be given, not taken. I act on impulse, which is wrong, but I do it. I advise you to act otherwise." It was as if he stuck a knife into me. "I'm a wild, spontaneous, emotional painter-body—a bally artist, I am. I am not expected to be canny. Anyhow, if he does say that, people will think that there was considerable unanimity in the brothers. No, I'm going to have that thing of mine now. Come along!"

Having assured himself that he had pipe, tobacco-pouch and keys in pocket, he marched to his door. Down we came to Renfield Street, and with a quick "I shan't be a moment!" he plunged into the shop. I stood outside, desperately unhappy, watching the traffic come and go, up and down the long incline of the hill, glanced at the window, saw Corner draw the blue curtain and his hand stretch out. It culled the statuette of the ploughman and the ploughing horses on their segment of bronze hill, with its deep, heavily turned bronze furrow. With the beautiful thing in his hand, Dick was at my side.

"That's it!" he said. "I just asked them to give me my bronze out of the window, and when I had it there was no more to say than: 'Tell my brother I came in and carried it off.'"

"Tom may rate Corner for handing it over," I pointed out.

"Not likely. It's mine. And now, old man, it is yours—for your new shop. At the 'Sign of the Ploughman.' How's that? Or how about the 'Sign of the Lone Furrow'?"

At these words a feeling of all but utter desolation fell on me, and then I thought how once again I was not looking delighted where I should have been.

"It is awfully, awfully good of you. to give it me," I said. "You know I have always admired it tremendously."

"That's all right. And I admire you tremendously for the way you take things," replied Dick. "Some people would have called him a blasted fraud."

"I did, as a matter of fact," said I.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

We went home together, and I carried the Ploughman up to my own room where I set it on the mantelpiece, taking everything else off. When I came down to wash I found Dick in the bathroom.

"Hello," said I. I had a sense of history repeating itself, of going back in my life. "Why don't you shut the door, you bounder?" I asked. "When is an egg not an egg?"

"I don't know," said Dick, laughing out of the towel with which he was drying himself. "Give it up."

"I don't know either," I replied.

He thought I was in a gay and nonsensical mood. I was in a desperate mood. He went away whistling cheerily. I locked the door, filled the bath, and plunged and slung as if I were trying to wash the effect of Tom off me. Then I brushed my hair with care. I went back upstairs, took a fresh pair of trousers out of the press, for the sake of the brand new crease, and removed all the match-boxes, pencils and pipes from my jacket pockets, which bulged ungainly. Seldom did I wear a ring, but now and then, when depressed and wishing to create an atmosphere to banish depression, I put on a signet ring with a very charming monogram—a slight aid. The monogram, H.G., served for me, although it was really a ring belonging to the Grahams of Gartmore, of which family was that Robert Graham who wrote: "If doughty deeds my Lady please. . . ." Tom coveted it, but the initials made it mine, when mother was once looking through her collection of gew-gaws, searching for a necklace that Florence might wear at an Arts' Ball, to which she was going

as Mary Queen of Scots. It had drifted into our family by way of the Cloustons. I had always admired it for its antiquity; and I liked to think that perhaps Robert Graham of Gartmore had seen it and admired it, too. I wore it when I was in the mood for living with the old balladists, and retiring to my cave of reveries.

I put on that ring, then, and went downstairs. On the second landing I saw Florence with a hand on Marjory's shoulder. Florence had been told, then. My sister glanced up, met my eyes, and then a look came on her face something like that which had come on Dick's in the studio. She noted that my pockets did not bulge; she noted the new-creased trousers; her gaze moved up and down upon me, and then she saw the ring on my hand. I think she looked on at the family as much as I did; I think she understood me very well, though she did not pry too deeply, believing in reservations. I hastened down the remaining steps so that she would not go away before I could make my congratulations. I held out my hand to Marjory. It was just possible that I had misread the attitude of the girls, so I did not speak first. It is a characteristic of the Scots that they do not like to be congratulated upon their engagements before they themselves have announced them. But when Marjory held out her hand to me, and smiled, I knew I had not erred.

"I need not wish you happiness," I said. "You will be happy. You——"

Florence had an air of flutter. She wondered if she should stay. She wondered if she should go.

"You going down, Marjory?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Come along, then," I said, caught Florence's elbow and Marjory's and said again: "Come along, then."

I took them jumping downstairs, as if we were all youngsters again. Mother, hearing us, came out of her room, on the first floor, with a gliding motion, her arms extended as mothers extend their arms to children. She caught Marjory to her, pinned her arms gently to her side, and kissed her. To rear appeared Dick. At that moment the gong sounded below, and mother put a hand on the banisters, went gliding down the last flight smiling. Despite her age she was still graceful. Dick and Marjory followed. Florence, as I came after her, looked over her shoulder.

"How did all go to-day in Renfield Street?" she asked.

"Oh, pretty fair."

Her mouth opened slightly, her brows were raised doubtful. She looked up at me as we look at a person who announces publicly that he is pretty fair, but whom we suspect of having a different private opinion on his condition—as we look when wondering if really he has not some trouble over the communication of which he hesitates. I was aware that she was again considering my unusual spruceness. Something made me close my hand to hide the ring, but I believe she saw that movement as well as all else.

"Tom has just informed me to-day," I said very quietly, so that only she would hear, "that he has sold the business. The new people are taking over shop and library. I shall be looking for new quarters."

Her brows puckered afresh. Those little upright lines showed between them.

"That's what's wrong!" she ejaculated. "I should think it is enough, too."

"Oh, it's nothing," I declared. "I think I am really glad to be starting afresh."

"We won't spoil dinner for them by discussing it over the table," she said.

"No, no," I responded.

With the lapse of an hour or two that transaction was becoming almost a matter of moonshine to me. It did not affect me much then; it was Tom's affair, not mine. Whether he had, or had not "played the game," was neither here nor there. I would be thankful to be free of him. I looked down on Marjory's head and shoulders. How well I knew their contours! How well I knew them. I wished for a moment I had let Florence run off on the second landing, and leave me to congratulate Marjory alone. Mad wish! What could I have done save show her that I too loved her? I did not think of her as one who would have been pleased to make this discovery. It did not occur to me that she might have a thrill of pleasure over the thought that she could have had me, too, that there was a hopeless lover a-dangling. I was not, actually, a hopeless lover, either. There was nothing mawkish in my case. But, perhaps, I was too greatly given to dreaming, letting the years drift by. Various experiences in my life had influenced me more deeply than I could explain, and that was all.

How much Florence surmised, I have never been certain. If she wondered, then she was content to wonder. There was never any attempt to "pump"

me. She knew no more of what had transpired between Marjory and me—if anything particular had transpired—than I knew what was the story she could have told of Arthur Neil. It was certainly not by prying, but by accident, that I was given later on more light upon that old matter. And by the time that light came I was going, as they say, more “into my shell”; was still more of a passive than an active member of society, watching the other little puppets as they pattered with me across the unchanging stage.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JOHN'S second novel was published the next day. Mother, who saw the copy I brought home from the shop, asked if I knew how it was going in the library, and I told her that all day long there was a murmur of voices there under the glass dome, with the rustle of silk petticoats, murmur of that word "*Delight—Delight—Delight.*" She was glad to hear this. I had only dipped into *Delight*, but I failed to see it as the *mater* did. She considered the book—poring over it—a "tragic warning" to girls, and was proud of its success. I have known Dick's "father-hunger," but I have known more of love, and books such as *Delight* hurt me. They seem to centralise on what is not dynamic, but on what is side-issue, and treat of love as an entertainment, or a method of diversion. I still love. I love Florence; I love Dick; I love Marjory; I love the sound in the big tree outside my window. I do not consider that I am Old Sterility, as I hear that Tom called me the other day, for with all this in my heart I must truly have given something of value on the way to those I have met.

In the evening, as we were on the point of rising from dinner, a letter arrived from John, who was then in Cairo. Mother read it first, and then it was passed round the table.

"MY DEAR MATER,—I am writing in the hope that this letter will reach you on the same day as my

new book, a copy of which I have asked Hardwood to send you. Ethel and I are having a lovely time. Everybody knows who I am, and they all seem to have read my books. This is really a better hotel than ——'s, which is now fallen into second place, I expect chiefly through always being mentioned by novelists with a desire to seem in the Smart Set. It does still remain smart, indeed almost raffish, but this house is better, and somewhat exclusive. The Duke Tripolita has a suite of rooms here, and is a charming fellow. Ethel and his wife adore each other. Last night we joined them at bridge. Their two little children are delightful. They persist in coming to me to tell them stories. They are a boy and a girl—twins, George and Joan. Ethel says I should have a dictaphone under the table when I am yarning, and I could thus entertain my little friends and write a children's book at the same time. She is very well, by the way, and so is the descendant. Why doesn't Florence come out here? The change would be splendid for her. And if only you, darling mother, could come too, how they would love your silver hair. Give my love to Florence and Marjory, Dick and Harold—and to Tom. I was greatly interested in all you told me in your last of how splendidly he has devoted himself to taking father's place. Mentioning father, you will be pleased to know that the Duke recalls hearing his father tell of meeting dad. They corresponded for some time, and he has letters from dad—not here, of course, but in his autograph collection in England. With very much love,

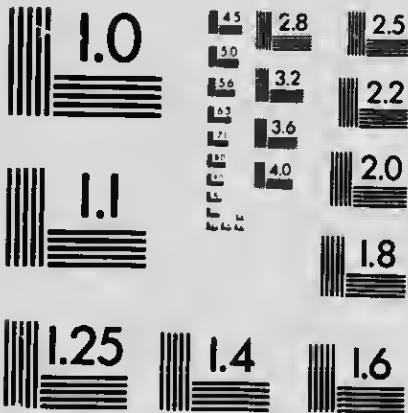
“Your affectionate son,

“JOHN GREY.”



