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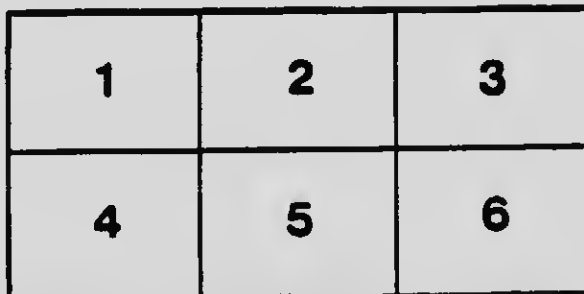
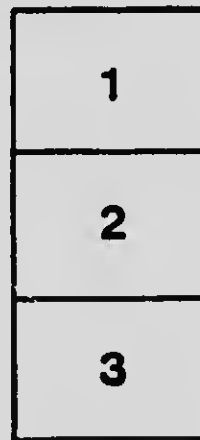
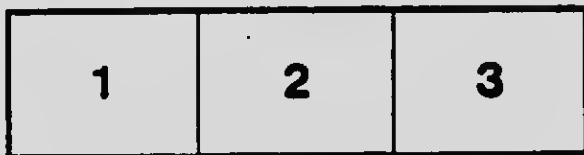
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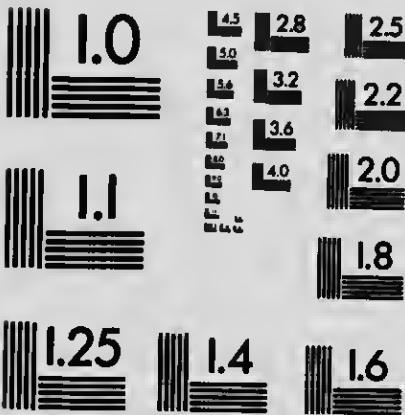
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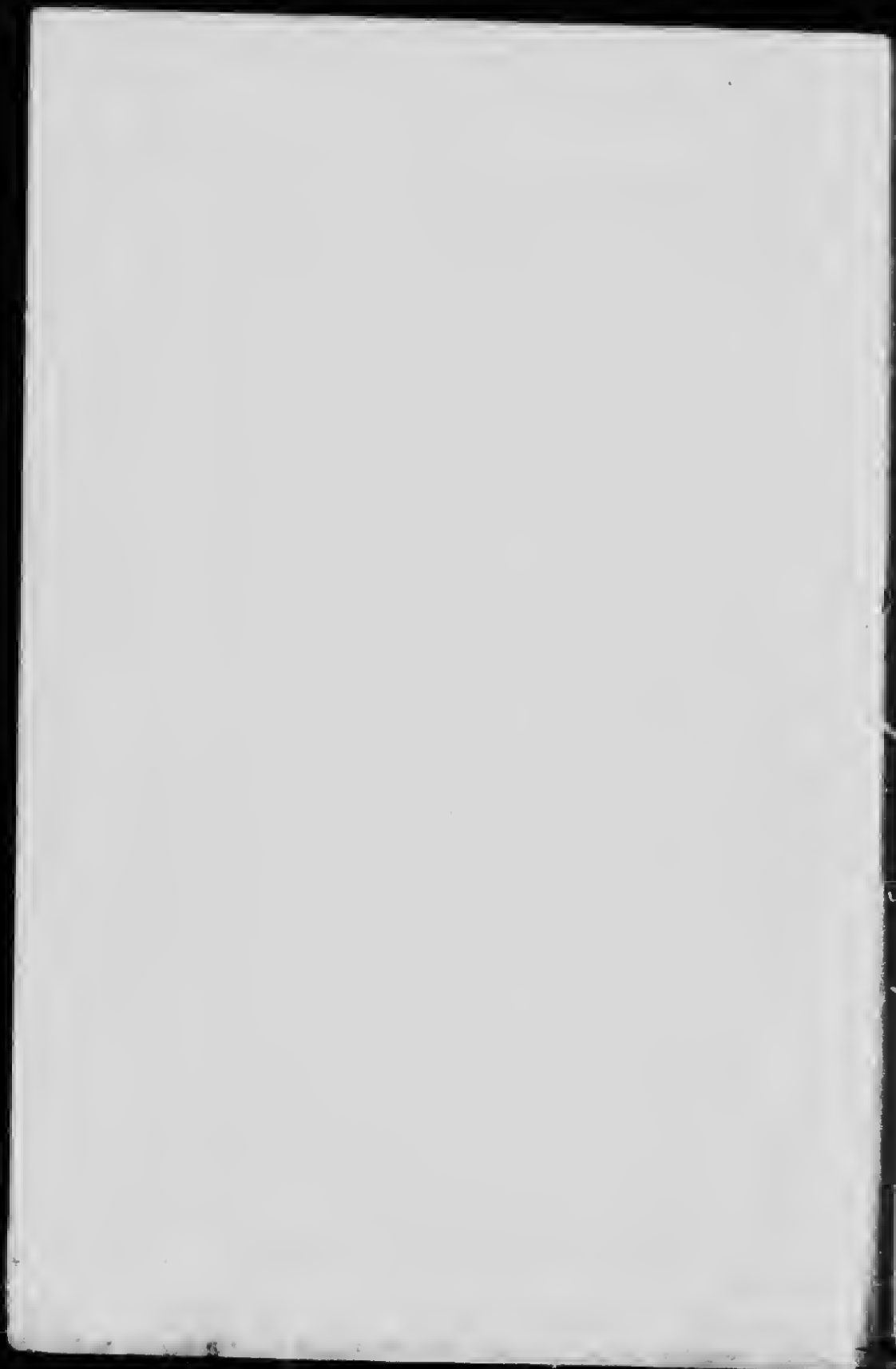
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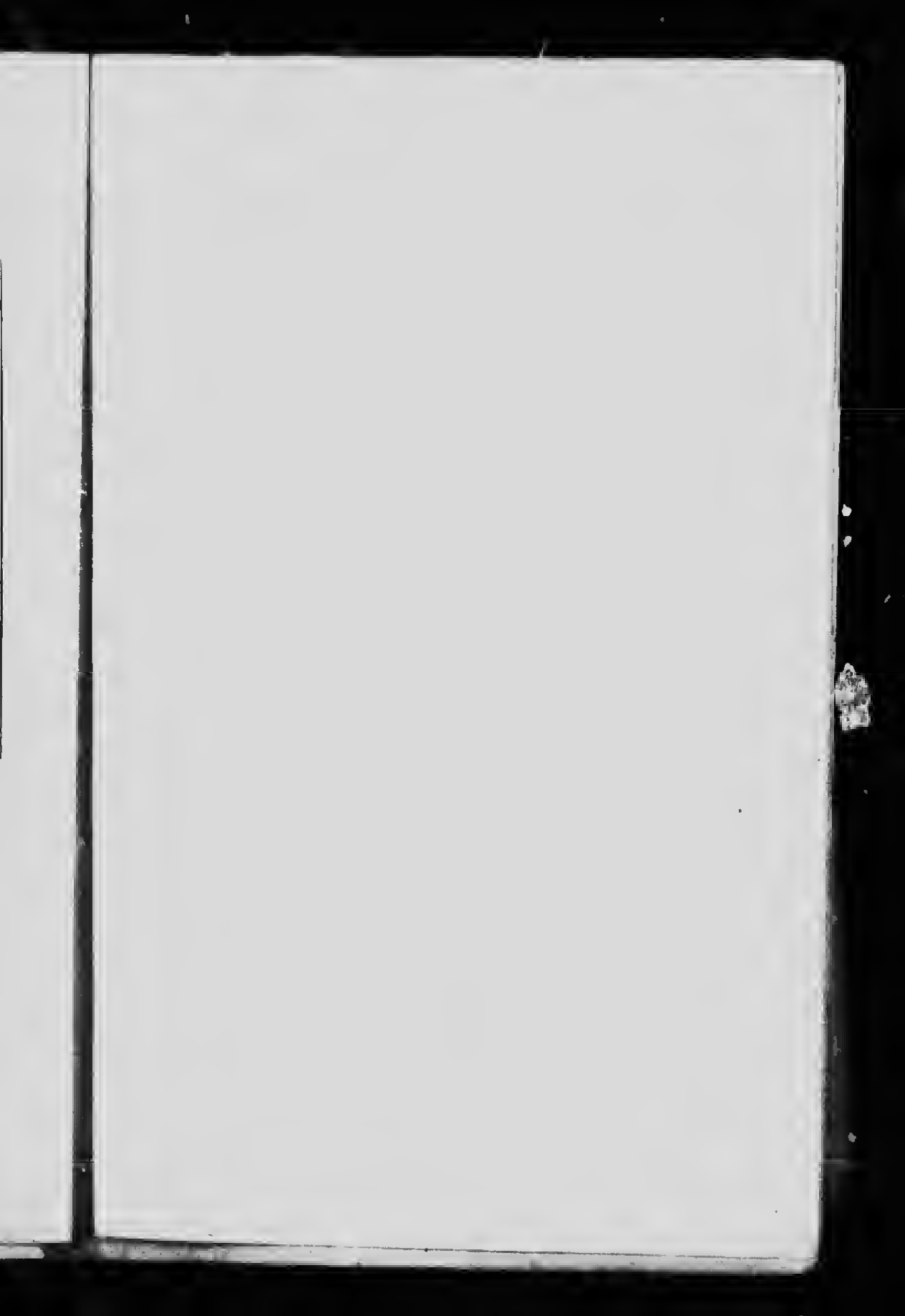
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" PEGGY CAME DOWN FROM THE HOTEL STEPS."

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

BY

G. B. LANCASTER

AUTHOR OF

"A OF THE RANGE," "THE ALTAH STAIRS," ETC.

"And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice——"

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FIGURE 100 FROM THE HOTEL STEPS.

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To all who wish to know and love the "open roads"
of England, this book is dedicated.

G. B. L.

x

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

CHAPTER I

'PISTOLS FOR TWO'

"WELL?" said the Honourable Peggy.

She looked as though she had been running, but it was the effort to keep still which had reddened her face and shortened her breath. The Colonel put a hand on her shoulder. His old stern eyes were dim, and his voice shook.

"He took it like a gentleman," he said. "Damn it, Peggy, he took it like a *man*."

In the room behind there was one other out of whose world the Colonel had also knocked the bottom. But neither the man nor the maid in the long hotel corridor was thinking of him. Peggy dropped a kiss on the old veined hand.

"And he said—Surrey said——?" she hesitated.

"Very little. He was courteous and loving as usual. But I could see that it hit him hard. I—I wonder if I have done right, little girl."

The Honourable Peggy could have dispersed that doubt in one direct sentence. But this was not her hour. She laughed at him, gathering up the length of her dinner-dress.

"Suppose we leave them to find that out," she said.

"And we'll go and do a dinner at the Savoy and a theatre afterwards. Come along, darling. It will be pistols for two only in that encounter, I fancy."

She slid a white arm through his and led him down the corridor. But her heart stayed behind with one

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

of the two men who sat silent in the big dusk room with the roar of London below them and the blankness of sudden shock in their eyes.

When Lady Alice Bouchier had married the Colonel Peggy was three years old. When Lady Alice died Peggy was exactly seven. Since then she had adopted the Colonel as every possible relation which nature and convenience could require, and the Colonel had filled the position gallantly, attending to such little things as occasional active service and duty on an Indian cholera-camp in the intervals. In reward Peggy gave him a good character to all her friends; but she refused to allow him to be borrowed, bought or stolen.

"He is mine," she had said. And she said it again, with her hand in his as the taxi spun through the glitter of London waking for the night.

"Take away that frown between your eyes," she said. "At once! You are not at all a good advertisement for your Peggy when you look like that."

"They—they are sure to make friends, Peggy," said the Colonel. "Eh? You think they will, don't you, little girl?"

"Oh, of course," said the Honourable Peggy, lying bravely.

And in the big silent room the two men whom the Colonel in his simple faith had bred up for mortal enemies just at that moment raised their heads and looked at each other fully for the first time.

Surrey Guest's blue English eyes were dazed yet. But they met the keen Canadian eyes coolly and directly. And the Canadian spoke at once, in a voice thickened by anger.

"We'd best settle this right away, I guess," he said.

Surrey pushed his cigar-case nearer the other man.

"I understand that the Colonel has settled it, Mr. Wylde," he said.

Against the smooth stone wall of his tone Wylde was baulked. Then he laughed shortly, picking a cigar from the case.

"Is that so? Has he arranged that we are going to play fair, for instance?"

Surrey went red. He was a public-school boy, with long records of his race and his blood behind him.

"We are gentlemen," he said.

"I've seen gentlemen out West that I wouldn't trust with anything—except a bit of soap," said Wylde.

"Ah?" said Surrey, politely. "I am afraid that is just the thing which you possibly could not trust me with under certain circumstances."

Wylde lit his cigar carefully. This man was game. But Wylde was not going to love him any the better for that.

"You mean fight, of course," he said.

"Of course," asserted Surrey. He was watching Wylde's big work-hardened hands in vague dislike and disgust. The very flesh and blood of this man were so distinct from his own.

There was a short, sharp silence. But while Surrey's English nature instinctively took up the position of dogged resistance, Wylde's keener virility and daring led him to the attack.

"We both want to win out," he said, abruptly.

"And we'll doubt each other all through and hate each other when we are through. But we are both going through. I guess that's the whole thing, isn't it?"

"Exactly," agreed Surrey.

Wylde sprang up and walked through the corners that were growing from dusk to dark. He took straight steps, one before the other, after the manner of a man who is accustomed to the treading of forest-trails. Surrey leaned back, with his hands slack on the chair-arms and his cigar-smoke making patterns that were hazy as his thoughts. This was the first crisis of his life, and his gay, easy nature could not instantly summon fibre sufficient to meet it.

To both these men the last half-hour had been a cataclysm which had split their world into shreds. To the Colonel it was the natural outcome of an experi-

ment begun long ago. For it was more than twenty-five years since circumstance had put into his hands two boy-lives—Surrey, born of good English stock, and son of a man whom the Colonel had loved and who had died beside him on the Afghanistan border; and Wylde, taken from a Winnipeg gutter, half-clad and wholly abusive, and yet vital with a native individuality which had forbidden the Colonel to leave him to certain wreck. Some questions concerning human life had always interested the Colonel. For instance . . . did luxury and opportunity cause a man's finer instincts to blossom or to stultify? Would a free life coarsen his aims and morals? Would a sheltered life cramp them? Was the virility born of the rough battle for existence a more powerful factor in a life than the knowledge born of all the arts civilization could give? And did all these outer influences make much difference to the inner man after all?

With those two boy-lives the Colonel had sowed his questions. To-day he had come to the reaping of them from the lives of two men, and the first sweep of his sickle against the bearded grain had startled him. Surrey he had loved all his life, and the boy had spent many holidays at the Colonel's old home in Northamptonshire, where the Colonel himself had seldom lived since his wife died and Peggy went abroad to school. Wylde had been left entirely in the hands of a Winnipeg solicitor with instructions to "hammer him straight and make a man of him." An hour since the result of the solicitor's attempt to do what nature had already intended rather too fully faced the Colonel for the first time in his own remembrance, and the interview had not been quite what Wylde called "maple-syrup and doughnuts."

Wylde was principally to blame for this. For it was quite evident that from his boyhood he had hated the Winnipeg solicitor as a chained dog hates a man who is brutal to it, and he took pains to make it clear that he recognized the Colonel as the root of all this evil.

"What business of yours was it?" he demanded. "What d——d right had you to meddle with me? I never asked to be licked into shape and brought back to heel by the whip, did I? Smayne has been a brute to me. He's hammered me hard. But, by —, you've been a bigger brute, for you paid him to do it. What cursed right had you to . . . ?"

"He did it for your good," said the Colonel, sternly. "You would have been among the lowest dregs long before this if he hadn't made a man of you."

Wylde took one step. He was a big man and very thin. There were lines about the corners of his strong mouth.

"Well?" he said. "Do you see what kind of man you have made of me?"

Surrey was dazed with his own trouble. But his love for the Colonel brought him across the room.

"I think we can do without this kind of talk, Mr. Wylde," he said. "We are both indebted to the Colonel for our education and for everything else. If he chose to bring me up to luxury and you up to—a hard life, that is made level now. He tells us that we have equal rights from now on, and that the man who—who is to be his heir is the best man. You have as much power to prove your eligibility there as I have. And I have now no more rights than you."

He tried to keep the bitterness out of his tone and he looked at the Colonel.

"Please go to Peggy, sir," he said. "We'll settle this best alone."

"Surrey," said the Colonel, "if you consider that I have wronged you——"

"No, sir. You never told me I was to be your heir. I have no possible right to kick if you choose another man."

He shut the door and came back to Wylde. But it had been Wylde who spoke first, even as it was Wylde who spoke first again. He halted in his slow walk from corner to corner and looked straight at Surrey. It was a quick look, keen as a lancet. All

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

the edges of Wylde's life had been razor-turned, and they had cut him until he believed the flesh grown callous. All Surrey's edges had been rounded for him, and he had slid over them down year after year of his cheerful contented life. But he winced at the plunge of Wylde's lancet.

"You know the Colonel's step-daughter?" said Wylde.

"Yes." Surrey's thoughts had been with Peggy just then.

"Is she engaged?"

"No."

Wylde walked away again. Surrey sat still, quivering with hot blood. He had fully understood all that the question meant, all that Wylde's cool insolence had not troubled to hide. But in some way this man of the long sliding step and the ill-fitting clothes possessed an untabulated power which daunted spoken anger. He was descendant of that mighty brood which England has bred and sent out to home where it would; and he had gained a new force from a new land, and the will of new ages was written in his blood. Instinctively Surrey knew him for the more virile of the two. This man's spirit was awake in him; keen, sharp, alert as the sting of salt spray. The dash of it hung back on Surrey's memory some words of Browning which he had once heard a man quote in his rooms at Oxford:—

"And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice . . ."

Surrey stirred in the big chair with a sudden shiver. At this instant he knew that the sin of the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin had been his all his life. It had never been Wylde's. The very tread of the man told that. And now—his thoughts slid back to Peggy. Peggy cared for him as he cared for her. He might have told her that he cared any day, but—Surrey bit on his dead cigar uneasily. That "but" had rounded

his every purpose. In his life there had always been plenty of time to-morrow. He was in debt, as usual, and his prospects were those of the ordinary lieutenant in the ordinary cavalry regiment in time of peace. But that had not troubled him at all. To-morrow he would be the Colonel's heir. To-morrow he would tell Peggy that he loved her. To-morrow he would really begin to mug up for his next exam. To-morrow he would think about putting by some of the generous allowance which the Colonel gave him. And now the to-morrows were shorn away suddenly and cruelly as a shifting plate shears a faulty bolt, and the future of all things lay in the hands of this big lean man with the quiet cat-like tread and the bitter tongue.

Surrey's code of honour was high—higher than Wylde's, for Wylde had been down side-trails where the best men never tread—and he had done few things that he was ashamed of. But he had done fewer yet that gave him pride, and the wrench which had dislocated his easy jolly life of small aims and small evils had left him naked of initiative or resource. He stood up, driven to his feet by the desperation helplessness sometimes brings, and out of the dusk at the end of the room Wylde spoke.

"I asked you just now if we were going to play fair," he said. "I want that back. I reckon we don't know—yet. We have a good deal at stake, and we are both ordinary men, I take it. I imagine we had better leave the matter right there."

"As you please," said Surrey, coldly, and went out. A little later he saw Peggy and the Colonel at the Savoy, but he did not go to them. Quite suddenly it had come to him that he could not go to Peggy in the old way any more. He was not now the Colonel's heir with a secure and easy life before him. He was a penniless man, on his trial, and honour would hold his lips dumb.

Something of this Peggy guessed, and the glitter of glass and jewels and silver down the long room went blind before her. A little while back she had

seen the two pass up the corridor at the hotel: Surrey with light on his ruddy gay face and fair hair, and Wyld behind him, dark as a shadow, with that long silent step which almost seemed a slink. At the door the shadow had blocked out Surrey's brightness. It lay on his face still, and Peggy drank her wine at a gulp, and looked at the Colonel.

"Say it again, dear," she said. "I am so sorry."

"I wonder I never thought of it before," said the Colonel. "It will be quite the very best way to test them, Peggy. We will take a motor-tour through England. Just you and I and——"

"The Rival Claimants," said Peggy.

"I wish you wouldn't call them by such absurd names, Peggy."

"Dearest, I couldn't call them by any names that would be absurd enough. I wonder when you will begin to know what you have done."

"My dear child, this experiment is the outcome——"

"Don't call it an experiment," pleaded Peggy.

"Call it a Colossal Chaos with Complications. Do, dear."

The Colonel pushed aside his savoury and looked at Peggy. She was leaning both soft arms on the table, and she looked just a little girl with her swathed fair hair and her slim shoulders and that red pout to her lower lip. But the Colonel knew enough about Peggy to know that he did not know very much. She had rioted through one glad delirious season at Simla with himself and Surrey; she had danced through a staid one in England; and now she was just a sweet elusive true-hearted bundle of impulses such as the Colonel worshipped and endeavoured to scold every day of his life.

"You speak as if you thought I had done wrong," he said.

"So you have. Frightfully wrong. And you are good enough to do more wrong yet. You have taken these two men and brought them up as you chose.

Now you set them opposite each other and say, ' You must both be good boys, but the one that is the goodest is the man for my money. Now, wade in, and do your damnedest.' "

"Peggy!"

"You have said just that," continued Peggy, relentlessly. "It is very hard on Surrey, because he has naturally thought he would be your heir, though you have never said so. It is hard on the other man, because he has to be a cad if he ousts Surrey and a failure if he doesn't. And from what you have been telling me I don't imagine that he intends to lie down to this business. And it is excruciatingly hard on you, because you'll have to choose according to your notions of fair play——"

"I thought you would help me there."

"Pater! Are your notions of fair play the same as mine?"

"No, no," the Colonel reconsidered hurriedly.

"No. I must decide for myself. But you must come for this trip, Peggy. I'll buy a small car that might take a lot of managing, and they shall drive in turns. I won't have a chauffeur. And I should think that in about two months enough little incidents will turn up to enable me to see which man has truly the greater grip of himself and of life."

"I should think it possible." Peggy spoke judicially. "Has it struck you that you are arranging for far more than petrol explosions on this trip? I'm not so very particular, but—does this Wylde man eat with his knife?"

"Smayne tells me that he is outwardly a gentleman——"

Peggy gave a soft crow of delight.

"Oh! Well, dear, we will have to find out what he is like inside, and—take off that frown, Colonel. At once!" She leaned over and patted his hand. "Dear old man," she said. "Don't worry too much. You just sit back and let the heathen rage ceaselessly together. I'll see that they attend to that part of it."

"Surrey is not a heathen. I do love that boy, Peggy. But——"

Peggy dared not listen to this to-night. She stood up, drawing her wrap about her.

"Which theatre shall we go to, darling?" she said.

In two days Wylde saw exactly where he stood with Peggy and the Colonel, and he saw exactly where Surrey stood. Then he took a train and went out to the country and walked his bitter soul back to its balance again.

The Winnipeg solicitor's process of "making a man" of Wylde had somewhat warped and tainted the original man in him. He had learnt to see the evil of life too clearly, too mercilessly. He saw his own faults, and he rooted them out savagely or cherished them with defiant care. And he magnified the faults in others. In this thing he looked straight down to the very end of the line, ignoring side-issues. The Colonel was one of those philanthropists who do as much harm as an earthquake and have as little understanding of how or why they do it. Surrey had drawn himself up on his insular rock of reserve and prejudice; solid as a lighthouse and just as fit to resist attack from all corners at once. The Honourable Peggy—here Wylde's thoughts twisted in a knot and he smoked three pipes while he disentangled them.