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When Dick finished reading the letter he handed it to Marjory.

"The Egyptian Twins, by John Grey," he murmured. "To my dear friend the Duke of Tripolita, this story of two cherubs and a celebrated littérateur, is affectionately inscribed for him to read to his darling children when they are old enough to relish the little twiddly-bits."

Mother had her blank expression as of not understanding, or not hearing. Marjory was reading by then.

"He's—a—great—lad!" said Dick merrily. "He is simply wonderful. Good old Jack. I believe he could run that hotel. Where's the book?"

"It will come by the morning's post," replied mother with a triumphant little smile. "Anyhow, we have it already—thanks to Harold. I do wish you would paint his portrait, Dick."

"Do you think I am competent?"

"My dear boy!"

"Well, I might try to capture him some day."

"Why do you never try the Royal Academy, Dick?" poor mother went on. "I think it seems almost—well, it doesn't seem patriotic that you should have pictures in galleries in Vienna and Paris, and New York too, and never try the Royal Academy."

"I might send John there," Dick suggested as one inspired.

"I wish you would," she said. "There would be an added incentive for them to hang it. You see—both the subject and the painter of it."

"Oh, I quite agree, *mater*," replied Dick; and then suddenly in some emotion that came over him

—of shame, of love, of pity—up he rose, trod round the table, caught her shoulders and squeezed them, then marched back to his chair and sat down again.

"Tom's late," remarked Florence.

"Tom? Oh, he's dining with a friend. It's a secret," said mother. "Well, not exactly a secret now, for it was all settled some days ago. I expect you know, Harold."

"Well, yes," I said. "He told me yesterday that——"

"He's——" said mother.

"Going——" said I.

"To——" said she.

"London," said I.

She sat suddenly erect.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I hadn't heard of that. He merely told me he had received a splendid offer for the business, and had sold it. I did not think of him beginning afresh so far away as—oh, dear, London! Of course I know he is full of energy. He must always be giving himself. Still—I have friends in London, though it would mean leaving many friends here."

She was all a-flutter, and I was very sorry for her.

"You could stay with Florence and me," I pointed out. "But of course I don't know all. I only heard the bones of it."

Mother turned to Marjory.

"Where are you young people going to settle?" she asked. "Is it to be a long engagement?"

Marjory looked at Dick.

"Oh, no," he said. "But I am uncertain where we shall live. If I could make enough to have a home on Loch Lomond-side, and perhaps a studio here,

as well as a flat ir.—” he paused. I think he was going to say “in London.” He flung up his head and laughed. “I’m uncertain,” he continued. “I’ve had a very pressing request to go to New York and paint Mrs. Hammertrip.”

“Mrs. Hammertrip!” the *mater* wailed. “But not, surely, the notorious divorcee?”

“Um!”

“Oh, Dick! You can’t! I should feel so unpleasant to think of one of my family even painting a divorcee.”

“I know. It is rather painful,” he answered, looking depressed. “Of course I could make my portrait, as it were, a criticism.”

“I had not thought of that,” said mother.

He looked as if he was about to get up and squeeze her shoulders again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

I DID not "let the grass grow under my feet" in the matter of looking for a new home for my Aldines, my Elzevirs, and all my treasures from elephant folios to duodecimos. That pleasant sense of being not lost, of not being one of those who mope over "there is a tide in the affairs of man," etc., of having Destiny with me, I could have nurtured had I cared. Next day I saw a shop to let in Buchanan Street, exactly such as I wanted. I procured the key from the factor and examined the premises. As I came out I almost collided with a lady, and stood back to allow her to pass. To my astonishment I then saw it was *Major*, and Dick was a pace in the rear with his head cast back, his eyes puckered to mere slits, oblivious to all save some effect of vista of street, perspective of kerbs, atmosphere, and the pavements, bone dry that chill blue day.

"Hallo!" he said, seeing me; and immediately realising my business there, from the key in my hand, stepped back to the gutter and puckered his eyes at the vacant shop-front. "I have it!" he declared. "The same colour-scheme as at Renfield Street, with a difference. Instead of blue and black, blue and a strip of yellow. Na, na! No thicker than that." He held up his hands, measuring off on his left forefinger the width of the yellow stripe.

"Yellow for forsaken—
Maiden from thee taken—"

I thought. It is in "The Book of Superstitions and Childish Fancies of Old Maids and Bachelors," printed by—but no matter. I must not slip away from my story to a bibliophile's interests.

"The curtains," he said. "I don't know but what they might be pale yellow, too."

"That is a lovely blue in the Renfield Street place," remarked Marjory.

"I know," he said, "but there are associations. We must think of that for him. I don't want to go too far from the Renfield Street design. I want to go near enough for the new people there to have to change it when they take over. It must be made obvious to all Glaswegians that here are the new premises of Harold Grey. Blue! We'll have blue, I think, and a brass shield—here."

"And in the window——" I began.

"The Lone Furrow," said he.

"I need not tell you that I am awfully pleased you are so keen," I said.

"Of course not!" exclaimed Dick.

"Of course not!" exclaimed Marjory.

She spoke as she were already part of him, and he of her. Or was it that she wanted me to know how much she too cared for my affairs? "But I must not begin to think in such fashion at all," I reminded myself.

"The rent's fair enough," I told them.

They accompanied me to the door of the house-factor, and there left me. On my return to the library I told Haig of my find. We discussed sal-

ary; and I took him out with me, and went back again for the keys. He strolled round the shop, greatly interested. As we came out, there were Marjory and Dick in the doorway again, returning from their shopping.

"Hal-lo!" said Dick, twinkling.

"Hal-lo!" said Marjory, smiling.

"Hal-lo!" said I, with a grin.

They came in to appraise the place, with an interior as well as an exterior view; and Dick brooded, peered as one who saw what was not, walking smartly about, pointing to a wall and saying: "H'm, yes, yes"; pausing before another wall, frowning at it, looking back at the other places where he had gesticulated.

"H'm!" he said. "Perfect. That's it."

"Fine colour scheme," said I.

"Splendid!" he ejaculated.

Marjory exploded in mirth. We all came out, after these investigations and plans, Dick and Marjory continuing their way to Bath Street, Haig and I returning to Renfield Street.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A WEEK later I came home one night to find Mr. Simson's preposterous silk hat on a peg of the hat-stand, a silk scarf pendant from it in place of the woollen one. I glared at it, and went to the study to write certain letters regarding the printing of new catalogues that I had been unable to write in Renfield Street. That place unsettled me. I would not be at ease until I was out of it, knowing I was so soon to be so. I can amble along quietly enough through life, but when I see too far in advance I grow impatient to cover the last little intervening space.

As I sat there the door opened. No one entered. I looked round to see if it was our gray-blue Persian cat that had flung the door wide, and as I looked, Florence's voice outside said very deliberately, unforgettably icy,—

"It is really impossible. I do not at all care. It is not in me to be a *Household Words* heroine."

Candidly, I thought to cough and make known my presence; but believing it better that Mr. Simson (for, of course, I took it for granted that it was he whom she addressed) had better hear such talk, and have done with it, without interruption, I remained still.

"I cannot accept a transferred affection!" Florence ended.

That was direct to the point, I thought. Florence

might let her female relatives chivvy her, but she evidently knew how to look after herself with the subjects flung at her.

Mother's voice responded: "Florence!"

"Can't you see, mother? Of course you do see! How difficult you make it. All this talk of potting sheds and stables! I am not to be purchased by an estate, and potting sheds, and twenty acres of glass, and a family pew. These things have nothing whatever to do with affection. And, besides, he is indeed old enough to be my father! I am glad he's gone. I will not see him again."

So he was gone!

"You heard me invite him——" mother began.

Suddenly Florence's voice went up in a shrill, strange note.

"How you have messed things!" she cried.

"Leave—me—alone! All I want is to be left alone. I wish father was alive. He preached the gospel of leaving people alone. Why did Arthur Neil go? If you want to know——" she burst into tears.

"Arthur! Arthur!" she sobbed.

And then, by the grace of God, instead of coming into the study to be alone, as she had probably at first intended, she fled away. I heard her feet pad softly even on the thick hall carpet. I heard her heels go click on the tiles at the edge. There were one or two metallic taps as, flying upstairs, she touched the brass stair-carpet rods. What was I to do then? Would mother go away, or, before closing the door that Florence had flung open, would she look into the room? I leant back in the chair where I sat and dropped my chin on my chest, closed my eyes, but kept my ears alert. Mother had not moved outside.

I pictured her standing there, frail and old; I pictured her looking up the stairs after the retreating Florence. Then there came the faint *frou-frou* of her dress.

"Oh!" I heard her exclaim.

I made no movement.

She advanced right into the study, speaking to herself.

"Harold is home," she said, and came toward me. I still sat motionless, breathing deep. Then suddenly I opened my eyes.

"Hallo, *mater!*" I said.

"You've been asleep!" said she. "When did you come home?"

"A little while ago." I took out my watch. "I haven't been asleep long." It may have been guilty conscience—I do not know; I am not certain about much where she was concerned—but I thought she looked doubtfully at me. "I came home early to do some correspondence," I explained. "Don't go away. I've finished it. I wanted to speak to you. Sit down, *mater.*"

She sat down.

"It's about Florence," said I.

"Yes?"

"I must say," said I, "that I am worried about her. She looks to me as if she had something on her mind."

"Oh—I—I can't say I've noticed."

"Ah, but she does, very definitely. Why don't you suggest that she accepts John's invitation to go to Cairo?"

"To Cairo?" she echoed. And then, in a low voice: "I have no influence with her."

"Yes," I said, and tried to think of reasons that would influence mother. "I am sure she has something on her mind."

"Who would go with her? I'm afraid the journey would be too much for me at my age."

"My dear mother!" I cried. "All we men have gone alone everywhere. She has been to the continent with Marjory. She went to the Rhine once——"

"Yes, and came back with ptomaine poisoning! Raw cabbage. How ridiculous!"

"But they don't eat raw cabbage at John's hotel in Cairo," I told her. "And just think of the people she would meet."

Mother considered that. At last she seemed slightly interested.

"John is certainly in a position to introduce her to people of importance," she agreed. "But she does not care for bridge, or dances. Girls are such a proposition. Still, I'll think of it. I had not noticed that she looked as though she had anything on her mind. But you may be right. To go away for a little while, and see new scenes, and come back, might make her—might make her better. I will suggest it—at least I will think it over."

But it was the doctor who settled the matter, for Florence had rushed up to her room to weep, to laugh, to weep again, to lie there sobbing until Dr. Morley arrived. Thereafter she remained in bed for a week, the room darkened.

"She must," said the doctor, some days later, "have a complete change. There is something on her mind. If you, her mother, can find out what it is, without asking any questions that may set her

back again—or if you happen to know what it is, and can put matters straight——”

“I believe,” replied mother slowly, “that she has been brooding over some old unrequited love affair.”

The doctor frowned, pursed his lips.

“Personally,” said I, “I do not think she should be worried about it. We should get her packed off somewhere, where the sun shines.”

He looked at me shrewdly.

“That would be excellent. If she could go to——” he paused.

“She has an invitation from Cairo,” I said.

“To visit her brother,” mother put in. “You know—the author——”

“Oh, yes, yes. John Grey, of course. Splendid! It is the right time of year. But no Cairo in the season of sunstroke, for any sake!”

Thus Florence went to Cairo.

CHAPTER XL

I HAVE to make confession here (though I am aware that the confession, in this matter, causes me to appear somewhat a prey of false-sentiment) that during the next months, after Tom's departure to London, I had a great pity for my mother. Her appearance changed rapidly. She who had been so stately and queenly, shrunk, fell in upon herself physically. A light almost of distress was in the fading gray of her eyes.

"I must not stand in Tom's way," she said. "Mothers grow old. He has his life to make. He has been a wonderful son to me."

News from him greatly cheered her. It was obvious that he had made all arrangements long before leaving Glasgow. He went south, and immediately electrified into life the business to which he had added his name. But all this time, she often sighed over thoughts of Dick; for one day he and Marjory had shaken her sense of the proprieties by coming home, unostentatiously, but with a veneer, a glamour, "the gleam, the light that never was on sea or land," upon their faces, and announcing that they were married. I think poor mother doubted if they were, had a sudden dread lest they had altogether sinned, creatures of a loose modernity. Anon I shall be old, and perhaps vex myself over manifestations of modernity again among the young.

There is a certain pathos in it all. She came to me for solace.

"I am not astonished at Dick," she told me afterwards; "I know among artists it is usual to be married so, but surely Marjory might have exerted her influence over him. There is something wrong with a girl who is not determined to see herself properly attired for a marriage ceremony, with friends invited, and a reception to follow. Look how beautifully everything was done for Ethel and John! How can I give Dick a wedding-breakfast now? I shall have to have a makeshift one in a day or two. This is all so new to me!"

Tears filled her eyes. I told Dick what she said, and perhaps my tone seemed to suggest that I agreed with her.

"My dear chap," he said, "I have humoured her and gone kindly with her——"

"I know you have," I interrupted. "You have agreed often on many subjects where I might have foolishly shown differences of opinion, and——"

"Marriage," he said, "is a sacred matter to me, a wonderful matter. We could, of course, have been married according to any ceremony. Had mother been a gipsy, and I a heretic from gipsy codes, I might have considered that it didn't matter after all, and have suggested to Marjory that we get married across a brook, and break a sixpence in half. Perhaps that would be big and kindly. And yet—consider. Why should we always conform? I have never hurt her, that I can recall, on any other subject, poor old thing, except when I said that Mrs. Hammertrip was keen to have me paint her portrait, and now and again she seems pipped over my not

doing John. Poor old *mater*. I'm sorry. But really there are limits. After all, it is our marriage!"

I took no side. I merely looked on. I pitied the *mater*, and yet was in sympathy with Dick's views. Very soon after that he and Marjory departed to New York, as other requests had come to him to do portraits in the United States. My premises decorated inside and out, to his liking, there was much buying of new cabin-trunks, and fuss of preparation; and then one day our household was reduced to two, mother and I—Florence being still away. On the departure of Dick and Marjory, mother's air became more and more of one too old in a changed world; but a New York paper or two, with pencil marks at paragraphs in "Society Gossip," eased her. She had not again mentioned the subject, but I gathered she was certain that Dick's first portrait would be of the notorious Mrs. Hammer-trip.

"We have now, in our little old city behind the Statue of Liberty, several interesting visitors, to wit . . . and last, but not least, there is that brilliant Scots painter, Richard Grey, here with his charming wife to fulfil many commissions, and fling upon canvas a beauty or two, a steel magnate or two . . ."

Or again:

"Richard Grey, the eminent Scots painter, is not a stranger to us. His 'Flowing Tide on the Irvine Shore' has hung in the Metropolitan for many a year now. This does not mean that he is old. He was born with a brush in his hand and a palette on

his thumb. We note a tendency in coiffing among the Upper Ten that suggests they have told their maids to study his wife's tonsorial arrangements."

Such notes pleased mother, although of the last she said: "There is a certain amount of persiflage in this, but I expect that is the way of breezy America. It is probably due to the climate. I think it is the climate that makes the women wear white boots. I wonder if Dick has decided, as a concession to my views, not to paint Mrs. Hammertrip? She is so well known that, after all, to refuse to do her would make a greater stir than to do her. Her name is not mentioned as one of his sitters in any of the papers he has sent."

Knowing Dick, I was inclined to suspect that his concession merely went the length of carefully selecting the printed notes regarding his visit to New York. Letters came from Florence in Cairo, and they were full of good cheer; but between the lines I "jaloused" something wrong. I know that in writing to mother when we were away, we always considered less what we had to say, than what would interest her; our letters were less a criticism of our views, exposition of our tastes, than of her tastes—or of her tastes as we conceived them. This should be remembered even when reading John's letters, I think. In writing to mother, Florence mentioned what people of title she met; to me she said nothing of them unless they had other claims of interest. But reading many of her letters, as I say, I had the impression that there was more than she wrote of to occupy her mind. I am not trying to write these memoirs as a novel of suspense, greatly though I can

enjoy novels of suspense and admire the gifts of the authors who know how to handle them. To turn to the end of such books is to spoil the fun. One must read them fairly. Yet at that time I was conscious of an air of suspense. I wondered once even, if away from Glasgow, Florence had come by some mad change of mood and was on the brink of writing to mother that she would allow affairs to drift on toward the queening of Mr. Simson's house in Perthshire, with all its cucumber frames and so forth. I wondered once if she had met "the" man in Cairo.

When she wrote to say that they were all returning from Egypt as the climate did not suit Ethel, but that she would stay a little while with John in London before coming north, I confess that once again I wondered if there was some love-affair to cause her to make this decision. Florence was so greatly a subject for marital schemes that I too fell imagining round her on the lines of sister Mary and Aunt Janet. I recall how I even hoped that she was not cheapening herself. I had a vision of her as spellbound by some man in Cairo who was also coming back to England. It was perhaps odd for me to think in this way, seeing that to me love does not signify infatuation. I got it, as the phrase is, "into my head" that a love-episode if not a love-affair was at the back of her prolonged absence. Perhaps in view of what was really occurring at the time there may be some who will say that telepathic transferences were going on between us, but that I had not the right receptivity to catch super-normal (though not, as we know, super-natural) transmissions.

"I wish," said mother once, during these weeks, "that John would write.

"I suppose," I responded, "that he is leaving correspondence to Florence, seeing that she is staying with them."

It struck me from her manner that she found my sister's letters, despite their length and small talk, unsatisfactory. They certainly seemed to me as not coming from the real Florence as I knew her; but—as I have already mentioned—it had to be remembered that in writing to mother we all thought rather of the recipient of our letters than of ourselves.

"All this chatter about the London streets, the shop windows, and the beauty of John's house," said mother, "is so unlike Florence. As a rule she does not care for that sort of thing."

Hearing that commentary, I fell to conjecturing how near mother came to realising that we had a tendency to humour her. I felt inclined to send Florence a note, suggesting that when she wrote again she should tell more of what she was doing, of what she was enjoying, than of what she thought would interest mother. I am inclined to think that the *mater* was hoping to hear either of some delightful man met in John's town house, or to read some message—if it were but "kind regards from me when you write"—to Mr. Simson.

Then Florence came home, very radiant in health, chubby in her cheeks, with many new frocks, and an Egyptian gew-gaw or two from the bazaars. She seemed to be more thoughtful than before; there were, indeed, times when I thought her look of renewed health was superficial, and that just below the surface she was on the verge of another breakdown.

She told us over and over again all that she had written, and for two or three evenings we were in the atmosphere of the Cairo hotel, with the pyramids seen afar from its windows. We heard much of John and Ethel, and of their little boy; but frequently, when speaking of Ethel, Florence's eyes would have a brief far-off gaze, and something happened to her forehead that I can only liken to what happens to a hillside on a day of sun when the faint shadow of a mere wisp of cloud flies across it.

"What's the matter with the author's *ménage*?" I asked her deliberately one evening when we were left alone by mother, after more questions and more responses, and pictures of the Mediterranean, of the P. and O. liner, of Malta coming up out of the sea, and the like.

My sister's little teeth bit down on her lower lip, which she sucked inwards. She looked down at the floor, then up at me.