The Honourable Peggy was a new element in Wylde's universe. She struck sparks off him whenever they came in contact, but she never seemed to get burnt. She was the kind of woman who lived in the best novels and in fairy-tales, and in the light delicate atmosphere which her brain breathed Wylde could not fill his mental lungs. It had been an encounter with her two hours back which had finally sent him out to the country.

After discovering that Surrey "really hadn't time, dear old chap," to draw out a travel-route the Colonel had given the charge to Wylde, and had seen, in blank astonishment, the first glow of real eagerness on Wylde's face.

"Why, I'll start in at it right now," he said. "Two or three months. We should see a decent lot of England in that time."

"It's only a little place," said the Colonel, remembering the sweeping land of horizon beyond horizon which Wylde had come from.

"But it is jammed right up to the cork with history," said Wylde. "I guess we'll manage to get some out in a few months."

And then he went to Peggy, and asked her to help him.

Over her book Peggy lifted her eyebrows a little, her eyelids rather less. She was the Honourable Peggy Bouchier in every definite dainty inch of her.

"I really cannot think why you should have come to me," she said. "Can't you get motor-maps and contour-books and all those sort of things?"

"Why, they will come presently," said Wylde.

"But the first thing is—what do you want to see?"

"Oh, dear me, no." Peggy drew her skirt away from his restless feet so very delicately that he only just knew that she did it. "The only question is—what will the Colonel care to see."

Wylde flushed that dull thick red which always told her when she had hit. Very surely he knew what the Colonel wanted to see.

"Then I shall map the trail exactly as I like," he said.

Peggy took up her book again.

"It would be as well," she said. "England is all houses and trees and fields. And generally there are quite decent hotels. And there is always dust in a motor. And I know very little of England, in any case."

Wylde, looking through the veil of his tobacco-smoke against the trees, seemed to see her again, delicately-coloured, exquisite from her coiled shining hair to the toe of her pale fawn slipper.

"I reckon it takes a well-bred woman to be brutally rude politely," he said. And then, while the lights

faded among the tree-boles and the birds fell silent, he looked his future full and straightly, and planned out his line of attack.

Defence never entered into Wylde's theories. By cunning, by savage force he had defeated his enemies more than once. He was unexpected, and he never forewent an advantage. By the time the shadows were thick and he gathered himself up to go home his way lay open before him, not nakedly direct, but a loose mesh of threads which might tangle and hold and tighten when he chose. To his mind the dice were clogged against him, and therefore he would cog some more dice for himself. Seeking for the most vital element of this combination, he unhesitatingly put his finger on Peggy. It was she who would choose if the man who had always had should have until the end, or if the man denied and starved and hardened for so long should come into his kingdom at last.

"It is the girl who will decide," he said. "And how am I going to manage her? I reckon that the only thing is to be prepared at all points."

The decision savoured of direct simplicity. The fulfilment was not quite so clear, for there were more than tabulated points to be considered in this game. Wylde steeped himself in English history and geography until he had much more than a hazy idea of what to see and where to see it. He steeped himself in mechanics until the oil appeared to ooze out of his finger-tips and his elbows. But it never got into his speech. His half-shy directness there enraged Peggy at first. Then it made her laugh. And after that it began to frighten her, because she saw just a little of the power which lay behind it. And, last of all, she began to let Wylde talk to her; partly because she could not help it very easily, and partly because something in the nervous virility of the man stirred new sensations in her. Dimly she felt that there was depth, height, great spaces of windy light beyond the calm prosperous world as she knew it.

With Surrey the first shock of conflict was already past. A dazed period had flashed into a briefer period of anger. Then he smiled at Peggy.

"One feels something like a prize baby at a show," he said. "I suppose the decent thing would be to back out. But I can't do that, somehow. I don't know how to fend for myself."

He laughed, and Peggy's eyes lit with battle. She was learning for the first time to dress her own hair because the Colonel had plainly refused to take her maid. But she was a woman.

"Even a prize baby can sit up and take notice," she said. "You can't. Mr. Wylde is out with the car every day. You have been three times. How much do you know about the cylindricals and aneroids and crutches and things?"

"Clutch," said Surrey, lighting another cigarette. "Well, it doesn't matter if Wylde understands more of the machinery than I do. He likes handling those sort of things. I saw him greasing the speedometer chain with his hands the other day."

He looked down at the well-kept length of himself and flicked away a speck of ash.

"It's not my fault if I do like to be clean," he added. "Come along and have some tea somewhere. And don't look so cross, Peggy. It will pan out all right, and if it doesn't where's the use of bothering beforehand?"

It was in this mood that he next day went to a shop and made a careful purchase, with this result. On the day that was to be the beginning of all things Peggy came down from the hotel steps with a mauve veil floating from her close bonnet in just that light elusive way which half-hid, half-showed the fair hair and the fairer face, and with what she took to be her heart bobbing in her throat. For that low long little car with the graceful lines and the blue body and the glinting brasses was to be a ring wherein many a stout battle would be fought. Wylde was at the wheel, blocked big in his yellow oilsk: and at the

bonnet of the car, above the interlaced A.A. sign a little blue brass bird fluttered and quivered with every petrol breath.

"Oh," cried Peggy. And again: "Oh! Our mascot. Who thought of it?"

Her glance flew from Wylde to the Colonel. Then it sprang to Surrey as he struggled into his coat on the top step.

"Give me something wet, Surrey," she said.

"My dear girl——"

"Never mind," said Peggy. "It might spoil the brass." She stooped quickly and kissed the round bird-head. "I christen this car the Blue Bird of Happiness," she said. "The first person to disgrace the name is to be run over immediately."

"What a fraud you are," said Surrey, as the man shut the door and saluted acknowledgment of the Colonel's tip. "You know you'll be the very first yourself."

Peggy cuddled into her corner among the rugs and blue cushions. For this June air was chill at six o'clock of the morning.

"Four precious souls, and all agog,
To dash through thick and thin,"

she murmured. "But please choose the thin ones, Mr. Wylde, for a two-cylinder Riley isn't quite as good a battering-ram as a four-cylinder Daimler would be."

Surrey was a dogged and careful driver, claiming his rights with easy decision, and keeping his temper in lordly aloofness. Wylde drove like a whirlwind; sensing dangers before they came; swinging his bold way through a crowd, and charging the traffic with a reckless delight such as earned him reluctant respect and prompt wrath. He swept them along the Embankment where the river waited, grey, hooded with mist, and sullen, for the benediction of the sun. He brought them, with occasional stops and violent rushes and short humming flights, down the Old Kent Road, where drovers drowsed atop of their slow-

moving loads and the little wedge-shaped costercarts rattled by with their quick-trotting donkeys, and the whole squalor and undress of each slum turned out to look at them. Through Lewisham they climbed to the Bromley suburbs, and here the first call of the open road came to Wylde with the clean wind that swept through the sunlight.

He clicked the throttle-control down until the throttle gaped and the car sprang forward under his hand like a live animal. And right and left the beauty of England's heart lay bare to them: wild roses nodding pink and white and red in the hedgerows; beanfields in bloom with their haunting sweetness drawn by the sun and the dew; far-reaching trees that dashed them into sudden darkness; wide splashes of sun on the level winding roads where great wains creaked in the hay-fields and men raked the scented grass at this seven o'clock in the morning; sleepy boys tailing cows that blew out milky breath to them.

Past Shooting Common Wylde whirled them; through Locks Wotten, yet blinking half-awake, and down hill to Farnborough. In all the little coppices gipsies were stirring under the strange patched, hooped tents that, like swallows' nests, have only half come out of evolution, and part-naked children stood up, brown and ruddy and strong, to the sun. On right and left the grey oast-houses pulled their peaked cowls over their eyes. On left and right the slender hop-poles made sharp green tracery on the delicate blue of sky. A wandering breath of clover touched Peggy's lips and the swift motion and the swing of the car smote a new feeling to life in her. She leaned forward with eyes lit.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh! I've never seen earth like this before. I don't want to go to heaven just yet."

Surrey looked round and laughed.

"Be prepared when I get to the helm," he said.

"If I tried to take these hills and corners at the pace Wylde takes them——"

"Is it too fast for you?" asked Wylde.

His tone was perfectly civil, but Peggy caught the antagonism in it and saw it flash back from Surrey's eyes. She glanced at the Colonel, smoking his pipe in absolute angelic content.

"You dear old man," she murmured. "I wonder what you'll feel like when we have all arrived at that state of friendliness which would prefer to get out and run behind."

Wylde had been in exactly that state until to-day. He had been chafing at inaction; awkward before the men and women who were daily fare to the others; resenting past and present, and pinning his fierce faith to the future.

And now the future reached her arms to him. Her breath was on his lips, in his hair as the car flashed up to the crest of the world, leaving billowing downs spread in blue haze below; fled down through zigzag ways where mighty horse-chestnuts caught them and made canopies over them, and rose again as an eagle rises on steady wings. Wheat lay green about them, splashed through with blood-red poppies. Dandelions and buttercups wasted the earth with gold. Long swathes of hay lay brown and sweet in the sun.

At the top of the steep hill by Sevenoaks the car poised, bird-like. Then she swooped down the level twisting surface in a swiftness which brought a crowd of delight from Peggy and a half-choked grunt of objection from Surrey. To himself Wylde laughed. Already he had come to delight in the skill of his clutch-work and in the car's prompt obedience to his hand. He was running her on the throttle only, ignoring the side brake. He was playing with her in a reckless and devilish delight such as roused Surrey's unwilling admiration and his just anger. But he said no word until the old Rose and Crown hung out its sign to them in sleepy little Tonbridge, and the Colonel hurried Peggy in to order breakfast. Then he followed Wylde to the garage.

"You are not taking risks for yourself only, Wylde," he said.

Wylde stepped out, shaking his stiffened limbs. He had not yet been below the surface with Surrey, but he made a cast for it now.

"You are always at liberty to tell the Colonel if you think I am driving carelessly," he said.

"Thanks," said Surrey, and reddened. "I prefer to tell you."

"Why," said Wylde, and lifted the bonnet, "that is very good of you. And now you have told me, haven't you?"

Surrey trod out of the garage with his crisp military step and a silent tongue. But Wylde, glancing sideways at him when they took the track again, saw no change on the genial good-looking face. In more than part he knew the reason, and it galled him as nothing else could have done. This man, secure in his birth and breeding and his state of life, would not condescend to anger against such as Wylde. Already he had forgotten him. And here Wylde smiled a little. Hate, love, revenge had been dealt him more than once. But not forgetfulness. Men who had done business with Wylde did not forget him.

Through grey clean old Tunbridge Wells with its Spa and Abbey; through Lamberhurst and Robertsbridge, all shining and primly uninteresting in sunlight, the road lay past red cows in brown sedge, and pink roses on white cottages, and green fields and umber fields and claret-red fields sheer down the long winding street into Battle. Here Wylde ran the car up to the clearing before the majestic hoary Abbey gates and paid for its standing, even as men had once paid the abbots of their day for booth-room at the Sunday marketing.

All his days Wylde had desired to see Battle Abbey. Partly its name had attracted him, partly its history. He thrust through the gates now, unheeding the Colonel's talk of crenelations and interlacing arches and Late Decorated; crossed the wide smooth

lawns where the mass of old and new buildings huddled to leftward, and walked straight to the crest of the hill where the English had stood in that day when England was lost to them. A parapet overgrown with ivy edged the drop now: below, where Harold had driven his stakes and ripped out his dikes, sleek cattle lay under big trees. Where the little Asten had once bubbled with blood wound a line of thick green. One lark sang in the hot blue sky. Across the valley where William the Norman had once seen the living Saxon wall deep birch and alder hung their graceful branches.

Peggy dawdled over the lawns, drawn by that big tense straight figure which looked like a landmark of another age.

"Do you know anything about this place?" she said.

Wylde had been waiting for this. But he was clever.

"There will be a guide directly," he said.