"Why?" she asked, then answered: "Nothing."

I knew she was not telling the truth, so left it at that. It was due to John, by the way, that I had two cares in life. That letter in which he had referred to father's letters had often recurred in my mind; and while Florence was away I had suggested to mother that there should be some sort of biography, or collection of letters of so eminent a divine. I think I suggested it merely as an aid to bring back some of the girliness to her eyes. She seemed lovely and lost in the house with me alone. I was not unsuccessful. She jumped at the idea. I inserted in *The Spectator* and *The Athenaeum* and *Life and Work*, a notice to the effect that a volume of letters of the late Thomas Grey, D.D., being desired, I would be

glad to see any in the possession of his wide circle of friends, that they would be carefully copied and immediately returned.

My second-hand book establishment by day, and this employ (of reading and copying the letters that came in response to my advertisement) in the evenings, filled my life. Florence having clearly decided, on her return, not to speak of whatever it might be that sent her gaze into distance when talking of Ethel and Cairo, I made no attempt to undo her resolve. Indeed, I did not wish to seem even to await in silence the changing of her mind. Our talk had flagged, so I went back to my work over the last letters received; and when she followed me to the study, it was not to enlighten me, but to ask if she could help with the copying.

CHAPTER XLI

I GAVE her some letters to attend to, and we sat there together while the clock ticked on, with no sound but that, the rustle of our papers, and the thin scratching of our pens. Suddenly she dropped one of the letters and spoke.

"I say, old man," said she, "I don't know where to begin."

I sat back in my chair and waited.

"It will all be out soon," she continued. "Ethel did not leave Cairo because of the climate. She left because there was a scandal." She paused again. "I lied for mother's sake. But I think one should not. She ran away a month before we left, Jack and I. I came home with him."

I had heard so much gossip of one or two authors that I merely wagged my head. I imagined that brother John had become one of these "awakeners of love," or perhaps even had felt his genius so great that he had come to consider he was one of those who live by other codes than the codes of ordinary men. I remembered his sensitive face and shrugged my shoulders.

"She got terribly excited," said Florence. "She rushed away. John was distracted and tried to get her to come back. He even worried about whether she was all right with the man; he found out where she was and sent her cheques." She shook her head.

"That is why I stayed in London, too, for a while, before coming north. Queer chap, John, queer chap! He came home one day as white as a sheet. He had overheard some men at the club speaking about her. What they said was: "It seems to me rather rank taste for John Grey's runaway wife and her paramour to entertain their guests with mimicry of Grey." He told me all this, white and miserable. Then he flung his arms up in the air and said: "The dirty little squirt! I expect he is living on the cheques I send her, too. I want her to be happy—if she prefers him to me and the boy—but, entertaining their visitors by mimicking me!" I tried to calm him by pointing out that he could see what those men thought, but he wouldn't listen. I was afraid something would happen. He said he would kill the man! He had not a word against Ethel all the time. He would not believe that she mimicked him. He kept saying: "Oh, God! Oh, God! What can she see in him?" What he had overheard rankled badly. He——" she paused again and her eyes filled, "he has filed a petition for divorce, you know."

I said nothing. Florence put her elbows on the table, hands joined under her chin, and gazed far before her, but less worried-looking now that she talked.

"What a fuss about it all!" she said. "Life is so good and—Oh, well, I stayed with him a while. Do you know, I can't help admiring him, somehow. He forced himself to perfect self-control, even went on with his work again in a fashion, and told me to come home so that I could be with the *mater* when the thing became public property."

"And when does it become public property?" I asked.

She opened her eyes wide. She saw I accepted it all and had no opinion to offer. But quickly she realised, after all, that I was giving her my real self.

"It may become public property any day now, I suppose," she said.

I did not speak at once, thinking over the affair, lost in consideration of it.

"What is your opinion of it all?" Florence asked.

"Oh, I have no opinion at all." I said. "We'll have to temper it to the *mater* when it all comes out. They'll make a splash about it, for he is celebrated."

I had been wont only to glance at the *Herald* in the morning and to take, each Thursday, the *Evening News*, because that was the evening when it published a literary supplement in which were often items of interest to me—essays on books or antiquarian subjects by some Scotsman with a pen. I took the evening papers thereafter, all of them, and we made a point of seeing the *Herald* in the morning before mother could get it. But the evening papers had the first news of it, six weeks after Florence told me as much as she knew. There was just a heading and a paragraph or two, non-committal, telling more who John was and who Ethel was, than anything else. These papers I did not even take home, but communicated their contents regarding the imminent case to my sister when I returned. In the morning we were down early and found the *Herald's* report much the same as that of the evening papers, with a few added details. We tore

out the page on which John was mentioned and burned it. When mother came down I was at the fire holding the newspaper up as a draught-creator at the chimney.

"Oh, it's on fire!" she cried.

"Good life!" I exclaimed, and snatched the sheet away.

Thus we put off the inevitable moment. I went to Buchanan Street not too greatly perturbed. In the afternoon I obtained the first nominal evening papers.

"CELEBRATED AUTHOR IN DIVORCE COURT.
CURIOUS DISCLOSURES."

ran the heading in one, and down the column every here and there were what I believe are called "side-heads." I tried to read the report as a new-comer. It lacked the attention to the bones of the case that I like to find in any serious treatise. There was little of Euclid about the method of recounting the proceedings. I had never read such reports before, and perhaps the writer merely followed a usage, a convention. Ethel was always spoken of as beautiful. "Because I love you!" was one of the side-heads. I have not kept copies of these papers. Whoever it was who was sent to report for the journals seemed to have dozed half the time, and to have been wakened up ever and again by some explosion of speech, some tripping up of an octave in the voices. I wondered what our friends, reading what I had read, would think. I did not feel myself entitled to express an opinion, and the papers did not help in this respect. There was no data on which I would have dared to say who was right and

who was wrong—until I came to the statement that some women crowded round John as he left the courts and hissed him. At that I was hopeful for my brother. I considered that wise people would know that he was not in the wrong. If I had known nothing at all from inside information, that little incident would have made me consider that the evidence showed him at any rate as not the worst sinner of those implicated. But what matter my considerations? The main matter for us in Glasgow (Florence and I) was mother, so I left Haig in charge and went home early in the afternoon, after reading the evening papers. I dreaded lest the *mater* might, by some evil chance, see a copy of one of them. Florence met me in the hall.

"Does she——" I began.

"Oh, she knows!" replied Florence, and gave a laugh that reminded me of Tom. "Trust our friends to come and condole. I think it makes them feel fashionable to be able to call on the house."

"Confound them!" I said. "How does she take it?"

"With them—wonderfully. She tells them she has known all the truth of it for a long time."

She was a wonderful woman. I knew it when she came in to the dining-room. She was wearing a beautiful gown, and seemed to have taken more care than usual with her coiffing. The thick white hair had been brushed till it shone like white metal. An old thin necklet was round her neck, a thread of gold. I am sure she did not want to eat, that she forced herself to do so; but even to us there was no sign, only when she went to bed—and she went early that night.

"Good-night, my dear," she said to Florence.

"Good-night, mother. Sleep well. I'll look in to see if you're comfy on the way up."

"Oh, don't trouble, darling. I shall be asleep. I am very tired. Good-night, Harold." She turned away. "It was very sweet of you, dear boy, to burn that paper."

She drifted from the room.

"You will look in and see her later, won't you?" I said to my sister.

Florence nodded.

CHAPTER XLII

IT is all over long ago now. Ethel has left the man she ran away with and been married again; and the man who took her from John we hear of sometimes in similar cases, either giving evidence or disclaiming any knowledge. On such occasions there is some passing reference to the earlier affair, some brief mention of John, and I dare say that the effect is not against the sale of his books. I have met him many times since those days, and if I have suggested that Dick and I had a view of him in common, to the effect that he knew how to be heard of, I would here say that I am certain he would be glad if, when new escapades bring into the limelight either Ethel or her former lover, that the papers would not say: "It may be recalled that . . ." and lightly retrace the old story of Cairc, without libellous words. He does not think about the circulation of his novels in that connection. That I would swear to. He has a look on him of a man who has been woefully hurt at some time.

I do not believe that at the time, oddly enough, any of us considered primarily what is called the moral aspect—not even mother. Her view of morality, it always seemed to me, might as well be called a view of what is usual. It was all rather a breach of *les convenances* than of the decalogue to her, but it aged her. She was shocked in the

same manner as she would be shocked if she saw some one eating asparagus with a fork, or picking a cutlet with their teeth—in the same manner, but in a greater degree. It is all, as I say, a long time ago now; and round about those days, as all days, there was Eternity. I suppose that what is to be will be.

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CHAPTER XLIII

JOHN came north to us, with his little boy, about two months after the affair was over, in response to solicitous invitations from mother. Many other divorce cases had, I suppose, by that time been heard and read. Such things do happen; there is nothing far-fetched about them; but they do not appeal to my taste, and I never read about them in the papers.

I found him (for a man like myself, I being not very garrulous except here, on paper) a charming companion. With his back to the fireplace, even when there was no fire to toast him, he would talk by the hour, occasionally flinging himself in a chair, and with one leg thrown over the arm. He talked of places and of people, of plays and music, of politics and affairs, and always with assurance. Like most of our family, he had a swift flick of the cynical in him; but that, to my mind, was as a dash of condiment. Florence and I, I have noted, are apt to turn the cynical gaze inward. It did not seem to me that John did this, but I cannot say for certain. The inner life of a man is hard to fathom. There is a bit of complexity even in the "Frederick Bettesworths" of the world, the simple souls. He talked much of himself, but he never bored, for he did so in an inveigling way, reminding me of Anatole France proposing to discuss himself *apropos* of

Shakespeare, Racine, Pascal, and so forth. I like John, not as greatly as I like Dick, but like him by aid of condoning little peccadilloes that I don't think I would have perpetrated were I in his place. But not being in his place I cannot speak for certain. As I listened, it struck me that, like my father (indeed like most of us, and we were a fairly human and average bunch of progeny) he wished to be thought well of. We were neither black nor white; we were a little grayish—which is no attempt at a horrible pun. He was not greatly excited over the account of how Tom got rid of me and, having asked for it, seemed only half interested in my reply.