"I know. That is why I want you to tell me. I never listen to guides."

Then Wylde spoke: spoke in short rough sentences such as suited the story which he told. The story of the half-naked brawny Saxons with their brutal daring and their wild harsh songs; of the hot blood and the pride and the savage power of Harold of England; of that late October afternoon when the sunlight ran level on lines of bearded faces and the night fell black on heaps of the motionless dead. He stopped as suddenly as he had begun, and looked away to the two Norman towers that had been staircases before they became ivy-clustered birds'-nests.

Peggy sat down on the parapet. For the first time in her life she had been jerked entirely out of her orbit and the struggle to get back turned her giddy. There were tears on her eyelashes, and they made her furious. This man was an impertinence, an anachronism. He was bad form. But he was more vital than anything which Peggy had encountered before,

and she went back to the car with unusually vivid memory for the long crypts and the stately arches; for the colonnade with its seventy-eight ghosts, for the hollow of fern where the English standard had flown and William had set his high altar, and for that little shrine which told in gentle French that it marked the spot where Harold fell.

They left the old grey walls on their right and the old grey church on their left when they swept up Blackhorse Hill to Tell-the-man crest, where Norman banners had once taken the wind above the ripple of Norman spears. Wylde flung one look back into the sleeping valley. There a man had struck straight for a big stake and had died in the losing of it, and across the dust of centuries the soul of the Canadian reached out to the soul of Harold, the Sussex man. For both knew the value and the meaning of fight.

The way was a green cathedral aisle; again it was a wriggling grey snake; again it was a steep downrun through little Bohemia and through the crowded streets of Hastings, where the ruins of the Conqueror's Castle showed rugged and bare on their straight-edged height. Then Wylde swung from it along the lie of the sparkling sea-front and proceeded to lose himself among the snarls of the narrow winding track that led over the downs to Pevensey.

There were never a hundred yards clear ahead; there was never a chance to take the foot from the clutch nor a space where two cars could pass with ease. Through Boxhill the road dipped and twisted toward Barnhouse Hill; a plain clay road, laid down with no skill whatever. Peggy told her objections to all.

"Was this the road William took when he marched from Pevensey to Hastings? Well, I don't think much of it. It's crooked—and it's narrow—and uninteresting. He was no good as a road-maker."

"It was a Roman road long before William came," said the Colonel. "You don't know where you've got to, Peggy. This place is absolutely prehistoric. Ask Wylde."

But Peggy did not choose to ask Wylde. She fell silent as they slipped down steep hills to the dead level where sea-winds were blowing and pale water showed faintly beyond the brown bents. Far across the level a little knot of buildings stood, a smudge between tossing sea and barren ground. But they have brought hot blood to the hearts of many men since Pevensey was once the Anderida of the Romans; once the little island naked in the sea of the early Britons; once the gathering-place of the squat big-toothed cave-men. That little smudge was a strong fortress when Cæsar landed there. It had known the pride of the Roman eagles. It had known the utter night which swept over Sussex when the men of Pevensey sent out their cry to Rome: "The barbarians drive us into the sea, and the sea thrusts us back upon the barbarians," and, receiving no answer, had sunk into blankness beyond speech, "so that they had no more skill to snare animals nor to set a net for fish."

Each valley that cut through the downs had once been stoppered by a fortress; each bare hill had once flamed out its beacon of warning and defiance; each foot of the sandy dunes and the quiet marshes had been ravaged by Norman and Jute, by Roman and Dane. Among the coombes hung with deep woods the lawless gentlemen of King George's day had smuggled their plunder and dared the coast-guards; along the gaunt coast the caves, once stuffed with foreign merchandise, lay empty and wind-swept.

To Wylde Pevensey was one little grey sleepy street and a long low line of Roman wall, dead and rotten, but holding among its sunshine and harsh grass and singing birds something which gave him the first earnest of that which was his heritage, the first belief in that ancient grim stability from which his English blood had sprung.

Surrey and Peggy followed the line of the deep-scored grassy moat rounding the flanks of the sturdy pile which the Conqueror's half-brother raised; which

the Red William and De Montfort besieged; which bishops fought over, and women held with gallant courage; which saw queens and princes bow the knee as prisoners. Beyond, Wylde lay flat on the warm grass by the Elizabeth gun, and Surrey's feet turned towards him.

"We'll go and ask him for some history," he said.

"He has brought us here, and he shall suffer for it."

Peggy laughed, tilting her bonnet to the sun.

"It is more than possible that he will make us suffer," she said.

Under the sun and the silence ruin blinked out from the broached grey walls whence the surface stones had been picked off as high as a man could reach. The towers canted this way and that; within the castle rank grass and ash-trees grew. Across the outward feet of the villagers had trodden a path, and circling all was the ancient wall where strong bricks grinned through mortarless gaps like red gums from which the teeth had fallen.

Wylde lay steeping himself in strong memories when Surrey asked his idle question from a foot away. Wylde knew it for an idle question in spite of its quiet courtesy. He did not know how much or how little there was in this man, but he knew that by and by there would be red hate between them. He sat up, and Peggy did not know his voice for the quick-breathed uneven force which she heard at Battle.

"Pevensey was once of such importance that it was called England's Gate," said Wylde. "The castle is still strong in parts, owing to the natural flint casing being preserved in the building. There are some good specimens of herring-bone tracery on the outer Roman wall. In the neighbourhood are the sites of many buried cities: Hydney, Northeye, Horseye, and others. Pevensey Castle was once a prison, but over the horrors which happened there oblivion has mercifully drawn a veil."

"You got all that out of the guide-book," said Peggy, sharply.

"Why, certainly," agreed Wylde. He got up. "I guess the Colonel will be tired of waiting," he added. "If you care to go out of the far gate you can see Westham Church. It is early Norman, and there is a colony of owls in the tower. We can pick you up there."

He moved away, and for a moment Peggy stood still.

"Surrey," she said, "I am going to hate him. The symptoms are as certain as those of an influenza attack."

Surrey looked down on her in lazy puzzlement.

"You are not going to let a fellow like that interest you, Peggy," he said. "Why, he's not much better than a workman."

"But he is clever. . . ."

"A workman can know his trade," said Surrey, lifting his shoulders. "My dear girl, he isn't one of us, and he never will be. It won't take the Colonel long to see that."

Wylde was content when he took the car out to the sweet hills of grass and grain-fields again. In a little while the Honourable Peggy Bouchier would not forget him as she forgot her maid or the coachman when they were not necessary to her. And once she had begun to remember the first mesh in his scheme was drawn tight. Power was the one thing that meant anything to him; the one thing that meant everything. . . . He thrust the change-speed lever forward and sent the car rushing the little hills with a sudden light in his eyes. For the life of the engine throbbed of power; power, and yet again power.

The warmth came round and wrapped them close; the cinematograph of distances pale with mist and fields vivid with colour flickered past. They slid into clean widespread noisy Eastbourne and climbed out of it. They left pretty Berwick and Firle Gate far behind. Lewes with its castle and priory remains was a white chalk face that stared stupidly. Brighton was blue sparkling sea and white undergoing. Port

Slade, Southwick, Egypt went by in a deadly line of new staring houses.

At Shoreham Wylde remembered how the Saxons had first landed here on a day that had perhaps been as glad and as salt with the sea-tang as now. Then he took the long fine stretch of the Worthing Marine Parade, and cut off before the big hotel standing square to the sunset.

Surrey walked with Peggy and the Colonel along the Parade that night, with the "coast-wise lights of England" linking up her defences from Brighton away to Rottingdean and beyond it. Peggy held an arm of each man, and a little thrill of excitement was in her blood. Wylde saw them pass as he stood in a shadow which the moon cast black from a hoarding, and he heard the Colonel say:

"Where is Wylde? We mustn't let him feel lonely, little girl."

Then Peggy's happy laugh broke to answer him.

"Dear," she cried, "Mr. Wylde is a first-rate chauffeur and a quite good history-book. But where could he walk if he was here just now? Tell me that."

Surrey did not speak. But Wylde saw his well-carried head and face and the shine of his shirt as he passed under the lamp. And he knew well where this courteous contemptuous young aristocrat would have placed him in the procession. And that would not have been in a line with Surrey Guest, nor yet ahead of him.

CHAPTER II

'WE ARE TOURISTS'

"I MEAN to be just to you," said the Colonel. "On my honour I have always meant to be just to you, Wylde."

Wylde looked over the wind-swept downs where the grass-stalks were polished in the sunlight and the tree-clumps down the hill-folds were black as night. In the front seat Peggy and Surrey sat very close together, while, sweet and smoothly the little blue car took the old, old road that ran back through all history to the very beginning of things. Then he spoke, briefly:

"I have not made any complaint, have I?"

"No." The Colonel hesitated. It was just one quiver in the dark lined face with the deep-set eyes which had jerked the words from him. But he would not take them back. "I took you off the streets," he said. "And what wasn't boy in you was devil, I think. You don't resent my having made an honest man of you, do you?"

Then for a moment Wylde lifted up the curtain of his eyes and let the Colonel see the bitter savage soul behind them.

"I might have won out on my own," he said. "There was one chance I could have had—and it was you who stopped it. Oh, you are mighty just."

The direct truth in Wylde was the one cord whereby he drew the Colonel, unpalatable though that truth might be. For the Colonel had mercy for every sin but those twin brothers, deceit and cowardice.

"I have made a strong man of you, body and soul," said the Colonel.

"Why, I'm strong enough, certainly." Then Wylde's eyes flashed again. "But *you* have made me," he said. "A man wants to make himself. He doesn't give a damn for the help of others. And now you've brought me to this—this—" He beat his hand on the soft cushions. "Good Lord, man," he cried, "I've slept on the prairie with my saddle for a pillow, and in a rotten shack with the snow blowing in. Why have you brought me here to make a fool of me?"

The Colonel laid his hand on the rough brown one.

"None but his own self can make a fool of a man, Wylde," he said. "But play the game as I expect you to play it or it is I who will have been the fool."

Wylde leaned back with lips shut close. He did not speak again, and only the murmur of the car and the low bursts of laughter from the two in front cut the silence. The road twisted on, unassuming as a chewed boot-string, and frayed at intervals into tufts or straggling ends of flint and thatch cottages: villages with the Saxon tongue clinging to their terminals—the Lancing, Sompting, Wotton of yesterday, the Angmering and Climping of to-day.

On the right earthworks raised by a race long forgotten swelled their green shapes and vanished; white chalk faces grinned among the tree-rings that were seal of unknown ceremonies and superstitions; above the coulees sheep moved with their shadows distinct and stocky before them; below, the folds of laced sticks stood gaping. Rooks flew low across the green fields, and in each hamlet children played about the sharp right angles and hidden curves of the road until the Colonel's hair began to stand up on his head.

"Surrey will certainly kill something directly," he said. "These roads are a disgrace to any engineer."

"I guess the engineer will forgive you," said

Wylde, dryly. "This was a British road, and I imagine that it has been used ever since. Folks built for the rivers and dew-pans in those days, and they hadn't any way of locomotion faster than their own feet."

The Colonel moved suddenly. He knew his England as the ordinary well-educated Englishman knows it. But the land had never given up any of its soul to his reading.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"I saw it in some book. The Britons drove their roads that way, but the Romans surveyed by taking straight lines between beacon-fires on the hills. But I reckon that's not new to you."

The Colonel gave neither assent nor denial. Instead, he drew Wylde on skilfully to talk of the things that he cared for; and in the next day he was amazed when he came to tabulate the number and quality of these things.

A world of red roofs and green trees and a bridge over a brown trout-river swept up to meet them, backed by an old hoary castle humped like a lion on the hill. Peggy leaned back to Wylde.

"The contour-book calls this place Arundel," she said. "Can we see the castle?"

"Not to-day. It is old, too. King Alfred gave it to his nephew, and afterwards the Conqueror gave it to one of his men. There's a Gothic church with a fine high altar, I believe. Would you want to see that?"