"Oh, well," he said. "That's Tom—and that's supposed to be business acumen. It's a queer world!" Then he added: "And if I may say so, old chap, you are a little—I nearly said soft!—a little apt to sit in your garret looking at the stars while people pick down your foundations." He laughed. "One has to be commercial or go to the wall. That's why I have shares in Hardwood's now; I simply could not grub along. To a certain length one has to compromise. We are a dilettantish and dreamy family. I expect we all have some Utopia in the back of our heads; but the world is not run in such a way that we can live our Utopia and exist."

John had great generosity in money-matters. His hand was always in his pocket for charities, and to lend money to poorer fellows of his craft, with a: "That's all right. Give it back when your ship comes in." To his boy, mother gave all her heart; but I think the presence of the child always served

to remind her of the downfall of all her ideals of marriage.

"The poor little motherless chap," she would say, when his nurse had taken him off to bed.

Regarding the publication of father's letters I consulted John.

"Do you think," I said tentatively, "that Hardwood would——"

He pursed his lips and shook his head doubtfully.

"It isn't just in his vein," he replied.

"Oh, that's all right, then," I said. "Don't trouble. I only wondered."

"You come back to London with me," he suggested, "and I'll get some good hopeful publisher out to lunch, and we'll tell him all about Balmoral if he does not know the Old Man's ecclesiastical fame already."

The composite effect of his talk was to make me feel provincial. The world appeared to be such a blasé place in his eyes—coloured, tinselly, savage; and he accepted it so. After a month with us he returned to London again, with his boy and the nurse. I mentioned to the *mater*, one day, that I did not know which publisher to go to for father's letters.

"Why not consult Tom?" said she.

"Oh, he doesn't know much about publishers," I replied. "I spoke to John while he was here, but he said it was not in Hardwood's vein."

"But I think you should consult Tom!" she persisted. "He is the eldest son. And then consider all he did for you and Jack in the old days. Recall how he took you both into the business when neither

of you had any knowledge. I'm sure he could give you lots of introductions now—and maybe he could arrange the whole thing."

I could not tell her I did not like Tom.

"Perhaps I should go to London as John advised," I said doubtfully.

"That is a good idea," she replied. "You could talk it over with Tom. I should like to see the book published before I——" and then came tears.

I wonder if generation by generation the new generation pains the old over what seems but a trifle? Sometimes it all, everything—seems so trifling to me; that is why I began these memoirs by talking about sweetbread patties. Tiny little items take up our days. And why? Because they are, after all, in some ways, not trifling but cosmic.

CHAPTER XLIV

WHEN I came to the indexing of my father's letters, I realised that the question of who was to publish them had soon to be decided. That final work took me longer than I had expected, but, truth to tell, I dallied over it from sheer enjoyment. The pigeon-holes we used for preparing our catalogues I pressed into my own intimate service then, writing upon slips the names of all those with whom he had corresponded, and going through the letters to note special subjects that required mention in the index. The page-numbers would, of course, have to be added on the proofs.

"Academy, Letters to, regarding article on John Knox.

"Ayrshire, affection for.

"Baxter's Saint's Rest.

"Balmoral.

"Burns, Robert.

"Call from Philadelphia.

"Calvin.

"Carlyle, Thomas.

"Chinese pottery.

"Christ, exploited by the churches, but seldom followed; money-lenders scourged from the tabernacle; Lord's prayer a specimen, not intended as a 'prayer to mumble as it stands.'

"Dalziel, Rev. Henry.

"Glasgow, Lecture Society; Woollen Comforts Endeavour.

"Gordon, General.

"Hardy, Thomas.

"Hell.

"Herrick, the ideal cleric.

"Horace.

"Irvine, an old house described.

"Italy, account of Roman Catholic procession as arrogant rather than Christ-like.

"James, G. P. R., as soporific for insomnia.

"Johnson, evils of tea-drinking."

But though I loved pottering over that index, it is perhaps an aside in these memoirs.

I was eager to have the volume published. I was not entirely confident of the romantic movement of the world, and dreaded lest mother might leave us before the book was produced. It is a small matter, maybe, in face of Eternity, but thus I felt. Her own interest in the matter was slightly dimmed by the return from America of Marjory and Dick. Days of house-hunting followed, and at last a place was found on Loch Lomond-side, where Dick was determined to settle down to a winter of serious work. I did not see much of Marjory during the next months, for it was necessary for her to remain quiet, and so her visits to Glasgow were infrequent. Mother and Florence often visited them for weekends, but I always managed to make father's letters an excuse for me to stay in Huntley Gardens.

One day toward the end of that summer Dick came triumphantly into the shop in Buchanan Street.

He walked up to my desk and said: "I'm on my way to see the *mater*, but I had to slide in and tell you I've got a son and heir."

"And Marjory?" I asked.

"Mother and child are doing well, old boy. So long, see you later."

"Are you staying the night, then?" I said.

"Not likely. But I don't suppose I shall have gone by the time you get home."

I think it was a good thing for me that I had a deal of work to attend to just then. There are some things one simply cannot brood over. When Marjory married Dick I knew that I had lost her; but the birth of their child seemed to take her irrevocably from me. I bethought me of a London publisher with whom I had become acquainted during the Renfield Street days, and I decided to write to him. Now and again, when visiting Scotland, he had been wont to call on us, not to do business—leaving that to his commercial man—but merely, as he would say, with a very pleasant smile, because he liked to do so. "Just to shake hands!" was his phrase.

"Awful old humbug," said Tom once, after we had all lunched with him; but according to Tom there was something wrong with everybody, although his store of acquaintances was great. To tell him one liked a certain person was generally to open the way to a laughing depreciation.

I recalled this publisher, then. He had considerable taste. Cover, choice of type, and the like, made his books pleasing to the eye. I wrote to him to say that I had my father's letters almost ready for the press, and would be glad to hear if he would

care to take up the publication. He sent a most charming letter by return:—

“MY DEAR GREY,—For I think we can dispense with the formality of the Mr. in memory of those pleasant days when I used to see you in Glasgow, passing through, apart from business. I saw some time ago your request in *The Spectator* and *The Athenaeum* for letters and had it often in my mind to write to you on the matter. I feel it would be an honour to have my name on the title-page of such a book as, by your advertisement, I saw you had in view. I can't tell you what pleasure it gives me that you have remembered me after the lapse of years. If you will send the MSS. to me I shall be happy to give my best consideration to it.

“Yours faithfully,
JOHN PARAMOUNT.”

That communication greatly pleased me and also delighted mother.

“I am so glad,” she said, in reading it twice. “Your father would be pleased if he could know of it. The tone of this letter would please him. He was always himself so courteous and so dignified.”

Later on in the evening she came to me to ask for another perusal.

“I'm a silly old woman,” she declared, “but I *would* like to see that letter of Mr. Paramount's again. It makes me so happy.”

I sent off the manuscript, and received a formal post card acknowledging receipt. Within a fortnight came another letter, as follows:—

"MY DEAR GREY,—I have made time not only to consider the essential financial side of the publication of your father's letters, but to read them. In themselves they are, of course, a contribution to the epistolary literature of our country. They stand with the addresses of such men as John Caird and Robertson of Irvine. They must be published. That is how I feel. So definite am I about this that I have had special conferences with my readers, my manager and my travellers on the subject. Unfortunately my speculations for the coming season are heavy. I am bringing out several books on my fiction list on which I am prepared to lose heavily. I have a travel book, the cost of the preparation of which appals me, but it must be undertaken. But I would never forgive myself if I saw another house put this volume before the public. I should dearly like to be able to offer you an advance on royalty. Of course I realise that this has been to you a labour of love and that the financial side does not weigh with you. Nor, indeed, does it with me. My dear wife (a French lady), to whom I mentioned your kindness in sending me the book, vividly recalls meeting your father when he preached in the Scottish Presbyterian church in Paris. It appears that he stayed a night with her father, who was the eminent Paul Calais. I feel that I should publish the book. One of the letters seems to state the case that I have to put very clearly. 'I have often wondered,' says your father, 'how right this man Thomas Carlyle is about the world being composed mostly of fools. If he is right, then where is the honour for any man in having a wide appreciation? Is popularity the true test of author, paint-

er, orator, actor, and last but not least, I hope, preacher? It may be, however, to delve further into this proposition of the Sage of Chelsea, that the 'mostly fools' are those who have no interests in any of these activities, of author, painter—etc. But if it includes those who have such interests, then a wide public is poor recommendation. All these thoughts arise from my increasing flock at this new charge. . . ." There, my dear Grey, is my trouble. Is there a wide public for these wonderful letters? I do not know. All my staff in the conference I mentioned are agreed on one point—that they must be published; but when it comes to the financial side we are divided. My manager and my travellers are, alas, doubtful. It is only my most scholarly reader who says that of course the book will sell. After this consultation I want to publish it even if I lose. I must decide at once for the new publishing season (as you know) is almost on us, and if I take it up I will want to issue many notes to the press of its advent. I suggest that I publish 2,000 (two thousand) copies free of royalty and after these have been sold to begin the payment to you of a royalty of 5% (five per cent.). This, I assure you, you could agree to, without any feeling that you are taking advantage of my interest. The sale of 2,000 (two thousand) copies would pay for production. I would suggest, whether I have the honour to publish the volume or not, that you add photographs.