His information was sufficiently dull and accurate. He had not forgotten Peggy's commendation. But Peggy shook her head and turned to Surrey again.

"We'll go through Goodwood Park," she said. "I love their cedars of Lebanon. And there is a cave-house there made of shells and paved with the teeth of horses from the stables. I've seen it four times."

"Are you ever going to grow up?" demanded Surrey.

"I grew up when I was sixteen. Now I'm working backwards. I cut a tooth the other day. When I am sufficiently advanced to dab at any finger that is held out to me and hang on to it I shall stop. No. I don't want yours. Look after your wheel." Then she laughed suddenly. "Why do half the trees in England try to turn themselves into cathedral aisles?" she cried. "I feel as if I were being perpetually poured down a green funnel."

Through a mighty avenue of beeches, down the Roman Stane Street they came to Chichester; the Regnum of the Romans, the Cissanceaster of Cissa the Saxon, who made his fifth-century camp here on his way to slaughter the people of Pevensey. A quiet grey town, this; bearing its ancient honours without advertisement; sleeping and silent under the sun.

After the fine Henry the Eighth Market-Cross blocking the street; after the old low-lying Cathedral with its four distinct architectures and its curious corbels; after the Bell Tower which holds the Arundel Screen, Peggy found Wylde by the high wall rimming the churchyard, and she met him with demure lips and Baedeker conversation.

"The father of the Claudia mentioned by St. Paul lived here," she said.

But again Wylde was unexpected. He kicked the earth restlessly.

"I reckon enough men and women have gone through heaven and hell here to make this old town holy," he said. "But we use them as pegs to hang our curiosity on. The twentieth century is a skunk, don't you think?"

"You do it yourself."

"Why . . . I said 'we.' But I do—and shall do—many things that I don't approve of."

"That won't lead to a contented old age," said Peggy.

Wylde flashed a look at her.

"I'm not exactly aiming at content," he said, dryly.

It was in the next hour that sudden trouble came

to the car, and for eleven minutes Surrey crawled into and out of and round her where she stood with brasses glinting to the sun, and utter indifference under her blue bonnet. Then he straightened and looked at Wylde, who had been gathering dog-roses and honeysuckle for Peggy.

"I wish you'd try and find out what's wrong, Wylde," he said. "You know more about the little beast than I do."

It was a franker tone than Surrey had used to him yet, and Wylde came at once. In his heart he called Surrey a fool and twice a fool, for he read criticism in the Colonel's eyes and impatience in Peggy's. Then in one moment of rapid decision he located the evil.

Surrey watched the long hard hands as they unscrewed the top of the sparking-plug and cleaned the brush. He loathed the grease on even the tips of his well-kept fingers, but this man handled the dirty things in his very palms. And these two facts explained more of the two natures than either man would ever understand.

Wylde screwed and unscrewed; rubbed, shook the plug, and fitted it back; finally dropped the bonnet and put life into the car again. Surrey's thanks were perfectly adequate and gracious. Also they were couched very much as they would have been to any other chauffeur who was supposed to know his business.

"You were very prompt in settling that," said the Colonel, when Wylde dropped on the blue cushions beside him.

"I guessed it from the row she was making before she stopped," said Wylde. And then they talked of the things that did not matter until a flash of sea showed to the left and the ugly fortifications of Cosham crouched along the hills to the right.

There were sharp high quarries with white chalk lips. There were forts, tramlines, bridges, and the sullen little holes of menace in the hills. The sense

of stir and strong life rose up at them, struck into individuality by the bronzed sailors and the black dockyard hands, pouring out, pouring out, until Portsmouth was threaded through and the keen air of Southsea took their faces.

To Wylde Portsmouth was England's lungs, even as London was her heart. He felt the rush of her breath through the mighty tangle of wharves and docks and arsenals and her hordes of sweating men. He read the core of her history in the graceful lines of the King's yacht flanked by the great grey battle-ships at gaze in the jewelled water with the three-decked *Victory* behind. And then he and Surrey thrust their dislike in their pockets, and went through the Dockyards with a man who knew all things.

The Dockyards were ugly and gaunt; speckled over with small squads of police or of soldiers, or of sailors who went by at the double. They were grim with skeleton bridges and mysterious with pale lakes where red-and-grey submarines lurked, nose up, like drowning whales. On the blocks torpedo boats, black and still as dead pigs, gave up their strong bodies to be scraped and cleaned. Among the ribs of a ship down in the building-dock men moved in an ant-swarm. Upon the signal-station wooden arms swung and flags fluttered unendingly. Cranes creaked; loaded lorries crept up to the provision-sheds that yawned for them; a wedge of marines passed with their soft alert step.

It was Life: Life intense; Life guarding and providing for that bigger Life which nourished all. It stood out in strong colours, bold as the figure-head of Raleigh's ship which greeted them with its Viking gaze as they entered, and gave them good-bye as they left. Wylde looked back.

"What an almighty large place England is for its size," he said, and the man who knew all things laughed.

"It has to be," he said. "If you'd care to go over

Whale Island, I know a fellow there who'd be glad to show you how we keep up the supply."

Surrey shook his head, yawning.

"No, Toby," he said. "I've done it seventeen times. The eighteenth would kill me. Yes; I know you've got a new battle-ship turret and a new method of big-gun sighting. But I don't want to see it. Show Wylde . . . and don't let him talk about it afterwards."

With eager eyes and mouth Wylde went through the gaunt windy island, built up out of nothingness; where the stone quarter-deck is the size of a cricket-field, and instruction-rooms, mess-rooms and practice-rooms call to each other across distant open spaces. He talked detonation, improved fuses, lightened cases, depression and a thousand things more. He learned how a gunner is made, and saw many of the fifteen hundred men "aboard" for the teaching. He climbed the turret beyond the cricket-fields where the big gun swung to the delicate lever-touch; and when the cold tide crept up the harbour under the greying day and the sentries stood big against the bare hills beyond he felt with strong critical fingers at the ragged holes burst in the iron shell-practice-sheets, unheeding the bleak wind and the sand that stung him.

He came back through Landport where a house in Commercial Road told in big letters that "Charles Dickens was born here," and he dressed for dinner in some perplexity.

"The English are a queer lot," he said. "To hear them talk you'd likely think they were ashamed of what they had done and mean to do. And yet I wonder. . . . I'd rather like to see what Guest could do if he was roused."

But at that moment he knew that he was the stronger, let Surrey do as he would. And, fortified by the knowledge, he went to dinner to see Surrey eat iced asparagus with an ease and skill that reduced Wylde's efforts to clumsy vulgarity. It was such daily

reminder which kept alive, more than all, his hate of the Englishman. Wylde was an outsider in all the fields where Surrey stood so lightly. He was an outsider, and Surrey's well-bred courtesy never let him forget it.

Peggy spoke at his side, so suddenly that he was startled. She had seen his eyes follow Surrey's movements, and something in his face put a fibre of fear to her voice.

"What have you been doing to-day? Were you at the Docks? Tell me."

"What shall I tell you?" said Wylde, awkwardly. "Did you know the origin of the sailor-dress? There was once an Admiral loved a lady, and he saw her in that blouse-and-collar arrangement and he put all his men into it at once. Is that the kind of compliment an Englishman often pays?"

"I have never had a compliment," said Peggy, demurely. "And—?"

"And the black handkerchief is for Nelson, of course. And the three rows of braid are victories." He stooped to her suddenly. "Will you come out with me after breakfast in the morning?" he said. "I want to show you something."

Peggy never knew what made her go, and when she stood with him under the sunlight before the George Inn in High Street her face was blank as the wall.

"But I don't know what this is," she said.

Wylde took her in and up the shallow stairs to a back room with Fifteen painted on the door.

"Nelson slept here the night before he sailed for Trafalgar," he said.

Peggy glanced round the little low bedroom. The deep rough note in Wylde's voice silenced her, but she found words in the panelled coffee-room below where Nelson had eaten his last meal on English soil. "They are not English," she cried. "What right have you to care so—so much?"

"I am British," said Wylde, and flushed dully.

"You likely don't understand what that means. And all this is new to me. I forgot that you might have seen it before."

"No; no. I haven't seen it." She turned to the window. "Can't you just think how the crowd would have blocked it that day?" she said.

"A pig-tailed barefoot crowd, smelling of tar and tobacco-juice, and all cursing and thrusting to get a last look at him. I'll take you out of the back door into Penny Street. That's the way Nelson went so as to get down to the Sally-port without them. But I reckon they followed him."

At the little square cut in the sea-wall through which so many of England's "Admirals All" have gone out to fight for England they found the Colonel. And thereafter they took a row-boat over the sparkling water that was alive with craft of every kind, until the ear-ringed boatman followed the make of the tide round the lee of a grey snaky battleship and brought them under the black-and-white counter of the *Victory*, bluff and sturdy yet in her three-tiered height.

In a glassed cabin lay newspapers telling of Trafalgar pictures, letters from Nelson and Hardy. On lower decks, where the huge beams of the flooring were worn to deep-splintered holes, stood rows of obsolete guns. Lowest of all, in the long cockpit where a man could scarcely stand upright, and where the officers' cabins ran along either side below the water-line, four dim lanterns gave all the light that was ever given in that airless place of utter blackness; all that had been given on the day when Nelson died in it for England. Through the heavy shadows Peggy looked from the white beam with the dead wreaths before it to the dark block of the amputating table. Then her eyes met Wylde's with sudden understanding.

"Did he guess at this when he ran out of the back door into Penny Street?" she asked.

"Likely," said Wylde. "But that wouldn't worry

him any. He'd got what he wanted and it is easy to die then."

"I could die more easily if I'd lost what I wanted," said Peggy.

"That's not so," said Wylde, and the Colonel heard the deep note of conviction in his voice. "It is to die before you have won out that hurts. I guess a man can't forgive Death for that."

Peggy shrugged her shoulders as she followed the guide up the steep dark steps which had been ladders only when men brought the wounded down. The Colonel hesitated a moment, and then he also went up to the blue sea and the sunshine and the fresh salt air. The Winnipeg solicitor had perhaps told the truth when he described Wylde as "a fellow who insisted on having ideas." But was he equally right when he had warned the Colonel to "watch out, and don't trust him further than you can see him or he'll get you worried?"

Because the Colonel was uncertain about this he had considered it honest to pass the warning on to Surrey, together with a few incidents concerning Wylde's life, as furnished by Smayne, and Surrey had straightway objected to the inclusion of Peggy in the party. But here the Colonel shut his ears. Since Peggy left her Continental schools she had been with him to Morocco, to India, to a handful of English towns, and she had once spent six weeks with him at the old Manor in Northamptonshire. Therefore he had come to fully understand that there was no one so fitted to take care of Peggy as himself.

"... Besides, it is not fair to condemn a man unheard," he said. "If he does anything I dislike I shall tell him so. And if you see anything really wrong you will tell me."

"I will not spy on any man," said Surrey, turning red.

"I don't ask you to. Just use your common sense. He has got to prove himself."

Surrey went away dissatisfied. And this know-

ledge had done much more than chill his heart to the Canadian. For Surrey was fastidious to the last inch of his body, and hourly contact with this man promised to be a thing which would presently irk him beyond polite endurance.

He gave Wylde a civility which did not hide the dislike below. Perhaps he was not anxious that it should; and so it was that he came reluctantly to Wylde that evening when the sunset was red over Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight was an emerald set in solid gold.

"Some fellows want us to dine on the *Jupiter*," he said. "Will you come?"

Wylde reddened. On his own plane he was afraid of no man living. On the plane where Surrey Guest walked he was afraid of them all. And he hated them all.

"No, thanks," he said.

Surrey rolled a cigarette carefully; lit it, and went out with a careless nod. To Wylde's ear there was relief in the very step, and he laughed.

"Well, I guess he's not going to have reason to love me any, either," he said.

But Surrey showed his other side at the Gosport Ferry next morning. By the lip of the grey water knots of boy-scouts were waiting also for the ferry; keen little bunches of muscle, with bare legs and treble voices. More than one was known to Surrey, and he saluted them gravely, and Peggy flushed up at the eager pride of their response.

"You can think of such dear things to do when you like," she said.

During that run past Titchfield and past the blue gleam of Southampton Water where the *Royal George* went down the Colonel was considering many things; and when Surrey halted the car in a small road with Netley's great Military Hospital far to the left and Netley's old grey Abbey very close behind thick trees to the right, he called Surrey back as he followed Peggy to the turnstile. Wylde was getting

guide-books out of the leather pocket, but he glanced up at the Colonel's tone.

"Boys," he said, "you will both unavoidably be thrown much with Peggy during the next few months, and I am sure that it is unnecessary for me to say more than that she is very young and neither of you have an assured position. You will understand me. I am speaking to gentlemen."

Surrey went red with swift relief. He had already accepted this for himself; but he had desired to see it enforced on Wylde, for he had not forgotten Wylde's question in the hotel. Wylde looked at the Colonel with narrowed eyes, seeing a little man, dried and grey with the dust of years, and whose words were very crisp with authority. But he followed the other two in with lagging feet.

"That is for me," he said. "And it would be easier than shelling peanuts to blind the Colonel."

It is the guide-books which call Netley "the most perfect ruin in England." But there are some who know that she is never a ruin at all, but a fine delicate spirit, tuned to speak with the clouds that hang above her grassy topless walls, the birds that nest in her hollow arches, and the trees that grow tall and strong in the rooms where the monks once laboured. Wylde went alone through the grey rough cloisters, and through the lovely arches of the chapter-house, and he found a broken column in the long chapel-nave where the sun streamed through the marvellous traceries and the perfect eastern and western windows reared their pure beauty against the sky. Pevensey Castle was a bluff old knight who faced the world stoutly with front yet undaunted. Netley Abbey was a fair and gracious lady, dreaming in stately silence of her lovers of old—Rupibus the Frenchman, and wild John de Warenne, and the grave grey Cistercian monks from Beaulieu—and complete with dignity still.

Other ruins which Wylde had seen were conceptions of manhood, of fight. Netley was feminine purely, and in a flash he understood that its churches

and its castles are the true history of every land; religion and fight—the feminine and the masculine of all nature, wedded up and down the centuries by the benediction of Time.

Beyond the tall avenues of Botley and Fair Oaks the wind blew up to them with the scent of strawberries from the fields where men and women stooped in long drab-coloured rows. Wylde climbed the hedge and brought back a basketful; and Peggy's outstretched hands and laughing lips, redder than the strawberries, troubled him when he stepped into the front seat again.

"I reckon Guest doesn't see her like that every day and not know it," he told himself. "They likely understand each other. And that has got to be my business now."

The road was like an unknotted string of beads which a child has dragged across country. In the valleys the beads had come off in clusters, making tiny glories of red, grey or cream houses. On the slopes they had rolled down in ones and twos; specks of pale ochre smothered in roses, of deep red among strong greens, of grey harsh naked flint. Peggy pinched the Colonel reprovingly.

"And you have only let me see England from a railway-train before," she said. "How was I to know that she could make lovelier quarter-inch canvases than ever Meissonier did?"

"She's had more practice," said the Colonel, and Wylde turned round.

"Here is Twyford, where George the Fourth married Mrs. Fitzherbert and Pope went to school," he said. "But I imagine there is nothing to see."

It was a blur of sloping streets and clean houses linked by trees. And then came Winchester with its steep ways and narrow turnings, and its long strong chain of history, and its splendid rugged gates.

Peggy's strawberries had not spoiled the appetite which the good air had given, and over her lunch in the old bowed God-begot House, built originally by

the wife of Canute, she endeavoured to prick the Colonel into remembrance of his history.

" . . . For I only know the week-end, watering-place England, and not very much of that. You and Surrey ought to know it all. You have no right to fight for a place you don't know anything about. I am never going to fight for it, and so I can be as ignorant as I like. Winchester must be Roman because it has a chester, and I know it is mixed up with every one else. But it will have to be sorted out for me."

She looked at Surrey. But he shook his handsome head lazily.

"I've forgotten all my history," he said. "What do you want to know for, Peggy? That kind of thing has gone out of date, except for tourists."

"I am a tourist. Thou art a tourist. He is a tourist;" Peggy pointed with a slim forefinger. "We are tourists;" she took in the whole company with outspread hands. "We have a Baedeker. We have an utter disbelief in everything and an insatiable thirst for valueless details. The ordinary tourist has no more—except a badly fitting coat and skirt if he is a woman."

Wylde stood up.

"I'm going to look out the town right now," he said. "If you would care to come, Miss Bouchier, maybe I could show you some things."

The Colonel was cutting a cigar. He nodded, drowsily.

"Yes, do," he said. "I'll take a little siesta, I think. And Surrey——"

"It is so confoundedly hot," said Surrey. "Of course I'll be delighted to come if you want me, Peggy. But there's awfully little to see in Winchester. I've been here a hundred times."

The bridge between Wylde and Peggy was yet as slight as gossamer-threads. Peggy disliked and distrusted him. But she acknowledged his strength, and she had the wit to know that it would be well to under-

stand him in case of future contingencies. Besides, Wylde knew things, and he knew how to tell them, and it amused her sometimes to let him jerk her out of her half-idle interest into the wide rough reality of life as he himself knew it.

But, until the greatest things of all rushed down on her in later times, she did not forget that day in Winchester with Wylde.

To Wylde one strong note struck the whole chord of Winchester's being, and he took Peggy to it where it stands in the High Street: a block of grey rough granite with the name "Aelfred" scored deep into it, and above, mighty and vital in bronze, the man himself; the father of his people; the maker of England. Gigantic he stands against the hills and the blue sky, with the clear brown Itchen running past beyond the Abbey Grounds and the little people of a later knowledge passing warm-blooded about his feet. He bears the cross-handled sword of Christianity aloft in his right hand and the shield of Faith in his left, and that memory took Peggy in a spirit of reverence to that one low dirty arch of Hyde Abbey, with its stone faces half-sliced away and the refuse of the stables on its earthen floor. Because, a thousand years ago, Alfred of England and the woman he loved were buried there.

The ruins of Wolvesey Palace, thick with history, and speaking from all its hoary walls of war, war from Stephen's reign to Cromwell's, meant most to Wylde because on its site Alfred first made English literature a living thing. Its rough squat walls tell nothing now, and a tennis-court is squared off in its heart. It lies dead to the sun, dried shapeless bones. But Wylde went away from it, treading softly. For the spirit that had been in it was gone out, broad and alive, to all the world.

The next two hours carried a blurred impression to Peggy of Winchester School with grey quadrangles and old and new buildings knotted queerly together, and vague fourteenth-century "trusty

servants" with the heads of pigs, and history which slid back into tradition and there bristled with Alfred and William of Wykeham. In the old Muniment Room over the Westgate, with the street below cut into sections by the latticed windows, she shuddered at gibbets and rusty manacles, and read the names on the walls of this room which had been a debtor's prison for almost three hundred years.

Wylde showed her a pillion with flaps like a cavalier's pockets and quoted a couplet from "Young Lochinvar":

"So light to the croup the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung."

But it has always puzzled me," he added gravely, "how the beggar did it without knocking her head off."

Peggy laughed the first frank laugh she had given him, and they went together up the hill to the Hall of what had once been a great Palace with that impalpable bond thickened ever so little between them. But the silent Hall with its shrouded chair and mighty Round Table hung on the wall daunted Peggy's spirits. Since Winchester was first the capital of England so many lives had throbbled through this old castle. Brutal Normans, hot-blooded Angevins, burly kings of the Lancaster race—she shut her hands suddenly over her eyes.

"All the dead people seem coming real," she cried. "The Britons here before the Normans. And the wild fair-haired Danes. And William of Wykeham with his crozier and those thin pinched temples. And Earl Waltheof, who went from his dungeon to his death on the hill-top. And that fierce Rufus, dragged here dead in a cart. And—and there is even a John the Baptist on that battered old fifteenth-century Cross in the town." She broke into a half-sob of laughter. "I don't *want* to remember so far back as that," she cried. "Why do you make me feel it all so?"

Wylde was watching her as she sat in the window-

seat, drenched with colour from the glowing crowned kings in the glass. But he did not choose that she should see his eyes. She was tired out and highly-strung, and his full-charged force had been too much for her. For the first time she was not the Honourable Peggy, but only a little very slight girl, sitting among the proud names blazoned on walls and windows for six centuries back, and with her own crown of pride laid away.

He spoke carefully, feeling his road. For this little girl was to be his ladder, and he was not on the first rung yet.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I reckon I've been boring you, Miss Bouchier. But I feel it all so keenly, you see. Except one thing."

"Then you haven't come across that thing yet," said Peggy, with a spark of derision.

"I guess I have. I mean William of Wykeham's motto: 'Manners makeyth man.' That's a lie."

Peggy had control of herself again. Her eyelids drooped.

"A man without manners is a most unfinished product," she said.

"They are only the polish. The man has to be hacked out of the block first." His voice hurried and roughened. "I guess you don't know anything of that," he said. "You don't know anything about—about many of the things that *are*. I tell you life is quick—quick with meaning in every breath we draw. We belong to all the men who were and who are going to be. My God, we *belong* to them. We've got the power and the right to take from them all they have got for us. And they have got an almighty lot. We should live with every inch of our flesh. And our blood. And our spirit." He was beating the wall softly with his shut fist. "And half of us never draw one full breath all our lives." He glanced at Peggy for the first time. "I guess that the most despicable thing on God's creation is an anæmic soul," he said.

His vehemence half frightened, half angered her. She brushed it aside. But later, in the great mellow hush of the Cathedral, the words swept over her again with a new and terrible meaning, and she slid down to her knees before the altar to which so many of the mightiest hearts of England have knelt throughout the centuries.

Surrey! Had Surrey ever drawn full breath as Wylde knew it? Surrey: lazy, cheerful, idly-secure in his honour, in his genial gentlemanly life, in his skill at polo and his quick eye at the wickets. Surrey never talked about people's souls, or their flesh and blood. Of course it was shockingly bad form, but—she felt her cheeks hot again between her sheltering hands. Wylde had spoken as if he *knew*. He had spoken as if there were force behind him that would carry him up and on wherever he willed. The man was vital; vital from the core, and to-day had made her know it. And then she shaped her prayer, brokenly, vaguely, and yet in deepest earnest.

"Lord, if there is anything to keep him from taking it all from Surrey—if there is anything—show me how to do it. I will do it. Show me the way. Oh, I will do it."

Wylde had seen her come in through the shadows. He had seen her kneel down as he never had done in his life, and from a distance he watched her curiously. Something in this place, this power of man's work made alive by the power of man's soul, struck exultation into him. Something in the shades of the aisles and the glory of the choir-screens and windows blessed by sunset; something in the white chantries and the pillars glimmering into dusk, in the springing fan-roof that seemed to thrust the beams up that it might expand its full loveliness in heaven, had touched that other undeveloped side in him and tinged his words with a new gentleness when he met Peggy under the tall west window.

"I want you to look up at this window," he said. "Like blank light on scraps of glass, isn't it? We

are too close. Now look right along to the east window."

Through the half-seen vaulting in the dusk of the mighty nave Peggy's glance went to the distant saints grand and glowing on the glass. Wylde interpreted softly.

"I guess it is likely meant to give the idea of life. They needed to go a long way—through the shadows—before they could look like that."

Peggy's laugh mocked him. At this moment every fibre in her was tightened up against this man.

"But I don't want to go a long way—nor to look like that at the end of it. I think I shall go in now. Thank you very much for all you have shown me."

The little inclination of the head was perfectly gracious dismissal, and it forbade Wylde come one step nearer.