"Believe me to be,

"Yours very cordially,

"JOHN PARAMOUNT."

Mother read this also several times, and while regretting that such books have not a very large appeal, was much affected by Mr. Paramount's personal interest, and by his directness. I have wished once or twice since that I could have had Florence's advice, but she was at Gartocharn with Marjory and Dick.

"I wish you would write to Mr. Paramount at once," said the *mater*, her eyes moist, and on her face a look of quiet pride. "Tell him to go on with the matter. Oh, I do look forward to seeing the letters published!"

"He is certainly eager——"

"And personally interested!" she said for the twentieth time. "What is the printed form he enclosed?"

It was merely a circular regarding the work of Paul Calais translated into English, with a most charming preface written by Paramount himself, telling of how, winning his French wife, he also won a distinguished father-in-law, and was thus honoured by being the sole British publisher authorised to produce translations of the late Paul Calais' classics. I wrote to him, thanking him for his long letter, and saying that I would be glad if he would at once take up publication of the volume on the lines suggested.

Then what a search we had into the past, my mother and I. Old jewel-cases were opened, and half-forgotten albums brought to life. Glasgow seemed more remote to me than ever, a city of dreams in which I came and went. I lived with daguerreotypes, miniatures, silhouettes, shadow-pictures, photographs; and we found an old envelope

containing a wisp of hair (of father's mother) from which a little piece for father's collet ring, now gone to Tom, had been cut. I recalled my only memory of her, asleep in a chair in a quiet room with a clock ticking.

On the Saturday that ended that week of searchings into the past we went down to Loch Lomond, to communicate the good news personally to Florence, Marjory and Dick. What wonderful blues there are in that part of the country! What a sense of tranquility broods on the fir-plantations, on the fields, on the shoulder of moor that ripples away toward the Trossach peaks. We had an open cab, and bowled along very happily from the station. Autumn is very good to me. I think it seemed very good to mother also that day. She was more contented than I had known her for some time. Her cheeks were flushed with expectancy and with the fresh air, and I could see, underlying the veneer of age, a youthful girlish face. The jehu sat bolt upright before us; the hoofs went clip-clap on the dry road; the air was keen but not too cold. The *mater* put out her hand and touched my knee with warm-gloved finger-tips.

"I am so happy, Harold," she said.

"I'm so glad," I replied.

I, too, was happy, looking on the bronzy bracken, seeing the fallen leaves in the ditches, for every here and there instead of fir-plantation, there were woods of beech and birch, and the road was bordered by the lately fallen leaves, old gold, crisp yellow, and patina-tinted. Smoke went up in pillars, like immaterial blue palm trees, from the cottage chimneys, fanned out high above and was dis-

sipated into nothingness. The lichen in the crannies of the walls, the stones of the walls even—all shared the benediction of that late Indian summer. We left the cab at the end of the drive, and walked slowly toward the house. Florence had told us in her last letter that Mary's youngest boy, Clouston, had joined them, and he came rushing now to meet us, leapt into mother's arms, almost upsetting her.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" she cried. "What a big boy you are getting to be."

"Look at my trousers," he interjected.

"Granny is hardly big enough to catch you now," mother ended.

"You must have a little rest before lunch," he told her. "We've got cold chicken." His little chin went down on his chest, and he gazed up at her under diminutive brows.

"Isn't he like dad——" I began.

"Isn't he?" said mother, and then: "Oh, yes—new trousers. Well, well!"

"Now I'm a man!" he announced.

Florence came hurrying from the house. She was in a pink garment—I mean as far as her upper parts—that I always describe as a sweater, though I have repeatedly been told that is not the name for it, that men wear sweaters but that the feminine of it has another name. I can never remember what that name is, however, so now, in concession, Florence calls it nothing else but sweater when she wears one. She had on a blue skirt of the hue called, I believe, heather-mixture, and looked altogether very pretty. Behind her came Marjory in Harris tweed that was the quintessence of all the colours of the

landscape. Obviously they were setting out for a tramp.

An odd thing happened to me. After our salaams were made we all moved on. Clouston's eyes were on me, noting how I stood back to let the ladies pass. Promptly he jumped to the other side of the path, deliberately imitating me; and in smiling at him they all smiled at me in a way! He stood pat there, very grave, heels together, and seemed to hold his breath. Florence gave him a serious bow; but I believe the little fellow had a faint suspicion then that there was some levity in us regarding him. Marjory was behind my sister, chatting gaily to mother. And then—was it an accident? It was nothing. Her sleeve brushed the back of my hand, and for one moment all blurred—the late roses in the garden, the clumps of Michaelmas daisies, the path, the house. I gasped, then promptly turned to Clouston.

"Come along, old chap," I said.

It may only have been fancy, but it seemed to me that Marjory's back expressed—but no matter. I was no longer a boy; but I was too young to behave like an old fool.

CHAPTER XLV

WE had taken with us all the pictorial representations of my father for a family opinion on which should be used in illustrating the book; but it looked as though we were not to have Dick's advice, for we heard on our arrival that he had gone suddenly to London upon business, and was not yet back. But after the lamps were lit there came the crackling of wheels on the "chuckie-stones" of the drive up to the house, and he tumbled in upon us, out of a dog-cart, with bulging strapped suit-case and his wonted cheerfulness. Salutations and the ephemeral gossip over, and his reply made of: "Splendid, old girl, quite, quite satisfactory," to an inquiring lift of Marjory's brows, he pounced on the array of miniatures and photographs on the table.

"To illustrate the volume of letters," I explained. "Give us your opinion."

"Now, nobody speak!" said Florence. "Let us have his uncogged and uninfluenced view."

But Dick, in the midst of looking at the exhibition on the table, lifted a finger in air and waggled it.

"Ha-ha!" he said.

"What is it?" asked mother.

"I'll show you," said he, and fled precipitately from the room. We heard him unbuckling the straps

of his suit-case which still lay in the hall. Back he came carrying a portfolio of gray boards, tied with gray ribbons. He opened it, and held up for our admiration a photograph of father that I was amazed we had forgotten. To me there came suddenly a picture of Irvine High Street, with the sun on the pavements, on the cobbles and on the tufts of grass thrust up raggedly between the stones. I saw the tobacconist's shop, with its bulging window like a great glass tun, or barrel, with the staves left on; saw again the wooden effigy of the Highlander taking snuff to one side of the doorway. I seemed to hear father again studiously, meditatively, discussing tobacco with the shopman, as though there were his first attempt; and in the end, I remembered, he bought a tin of the brand he usually smoked. The whole morning was reconstructed for me in Marjory's drawing-room at Gartocharn. I recalled slowly crossing the road to look in the photographer's window, recalled the old portraits displayed there—of a lady smiling in a phaeton; of a gentleman in a frock coat with chains of office round his neck; of the Burns' Statue at Ayr; of Queen Victoria, beaming benignly from her carriage.

"Why!" I broke out. "That is one of the——"

"That was taken in Irvine," said mother.

"That is a portrait," said Dick. "And look at this one."

He spread out the photographs side by side. The first that he thus exhibited was the original from which the clay block had been made for Mr. Smart's forgotten article on "Eminent Scottish Divines." One of the others I likewise definitely and immediately recognised. Of the third I was uncertain,

but Florence and mother remembered them all. The first was the Rodin-esque thing of father on the forward slant, head up, his jowl lit, just a hint of the Blavatsky look in the white of his eyes. There were the lips of the orator. But now that he was gone from us, I found that it was not the histrionic portrait that most inveigled me, but the one I had forgotten, in which he stood with head a little bent, smiling sideways at the photographer, a touch quizzical.

"They are wonderful," I said.

"Have you been carrying them about all these years?" asked mother. "Ah—I expect Tom had them! I expect he gave them to you. Kept them all these years!" she murmured, and her eyes melted. She was infatuated by Tom throughout her life.

"No. I brought them from London," said Dick. "But Tom didn't give them to me."

"How does he look?" she asked.

"I hadn't time to call," said Dick. "It was an awful rush."

At the same time I was occupied with other thoughts. The photographs were mounted with what I can best describe as a sumptuous simplicity, and on each was a triumphant signature, in itself a work of art—like any name written by Auriol. Dick saw me staring at it: *Carl Ferzon*.

"H'm. Great signature," he said. "It's worth half a guinea itself."

"Ferzon," said mother. "Ferzon. Was that the name? Well, it must have been, I suppose."

Dick laughed.

"Charles MacPherson was his name in those days," he said.

"Why, of course!" she ejaculated. "Then why this?"

"He explained it all," said Dick, sitting down near Marjory on a settle by the fireside. "He was frank enough. He told me that with photographers, as with pianists, the mane and the name—rather difficult to say—are half the battle. He wears a French hat; he has changed his Christian name to a German one; and his surname to who knows what? He has hair like a golliwog. I believe it is a wig, but there it is. You have only to go into his place and you say at once: 'Obviously the business man!' He's immense. He is it. Gray walls, convex mirror, Toby-jug, stage-properties lying about that one wants to steal, and a be-oo-tiful lady in the reception room. But he's an artist, too. It was only by chance I got on to those things of the Old Man. There is a show on just now in Bond Street of photographs. Some of them are wonderful. Steichen has a fine portrait of Gordon Craig and one of an American, Chase, wearing eyeglasses, worth studying by a painter. I was pleased to see how high Glasgow stood. Craig Annan had one or two quiet and satisfying things. It is sheer, genuine photography with him, of course; some other chaps get effects like brush-marks over some of their work. That man Langdon Coburn has no end of an eye for the value of Georgian pillars, and a curve in the path, and a cedar tree. And there is a thing by a man named Hoppe of a fir-bough—a Japanesy sort of picture. I thought he only did actresses and duchesses; but that fir-bough is wonderful; and he showed also a green print of an old London cabby, or bus-driver, a change from women in pretty clothes. Dad dom-

inated the room in which he hung, though. That is the one that was on the wall," and he pointed to the one that gave the effect of a statue. "Ferzon told me that some of his early work he has never excelled. He's paying the price of success. The day I went to see him——"

"Did he do you?" Marjory interrupted eagerly.