The Cathedral seemed darker, colder when she had gone, but the spell of it was on Wylde still. Here Canute, fresh from his sea-test at Southampton, had hung his crown on the high altar. Here Godwin, father of Harold, sleeps where no man knows his grave. Here William of Wykeham lies on the spot where he prayed as a boy. Here Gardiner married Mary to Philip of Spain. Here Ethelred the Unready, Canute the Ready, worthless Hardicanute, the last Danish monarch, and Emma, who was wife of two and mother of the third, lie in the sixteenth-century mortuary-chests above the side-screens with the bones of many others.

Just then Wylde, staring up at the quaint yellow lettering on the old brown chests, heard a young clear voice raised behind him.

"Canute and Emma and the bones of several bishops. Why, now, I don't call that decent. She didn't marry them all, did she? I thought bishops had to be silicates in those days."

Wylde turned swiftly. She was the prettiest girl he had seen in his life, and her clothes were as American as her tongue. But Wylde knew, and a

month ago he would not have known, that she was not the best class of American. The knowledge that he knew the difference gave him a quick pang of delight. The Honourable Peggy was his touchstone now.

The man beside the pretty girl mumbled something. Then the clear voice rose again.

"On there? On that big screen, is she? My, my! I do call that elegant. Alfred's queen, and Canute's queen, and Queen Victoria and all those saints and angels just looking as happy as anything. I do admire that screen. I guess we haven't got anything better in Montana."

Wylde sat down. The spell of the Cathedral had suddenly evaporated.

"This book says that St. Swithin was tutor to Alfred and Bishop of Winchester," continued the pretty girl. "He is the saint belonging to the poetry. They buried him outside, and it rained for forty days right along so that they couldn't bring him in again. I imagine he wouldn't have been worth salvaging, don't you? And this is the tomb of Rufus—this black thing in front of the altar. I don't remember what happened to Rufus, do you, Chep? Well, I guess he's dead, anyway. And the guide-book says the Tower fell down because he was buried under it. I guess they must have done a mighty lot of excavating for his vault, then. What? Why, it is getting rather dark. I guess we can go now. We've done about the lot."

The memory of Wakelyn who cut down Alresford wood in four days and nights to roof in St. Swithin's shrine, thereby incurring the wrath of Rufus, was dimmed for Wylde. The simple brass to Jane Austen; the stately quiet of St. Swithin's Chapel, the haunting shades of Charles the First, Nell Gwynne and so many, many more could not hold him. He got out into the dusk and let himself laugh. A shred of history floated across his brain.

"In Lent the monks of Netley Abbey sent oysters

to St. Swithin's monks," he said. "That is prosaic enough, Heaven knows. But it is romance contrasted to that girl." Then his eyes half shut. "I imagine Guest about classes me in with her," he said.

When the car climbed upward past St. Catherine's Hill in the morning Peggy looked back at the old grey-and-red town sunk in her tree-hollows of blue haze and soft sunlight. One sword-flash of the Itchen spoke sharply of the red blood of youth and the grey head of age which had gone to rest there. And then Winchester was past away, with its living memories and its peaceful present. Peggy slid her hand into the Colonel's.

"I should think God must be accustomed to answering prayers from Winchester, don't you?" she whispered. "So many good men have prayed there."

"Peggy, you must not be irreverent——"

"You dearest thing, I have never been less so. Oh, sit tight. We are going to be poured down some more green funnels."

Romsey wore a perpetual red-brick disapproval of the old massive Abbey which the elder Edward had founded in the heart of it. The Abbey was pitted with shot or smallpox; its doors were patched with wood squares as a garment is patched with cloth; its double gargoyles showed cats'-heads joined to the heads of women, and Peggy explained this to the Colonel as the car flashed on to Salisbury through a view that seemed leading into heaven.

"The double gargoyles always mean vice and virtue," she said. "A cat means everything that is horrid, of course, and so a woman must mean everything that is good. Do you understand, dear?"

The fair flushed face clipped into the close bonnet was very near the Colonel. The dark eyes under the long lashes were brimming with mischief. The Colonel shook his grey head.

"Peggy, Peggy," he said. "With a woman there is such a wide difference between the thing she aims at and the thing she hits."

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The calm afternoon was very full of beauty. Green slopes far down where sleek cattle moved, rises swelling to the blue low sky in a web of delicate lights made by the pale tones of the ash and young oak, strong green of the elm, and the deep-scored blot of the copper-beech. Then a tableland on the top of earth where the air blew clean and glad, and half the world rolled down in hills and valleys to the left, and what was over humped into barrows and the oldest of all the old earthworks on the near right. Through the bottom of the earth Salisbury spire thrust up its pointing finger to the sky, and swiftly they wound down to the clean cheerful child of the old dead city on the hill. Before the Old George Hotel Wylde halted. "Shall we just leave the luggage and go right along to Stonehenge?" he suggested. "It looks like rain to-morrow."

Surrey unfolded his long legs and stepped out.

"Sorry," he said. "But if you'd been camped in this part of the world as often as I have you'd be sick of the name of Stonehenge. Of course I'll be delighted to come if you want me, Peggy——"

"You always say that," snapped Peggy. And then, before his troubled surprised eyes her face changed. "I know you would. But it isn't a scrap necessary. Good-bye."

The flutter of her fingers and the half-earnest sweet eyes stayed with Surrey long after the blue car whirled out of sight. For a full three minutes he forgot to light his cigar. Then he smiled. By and by, when matters were settled again, he would tell her that.

In the blue car Peggy was giving her orders.

"We are going round by Amesbury," she said, distinctly. "Elfrida built a nunnery there after she had killed the young King Edward. Oh, and Queen Guinevere built the first one after she forsook King Arthur."

"Seems a queer fancy to immortalize an evil deed," said the Colonel. "What's that, Peggy?"

"This is the market-place. The Duke of Bucking-

ham was beheaded here in 1483. I don't know if they were doing as much selling and buying as they are to-day. And——"

"Peggy, Peggy," said the Colonel, "I knew all this before you were born. Talk to Wylde and leave me in peace."

But Peggy talked little to Wylde as the blue car wound round the old Sarum hill with its deep-scored ridges of two thousand years ago, and its green grass that buried all. Small scattered trees showed as they rose; the great lines were plain and livid. Then the blunt hill and the slender spire stood behind them with the sense of old and of new sharply blended, and after came a maddened storm of rain.

Wylde and the Colonel had the hood up before Peggy knew it. Then Peggy spoke.

"Do you mind going on in the rain?" she said.

"Why, certainly not," said Wylde, and took the straight road through sleepy thatch-roofed Amesbury and through close woods that gave suddenly on wide rolling country mysterious with tree-rings and long green barrows. The wind blew round the glass, cutting Wylde's face with the driving rain. Peggy, in the tonneau with the Colonel, tucked the rugs closer and felt a wicked eagerness.

"For if he is bad-tempered he's going to show it directly," she said.

Through the slivers of rain something loomed, vague, grey as a dream of dead things. Wylde rushed the steep greasy descent at a pace that brought him near the next rise where the humped barrows lay, and then that grey dream divided itself into stones; stones upright, fallen, laid in copings; silent and suggestive as eternity.

Wylde cut off the engine and sprang down, a big wet figure in his flapping oilskins.

"I guess it'll lighten in a minute," he said. "But anyhow you've got your rubbers, haven't you?"

"I am not coming out," said Peggy, composedly.

"I just wanted to say I'd seen it."

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Wylde's dark skin turned darker. For a moment Peggy waited the explosion which she half-dreaded, half-hoped for. Then he opened the door.

"Are you coming, sir?" he said, and his voice was colourless.

The Colonel got out with a suppressed groan. For he had been three times before. But annoyance with Peggy brought him to follow Wylde through the turnstile and across the new-scythed grass to the great capped outer circle and the dual broken horse-shoe rings within.

Wylde did not speak, and whether he felt anger or a reverence for this altar where England's early blood was spilt the Colonel did not know. He stood and watched the younger man whilst Wylde trod slowly from the altar-stone to the sacrificial stone without the ring and to the tall column set up to take the sun beyond it all.

The rain had lessened, and in the little puddles of the cupped stones the sky made pale reflections. Even the tall squared uprights held holes that looked as though a giant had thrust his fists in. Wylde remembered how Merlin is said to have sent the people of Caerleon to bring to England these Stones of the Giants' Dance from Killara in Ireland. The wild story seemed to fit the closing shadows, the mystery that has no key, the sign-manual of a dead great past. Faint mist rose behind the barrows and began to feel across the land with long blind fingers. It sought those upright silent stones and folded round them, sending the Colonel back, coughing to the car, and holding Wylde very still in the centre, cut off for a little space from all but a strange intangible past which could tell him nothing.

To Peggy he said one thing only before he backed the car.

"You were wise not to come, Miss Bouchier," he told her. "You would not have liked it. I reckon it is the kind of place that makes a person feel very small for the time."

He brought them home by the Nadder river where long tree-lanes drooped and dripped. And while the humped shoulders of Old Sarum grew nearer the Colonel talked of Gay, who wrote *The Beggar's Opera* at Amesbury, and of Elgin, daughter of Caractacus, who married the Lord of Old Sarum in 60 A.D. and became the first woman saint of Britain.

Peggy listened with the frank love that was her daily offering to the Colonel. But later, she shut herself into the Squire's Chamber at the Old George and laughed until her eyes were wet.

"The Wylde man has a temper," she said. "And he has a tongue for something besides history. I believe that he is nothing more than human after all."

On the stairs came a sudden stumbling sound of men's feet, men's voices. One voice, like the Colonel's, spoke sharply. Some one half-choked a groan. Peggy flung the door wide; and then Wylde caught her by the shoulder, twisted her back into the room, and pulled the latch to with a snap.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I guess you're not wanted out there just now."

Peggy stood still. She was stone-cold, except for that spot on her shoulder where Wylde's hand had gripped her.

"Surrey?" she said, weakly.

Wylde's eyelids flickered a moment. Had there been need for pity he could not have given it.

"They reckon there are no bones broken," he said.

"He tried to stop a runaway horse, and it knocked him down. He is able to walk all right, but he looked a bit chawed-up. Not quite pretty for a lady to see."

In his voice cool amusement was threaded on contempt. He had seen the great terrors, the great agonies of life too near to take count of a thing so small as this. He looked at Peggy curiously. And she felt it, and faced him in a sudden flame of pride.

"Thank you very much for telling me," she said.

"I was afraid that it might have been something

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really serious. I hope he will be able to come down for dinner. And it is just about time to dress for dinner, isn't it?"

But when Wylde's quiet springy step died out on the stairs and only the faint murmur of voices from the oaken "Earl's Chamber" next door mixed with the tread of creaking boots, she sat very still, staring at the wall. She was not afraid for Surrey. She had seen him brought home from the hunting-field with a broken arm before this day, and she had all the natural courage of her race. But she was afraid of Wylde. He would brush her aside any day he chose to reach at Surrey. He would—she slipped into an evening dress and turned to the glass. On her bare shoulder the mark of Wylde's hand showed scarlet. Scarlet leapt to her cheeks to meet it. Then she pulled the dress off and sought for another. As she fastened it she spoke to her angry eyes in the glass.

"Peggy," she said, "you are not vindictive as a rule. But because of this and some other things you will have to teach the Colonel to dress his notions of fair play by yours." Then she shut her hand over that covered red mark.

"How dared he?" she said. "How dared he? How dared he?"

Steps trod across the passage. The Colonel tapped on her door.

"Are you ready, little girl?" he called. Then she smiled into the flushed face that met him. "Surrey is all right," he said. "A bit bruised and dazed, and he may have to keep his arm in a sling for a few days. But it might have been worse. Did Wylde tell you?"

"Yes," said Peggy, slowly. "He told me."

The Colonel tucked her arm into his.

"Well," he said, "come along to dinner. This is a delightful old place, Peggy. I must tell Tony Moreton about it. Fourteenth century, and very little altered. Shakespeare used to act here with his stroll-

ing players, and the performance had to finish by seven in the afternoon. What do you think of that for barbarism?"

There was history in the Old George long before Shakespeare. Long before Pepys slept in it and pronounced the charges "so exorbitant that I was mad." Twisted foot-square oak beams told it with their dropping dust, crooked passages and steep stairs creaked it in the night. The names of the low-raftered chambers whispered of gallants and gay dames long dead.