Dick flung up his head and laughed.

"Well, as a matter of fact he did," he replied, "but I wasn't going to tell you anything about it until the proofs came. However! As I say—the day I went to see him he had been three hours photographing a celebrated—er—actress."

His enthusiasm suddenly ended. After firing off all his admiration like a machine-gun he stood staring critically at the Ferzon (or MacPherson) portraits. I could not but note at one point, as Dick spoke, that mother looked at him a little sadly and sighed; and I hazarded a guess at the thought that occasioned the sigh; I surmised that she had noted that Dick had found time to go to a photographic exhibition though he had been too greatly rushed to call on Tom. But the look passed from her face; that thought (if I have it right, and I think I have) was thrust aside and she smiled with a brightness of a kind that may be seen on faces of those growing old—a forced brightness, when they have a regret but do not voice it, realising that all may not be as they desire or hope. I had the impression that Dick had more to say, but that it was not for us all to hear. It was not till we were going to bed that I had my suspicion proved correct. He came up to the bedroom assigned to me to see that all was comfortable, each carrying a candle in a brass

candlestick. I set mine down to one side of the little walnut dressing-table; he set his down on the other side, and the central oval glass, and the small upright ones at either end, cast a haze of rings from their polished surface and their bevelled edges.

"That chap Ferzon," he said. "Let sleeping dogs lie, so to speak, and the dead past bury its dead. Do you know who he is? Have you tumbled?"

I had not tumbled, so I shook my head.

"No," I said. "Do you mean that he is not, after all, Charles MacPherson of Irvine?" Then it suddenly dawned on me. "What!" I cried. "Is he Charles Fearson——"

"Sssh!" he admonished. "There is no need to let the *mater* know and recall all that affair; but he is, all the same. He is the chap Victory Plant married."

It was my turn to stare at him now.

"Fact," he said. "And he has two amazing things of her in his show-room. I was looking at them when he came in. "That's my wife," he told me, and I bowed to her in sepia. He said that sometimes he wished he was back in the old days when his idol was Hill, and he could devote himself to gum-prints. I asked him what they were, and he showed me some. They take a devil of a time to do for a man who has a lot of money to make, it seems. While he was showing them to me he told me how he began in Irvine and then went to Glasgow. He did a bit of flattery business, of course, talked of how he wished he could devote himself to making camera-studies of such men as my esteemed father, but then, as he explained, he has a living to make. And the way he said: 'Huh!

Ambition!' would be fine on the stage. I rather liked him, struck me as being a very decent fellow. Interesting people human beings are, aren't they?"

"Yes," I said.

After he had gone I undressed slowly, washed, and lay awake a while listening to an owl hooting in the night outside. People are interesting, as Dick said, and their lives are interesting. I believe lots of folk have dreams in the back of their heads, but many leave them there. I remember hearing a man at the Glasgow Green once, when I passed, say: "Christy-anity is all very well, but what I say is: There is a place for everything and everything in its place. Christy-anity should be kept in its place." It is the view of many regarding dreams and ideals. They don't live with them. The dreams don't fit in, and they would not try to change the world. They accept it as it is. Going over my father's letters I had come to see him differently from the way I saw him when a boy and a young man. He lived a life of his own in his heart, acting a part in the world. I wonder what he would have been like if he had not had his taste for whisky? Or was the whisky an effect, not a cause? I think his emotions were often alcoholic; I think he often should have fought against things when instead he said: "Oh, let's be friends." He would make all sorts of compromises for the sake of *bonhomie*.

I lay musing while the owl hooted in the night and made it seem very big. I have not yet come to a decision as to how one should live. My father had the big body and the broad deportment to carry himself off grandly while compromising. He remained genial to all the world, but never let the

world really see him. Alone he had often very different views from those he expressed in public, and in his letters to intimate friends I was struck to find how repeatedly he contradicted the public man. Even with mother he was diplomatic, much as he loved her. He would agree when I am sure he had other opinions from those she expressed. How to live—how to live, I wondered; and fell asleep. The sun was high, twinkling in the yellowing discs of a thinning birch tree when I woke—to the light, and to the splendid rustling of the leaves.

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CHAPTER XLVI

I LIKED that house of Dick's. I feel inclined to linger over it as I lingered over the indexing of my father's letters. It had once belonged to the venerable gentleman from whom I had learnt the first paces of accountancy. You will remember that Dick had often visited his painter-son on Loch Lomond-side, so he was the member of our family most at home there. He had a double interest in these former owners, having, as I have said elsewhere, met that son in Italy and made friends with him before discovering that there were earlier links between the families. I may mention, in passing, that I never regretted those years of which I have told, in the chartered accountant's office. I never forgot what I learnt there, and could help in auditing the books at Renfield Street, and my ledgers at Buchanan Street are as tidy as tidy.

As for that house, it seemed as if the family in selling it had cast in with the actual stone-work, gardens, and fields what figures in account-making under the entry of "intangibles." There was a knoll close to the house (as I write I seem to be on its summit, and to hear the cocks crow across the peaceful golden countryside) up which the boys of that family had made a path; and here and there, where the slope was steep, had cut steps in the soil, in some places shoring these up with a board or two. I never went there but I thought of *Robinson Crusoe* (even

as a grown man I enjoy *Robinson Crusoe*), that part of his story where he climbed on a hill-top and "discovered a ship lying at an anchor about two leagues and a half's distance from me, south-south west, but not above a league and a half from the shore." And as that other mother had liked to climb up there and sit on a rough seat made for her, so did our mother like to do.

On the Sunday afternoon as we sat there among the scattered firs, enjoying their stately branches against the sky, and the rich-coloured view, my mind went wandering off, thinking of the old stories of that countryside. "My old accountant has gone to his long home, and his wife, too, and the family is scattered," I thought, "and here are we enjoying the place as they made it, touching something of their spirit dwelling here too." Dick and I carried tea up to the women-folk there, and I tramped up and down the path lost in thought, or reverie. I recalled the boy that had been I, poring over *Robinson Crusoe* and, with a little step-ladder, climbing to the top of a chest of drawers, then drawing the ladder up after him, in imitation of Crusoe's way. I pictured Irvine, far south, beyond the twist of the Clyde and down the Ayrshire coast, saw the High Street and the wharf-front stores with the oilskin coats hanging in bunches at the doors, recalled the very tang of the days there, saw the fuschias like little purple lamps in Marjory's old garden, saw her there again, and remembered arranging her lace-fall. So I came to the top of the knoll and set down at her feet the tea-things.

Below us, where the wind blew, beech leaves went in streamers from the trees. I slipped my fingers

into my waistcoat pocket and felt a duodecimo Virgil. Looking round, I glanced down at the house. It was very pretty, with quaint perspective of roof half-hiding the upper windows. The side toward us was almost covered with some creeper, and the wind, running the length of it, gave an effect of trembling to the wall. Tea over, Florence played with Marjory's baby. She has no great ear for music, or, I should say, no great ear for distinguishing tunes. Once she gets hold of an air she can hum it perfectly, but she will blend airs and words never meant to wed. To the tune of "Sing Me to Sleep" she entertained young Richard thus:—

"When the wind ceases
The cradle will fall,
Down will come baby,
Cra-dle and all!"

"Wrong hymn!" said Dick.

"Wrong song!" said Marjory.

"Wrong tune!" said mother.

"Wrong words!" said I.

And then we all laughed. Some remark or another brought up old days, and Marjory asked Dick if he remembered the goloshes she had to wear when it was wet, by doctor's orders, after a chill she had. He nodded.

"I remember them, too," I said. "I remember coming out of the hotel and seeing you coming. It was feet first—and then Marjory. I nearly stayed pat in the doorway instead of going down to meet you."

"There was a fond admirer!" she ejaculated,

laughing, and next moment bit her lip, I suppose because my absurdly transparent face had shown something to her.

We all helped the maid to carry the tea-things away again, and sat down beside the house to chatter. Mother having left us to go indoors, lest the damp of the lawn might affect her rheumatism, I followed to see that she was comfortable, after strolling round the garden, blowing smoke into a late rose or two, which made the little flies run out. Little Clouston was much amused by my entertainment, and followed me like a kitten from bush to bush. Then we went indoors together. All was quiet within. The hall was an arrangement of space and doors, like a Hammershøi picture. The boy seemed impressed by the hush and kept by my side, big-eyed. We peeped into the sitting-room, and there in a big chair was mother. She had fallen asleep. Her hands lay in her lap, palms upward, and her head had fallen to one side. I stood and looked at her. The engagement and wedding rings on her finger were a spot of light. I never see any one asleep but somehow I feel the pathetic in life. Perhaps this is mock-sentiment? I do not know. I thought that I would do anything for her, even if she asked for something contrary to my deepest beliefs. It was very quiet. The clock went tick-tock, tick-tock. Suddenly she stirred, opened her eyes, and said: "Hallo, you two! I've been asleep!" I put all this down because I felt deeply then. It is moments like that have made me what I am; and though these are memoirs of my family, I must try to tell of myself, too. She closed her eyes again, and we tiptoed away. Once out of the house, Clous-

ton rushed round to where the others were still sitting.

"Granny's sleeping!" he told them.

It was an impressive incident to him.

CHAPTER XLVII

FROM Gartocharn I posted to Paramount the portraits that, between us, we selected as best for the volume; and those two of Ferzon's were of the number. The proofs began to come very quickly, and the letters were published just before Christmas of that year. Two handsome volumes they were. Instead of Christmas cards, mother sent copies to many people in her large circle of friends. I subscribed to a press-cutting agency so as to see the reviews, and all that had anything chilly in them mother never saw; these, however, were few. Every morning two or three eulogies of the Old Man, with words of praise for the editor—some remembering to thank for the "excellent indices"—were on her plate to begin the day for her with pleasure. Tom wrote to say that they had sold many copies on their firm. In the middle of February I wrote to ask Mr. Paramount how the sales had gone. I received the following letter from him:—

"DEAR GREY,—In reply to your letter I am glad to be able to tell you that the book exceeded my hopes financially. I have sold 1,701 copies to date. I admit that the sales are now falling off, but there are sure to be a few odd sales still, and that will bring them up to an amount that will show, if not a profit, that at least the book has paid its way. I

am still a few pounds short, but we will say nothing of that. The gamble was mine. Had there been a profit you would have shared. The author is not asked to pay deficits. They are, at any rate, so trifling that I have a suggestion to make to you. Surely you must have by you some of your eminent father's addresses and sermons. If they were published they would revive interest in the letters, and I believe the balance of the odd copies would be sold off. To be frank—to have such a book on my list among the more serious volumes is, if not necessarily a great financial matter, excellent from the point of view of kudos. On this book I would be prepared to pay a royalty of 5% (five per cent.) after the sale of the first 1,000 (one thousand) copies, as the expenses of production will be less, of course, than on a two-volume book. I can see a volume, bound uniformly with the letters, and with a frontispiece—perhaps by Ferzon. My reader, nephew of the Duke of Sussex, with whom I have discussed the idea, is eager for me to write to you.

“Yours very sincerely,

“JOHN PARAMOUNT.”

Here was another piece of work for me for the evenings. Here was more happiness for mother. Florence helped much in the copying of the sermons and lectures, for we thought it advisable, just in case of any miscarriage in the post, to have duplicates of all. She seemed quietly happy over her labours. Old man Simson, who had come out of the past with his foolish smile and painful air, half-unctuous, half as though ashamed of himself, did not return. Perhaps he had written to Florence at Cairo and had

received no reply. Perhaps Florence had told mother not to write him back, or to freeze him away, and mother had succumbed. Perhaps, even mother had realised her own folly and, amending, had frozen him unasked. She could be frigid with people, or maybe he realised that he was making an ass of himself and simply retired. At any rate, comet-like as he had come, comet-like he went—out of our ken. Talk of him recalls that terrible day of Florence's breakdown; and memory of her cry on that day recalls Arthur Neil. I came across his name one day in *Who's Who* when I was looking for the address of a man to whom I wished one of my catalogues to be sent. "Neil, Arthur Steuart," caught my eye. I did not know of the "Steuart" and read on to see if the entry was of our Neil. Obviously it was by the evidence, not only of "*educ. Aberdeen Univs.*," but of "*asst. ed. Glasgow Evening —*" and other early details. I followed his career with interest on the page of that fat volume, noted that he was "*m*" (married) and had "*one s*" and "*one d*," and two clubs. How long it seemed since I had that strained meeting with him on the pavement of Renfield Street! I wondered if Florence knew of his life, wondered what thought she had, looking back on him. I do not think he was ever good enough for her. It was fine to see her eagerly at work over these manuscripts, fine to see her easy carriage and the jolly fulness of her cheeks, and their colour. The work went on apace; but mother did not live to see the publication of *Addresses and Sermons*. The condition of her heart had been giving us increasing anxiety, and we had impressed upon her the necessity of not running upstairs. at her age.

It is difficult to curb temperament, and though the stately was her usual manner, she was often very girlish at home, despite her years. It was in her nature, if she wanted anything, to jump up and go running for it.

While going over father's manuscripts, she must have suddenly remembered a little carrier of waterproof silk in which he was wont to carry some sermons when going on a visit anywhere for any length of time, lest he might be asked to take a service. Florence knew she was in the drawing-room, had left her there for a few minutes, and, hearing the sound of a fall, ran back, only to find the little table strewn with manuscripts, but the chair in which mother had been sitting put back, and she gone from the room. So my sister hastened upstairs. Mother had climbed on a stool to lit down from a shelf in her bedroom an old box and had then apparently collapsed. By the time Florence reached her she was in the article of death.

When I came home I felt something in the air, as it were, that flustered me for a moment, and then made me take a calm hold on myself, for it was strong on me—I suppose in some telepathic way—that control would be necessary. The place was so still that I called: "Is nobody in?" Then I saw Florence on the stairs.

"What is it?" I said sharply.

She looked me in the eyes.

"No!" I cried out.

Biting her lips, but with her eyes large and tearless.

"Yes," she said.

"When?" I asked.

As Florence turned to mount the stairs again, in a word or two I cannot recall now, she told me all, and how mother passed before the doctor arrived. I found myself in the bedroom where she lay, and seeing her face I had—I might almost say the conviction; I might almost say the knowledge—the belief that all was well, with father, with her, and with all of us. Age was obliterated on her face, and what I thought, standing there, was of that "peace of God" which passeth understanding." My sister's hand slipped into mine. I took it and pressed it, feeling old.

EPILOGUE

I TOOK up the task of writing this book during the bitter years of 1914-1918, and this chapter is but an epilogue, for with the death of my mother I really come to an end. I am glad she did not live into the war years. She would have liked to have seen the volume of father's sermons, but still. . . . There is little more to tell. The old home was broken up completely when we lost her. Tom and John came up to Glasgow for the funeral; and immediately it was over Tom returned to London, but John remained with us for a time. My eldest brother has not been back to Scotland since, and I only see him very occasionally, when I am staying with John. Florence and I have set up housekeeping together; she is bringing up John's boy, who is now a fine young fellow.

It may be recalled that while father was alive we had a parlour-maid called Mary Lennox, who left us to get married. We had kept in touch with her, and at this period, after mother too went away into the deeper mystery beyond the mystery of the life we know, she returned to us one day—to weep upon my sister's shoulder over the loss of her husband. There had been one child, which died in its fifth year of pleurisy. Her return had its quietening effect on us. She had been married, had had a child, and knew all about the life that the young dream

of. It was obvious that she must come back to us in her old capacity; and as the servant we had then, in the smaller house to which Florence and I had removed, was constantly being censured for feeding her family on the shoulders of mutton carried away from table, and was very hoity-toity about what she considered to be meanness on our part when we discovered this, and reprimanded her, and further, as half a fowl went up the area steps under Florence's nose that night—she was dismissed. Mary Lennox (or MacArthur—that was her married name), came to reign in her stead. This is no mere figure of speech. Mary treats us as if we were a kind of superior vassals; we fall in with her views, and are all very comfortable together.

I said at the beginning that this was partly a "slice of life," partly a "case." I have said that I, too, was a "case." So much interested in all the others, looking on at them, wondering about them, I find my own life has drifted along. Nowadays, especially since the Great War, I am generally in a frame of mind when I could well wear that old ring I have told of—and I wear it not at all. I have gone far beyond mood. It does not matter to me that I have heard at third hand that Tom calls us "The brother and sister Sterility." I only wish people would not repeat remarks like this to those thus commented upon. The world is such a splendid place that I cannot understand any one ever rising up to fight except against two evils, inhumanity and injustice. I may be a "dry old stick" in my exterior, but in my heart is always the wonder at life, the life of teething, having scarlet fever, courting, listening to music, playing at golf, going to the dentist,

and either being content with baldness or getting bottles of hair-tonic. I think I become like my father; I try to practice geniality, and am of a mind that nothing greatly matters save love in the real, fine sense.

Not long ago, realising that I had been working extra hard for "a guid while," without a break, I decided to take a week-end rest.

"I have a tremendous longing to go to Irvine again," I told Florence, when I got home in the evening. "Perhaps it is not much of a place, but it does intrigue me—as the young men are using the word nowadays. Would you care to come and see it again?"

"You don't want to go alone?" she asked, turning away to arrange some flowers on the top of my desk.

"Damn it, no!" I said.

"Oh, very well. I'd love to go there, too."

I end this book with a visit to Irvine, not in any thravn desire to have an anti-climax. Nor do I end it so because of the impression I have as of one going home when I go there, nor because of my liking for books with a feeling in them of going home. I end it thus because of what my sister said to me there. In our haphazard way we came near to having to sleep out. Even Irvine was full of people. But they found two rooms for us in the old Gallo-way Inn. Mrs. MacQuilp had died long ago, but her daughter reigned in her stead, and was oddly like her. Looking out of the window, after our arrival, I was perfectly contented. Dinner over, in the packed little dining-room, we drew on our coats and went out to have a walk through the streets.

On the bridge we paused. I remembered that drive from the station years ago, when the streets wiggled in and out of the frame of the hotel-brake door. The pavements and the streets were all bone dry. The lights in the windows shone bright. The faces of the passers-by were indistinct. Suddenly there came dropping down on us the boom of a bell, striking the hour. It moved me. I did not consider why; I did not want to analyse anything. We peered down at the river. It was all dark; if it had not been for the reflection of lights from house-windows, the water might not have been there save for an occasional plip-plop and a sucking sound.

"How queer to think," said Florence, "that a hundred years hence it will still be flowing past."

"It is a thought," I replied, "that crosses many people's minds."

We moved on. Just beyond the bridge we saw a little furniture shop; and turning our heads, attracted by the light of the window, beheld a picture of ourselves in miniature, walking along, in a convex mirror. It hangs now above the desk in my shop where much of this book has been written (for I have carried the manuscript to and fro with me every day); and sometimes I turn to look up at it, and muse for minutes on end. It is a little tilted to show the street. It gathers the shop and the doorway, the sunlight on the pavement and the people drifting past, into its peaceful circle.

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