Through that night Peggy heard them whisper in her dreams. The moonlight, that peculiar crick-cricket of old stairs resting after the strain of the day; the movements of Surrey in the room beyond—all jumbled into a vague horror of silk-clad men fighting with flashing swords; of one who lay dead with hidden face; of the deep dark wall-beams that reached round her with strong arms, closing in, closing in until they gripped her tight, and then dropped and went away, leaving laughter chuckling somewhere round the room. Here Peggy started up and made a light. But it was little comfort. She turned, lifting her face in the pillow.

"I never knew how much I loved him till now," she said, low. "Oh, I never knew. I never knew."

But she carried a brave face round Salisbury in the morning, when the Colonel took her to the old glorious cathedral; keeping her without it while he explained something of its pure thirteenth-century majesty in technical terms which were Dutch to her, and then bringing her within to its tall white impressive nakedness, and showing a mild surprise when she suddenly pinched his arm.

"I can't stay here," she said. "Take me away. It is so perfect and so stern. A sinner wouldn't dare to come and pray here. Take me somewhere and make me laugh."

"Well," said the Colonel. "You mustn't call me irreverent, Peggy. But I think"—here he took her

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into the small octagonal Chapter-house beyond the grey cloisters where tall yews shaded graves old and new—"I think," he said, "knowing you, Peggy, that you will like these."

Round the walls ran the history of the Old Testament in bas-relief; a thirteenth-century reading-book spared by Cromwell because it was the Old Testament. Here Cain eternally kills Abel, standing upright with a foot between his brother's shoulders. Here a cheerful brethren eternally holds Joseph by both feet, dropping him into the pit. Here the Egyptians, in Crusader armour, are eternally drowned in the Red Sea. And beneath each group gargoyles nod and yawn and grin, or look eternally bored. Round the door-arch all the Virtues were treading on the Vices. Truth pulled out Falsehood's tongue with enormous pincers, and Peggy laughed, holding the tip of her little pink tongue.

"Dear," she cried, "next time I tell a story I shall have to remember this."

"Have you ever told a story, Peggy?" said the Colonel, suddenly serious.

"White lies," said Peggy, shrugging her shoulders. "Society lies. Never anything big enough to need the punishment of the scold's bridles or the finger-stocks that we saw at the museum just now."

"I hope your conscience would give you heavier punishment than either of those, my Peggy," said the Colonel.

And then he took her down to the hall of John Halle, where the long-shoed John swears eternal fidelity to Edward the Fourth in the window-glass, and Derby and Royal Worcester and fire-opal china glow from the cream and brown of the ancient walls to the massive black beams overhead.

"Surrey is very fond of china," he said. "I would like to get him something for his rooms. What do you think of this?"

It was a loving-cup in the deep crimsons and gorgeous blues of Worcester, but Peggy turned from

it and chose a little jug where orange and rust-red and leather-browns melted together into a glory of nameless colour.

"I love this fire-china," she said. "It is so uncertain. You put it into the furnace and it might come out anything at all. And that is so very human."

She explained this to Surrey when she saw him at the hotel door. And her voice was gay and light because the woman in her shook at sight of his banded arm and the cut on his cheek-bone. For this reason also she talked of Old Sarum kettles, and the tallest spire in England, and the handsome old market cross until Surrey laughed.

"I never saw you give yourself away so completely before," he said. "I scared you, didn't I, Peggy?"

"N-n-no." Then Peggy sat up. "I mean 'No,'" she said. "My voice slipped. No. But I hope you won't let that sort of thing become a habit. Does it hurt much?"

Surrey's blue eyes were very gravely intent on the small face where the colour flew and rushed back again. It told him more than she guessed at, and just a little more than he had known. Then he half-smiled.

"Not so much as it would if I hadn't you to talk to," he said.

Past the single handful of houses branded Ower, past the quaintly-clustered Cadnam on the rim of the New Forest the white road climbed a hill through the scented silences. Beech-mast was thick in the dells of fern; grassy glades gave on long oaken avenues; a brown rabbit sat up by the road to look; a pheasant flew into the undergrowth. Then a narrow track gaped to the right, leading down by steep ways to the Rufus Stone.

Peggy stood up in the car, and her eyes swept clear over great distances of gleaming trees, threaded by white road-lines and sharpened by far-off church-spires. From furze and heather and open common

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the wild ruggedness was gone. The deer that Rufus once hunted had left never a trace behind. Then she looked at the Colonel.

"Dear," she said, "we've got all the sun there is to-day, and I'm going to take a photograph of you by the Rufus Stone."

From beyond Wylde watched her as she posed the grey upright Colonel beside the grey upright stone with its laboured inscriptions. He saw her lift the Colonel's chin with a dainty finger and cock his hat. And he nodded, slowly.

"She is the one that counts," he said. "And the only one."

Then his eyes fell on the double tree that grows in the rim of the clearing; oak and beech knitted together; the rough bark and the smooth; the heart that stands for ever and the pithy heart that rots. With his toe he kicked up the rich brown earth that nourished them both.

"I've seen marriages like that," he said. "Plenty of them. I wonder if the oak knows yet that the beech won't stand wear."

There were thoughts of Maurice Hewlett's Forest Lovers, of bold Sir Nigel of "The White Company," of fierce Margaret of Anjou to go with them through the hamlet-dotted road to Lyndhurst. Men tilled fields where the Red William had hunted. Beaulieu Abbey with its salt lake of the Solent called across the years of John, the evil king. Forest ponies flung up their shaggy heads, staring bright-eyed. At Lyndhurst the picturesque Crown Hotel and the Church with its lovely Lord Leighton altar-piece slid behind, giving way to desolate land of bogs and pale heather and silence. The railway line of Holmsley struck a discordant note across the barren emptiness. And then the Priory Church of Christchurch received them, with its many sad sweet legends and its low strange towerless length.

There was a gleam of sea beyond it where Hengistbury Head breasted the air whitely. There was the

drone of bees in the sun over the ivy-ruins of a portion that was old before the De Redvers of 1160 gave a Priory grant to Christchurch. There were curious fish-scale buttresses without and splendid widths of hatchet-work within. And against the front side, listless, directly beautiful, glimmered a white statue of Shelley, with half-living mouth and drooped eyes, and sea-weed across the long hands. A true and bitter wedge of verse from *Adonais* was scored beneath it, and Wylde read it three times that he might not soon forget.

Then the everyday of life unrolled itself in long tram-lines that led through Pokesdown and Bourne-mouth to old, old Poole and a house on a hill, with a red dark-barred sunset beyond it and a haze of grey water below.

Peggy came to the Colonel when he jotted down his accounts that night.

"Did you remember the twopenny toll across the Stour?" she asked.

The Colonel did not smile. He pulled her round on his knee.

"Peggy," he said, "if for any reason you get tired of this trip will you let me know?"

Peggy twisted up his moustache with critical fingers and sideways head. Her heart was throbbing thick in her throat.

"Never," she said. "I will never desert Mr. Micawber." Then she kissed his forehead. "Dear," she cried, "I wish you'd always wear your moustache just so. It makes you look *un grand seigneur*."

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CHAPTER III

PEGGY'S THANKSGIVING

"No," said Peggy. "I'm sorry, but I must believe that Raleigh sat just here to smoke his first pipe, and I must believe that after Elfrida had poor young Edward killed at Corfe Castle and came here from Bere Regis to his funeral her steed walked backwards, just as the story says. It would, you know. And it is these beliefs that give a zest to life."

Surrey looked round on the fallen walls of ancient Sherborne Castle and yawned.

"I can't see what you want to believe anything for," he said. "Has that fellow Wylde had the impudence to tell you that you ought to?"

Peggy's head went up. Because there was more than a spice of truth in the words. During the three days that had kept Surrey the prisoner of pain in Poole, Wylde, with herself and the Colonel had made a dash through the rain to Corfe, past the little inn called Peter's Finger and long straggling Wareham with its deep-breasted earthworks flung up either side the white road and its far-linked history. And in that old majestic ruin on the hill-top that had once been the centre of the Isle of Purbeck Wylde had done for her and the Colonel that which he had done more than twice before.

She drew a quick breath, remembering Wylde standing by the burst erect bastions of the inner gate where Elfrida is said to have given the cup of death, and speaking in his clipped pregnant sentences of the Norman and Roman legions which had once tramped that white line through the hill-cleft; of John, who

had kept his jewels there; of Edward the Second, imprisoned by his wife; of Sir John Bankes's brave lady, who held Corfe for the king when all the towns along the coast stood out for Cromwell.

"Peggy!"

Surrey was leaning towards her on the short warm grass. He had thrown away his cigar, and his laziness was gone, and there was something in his handsome rather imperious young face which Peggy did not know.

"You have no right to have anything to do with Wylde," he said. "He is not in your class."

"Suppose you tell that to the Colonel," suggested Peggy.

"The Colonel is—well, he's trying his experiment;" Surrey lifted his broad shoulders with a shrug. "But you have no business to be drawn into it. Peggy, you don't know what kind of life this fellow may have lived—and he's an uncouth brute, anyway. I hate to see you talking to him."

"He has plenty to talk about," said Peggy, perversely.

"Oh, he's clever. I grant you that. Browning was clever, though his uncle or some kind of relation was a footman at Corfe. But Wylde isn't Browning."

Here Peggy began to laugh; joyously, uncontrollably. Surrey reddened, biting his lips.

"If you're the kind of girl I've always thought you, you will leave Wylde alone," he said.

This was the direct challenge of insult. It brought Peggy to her feet.

"What a surprise it will be for you to know that I never was that kind of girl," she said, and turned, walking deliberately across the grassy spaces to the gap in the ruined wall where the trees grew thick.

Behind the wall Wylde's voice was trolling out a song that brought recollections of Lulworth Cave and Studland hamlet and all the gay reckless smuggling days when each cave along the ragged rocks spoke with little tongues.

"If you wake at midnight and hear a horse's feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street;
Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie,
Watch the wall, my darling, when the gentlemen go by."

He broke off, looking up. He had felt her rather than heard her, for that power which comes to men who have guarded their lives by the quickness of their senses was strong in him. She stood in the broached wall, with grey ruin and green trees that waved in sunlight behind her. She was half-defiant, half-hesitating, and wholly alluring. Wylde sprang up. It was the first time the Honourable Peggy had sought him of her own free will, and he was quick to grasp the advantage.

"The Colonel said he wouldn't be out for an hour or two," he said. "What a man he is for hunting up old friends and doing something for them! Don't you think this would be as good a place to wait for him as any?"

Peggy hesitated. Then she sat down. Already she was sorry and angry and nervous, all in one quick pulsing of the blood. But Surrey deserved punishment. He deserved it.

Wylde dropped on the grass at her feet, and punched holes slowly in the sunny turf.

"It feels queer to me to think I'm digging up Dorset," he said. "It is so full of the old life. Do you know I'm rather sorry we came up here instead of making along the coast. I have just been remembering how the French and Dutch plundered all along it, and how Alfred won the first naval battle of England off Swanage. And the Armada met the home fleet near Lyme Regis."

"All Dorset is much the same." Peggy was making conversation uneasily. "It is alive with earthworks and cromlechs and rings and Roman entrenchments. Maiden Castle is said to be the best in England. And Badbury Rings near Wimborne are very historical."

"Why, I suppose so. Arthur is said to have fought Cerdic there. . . ." Wylde let a little silence drop

between them while he marshalled a certain line of thought into train. Then he spoke again, leading up with seeming idleness to his point.

"Did you notice that they call the Frome the Puddle at Wareham?" he said. "Tolpuddle gets its name from Thola, wife of a man of Canute's. Canute lived at Wareham. So did Stephen, and Charles the First. And the Baldwin de Redvers who founded Christchurch Priory was the same one who held Corfe for Matilda against Stephen." He punched more holes. "It is so queer to see these sharp contrasts in England. The strong fine castles and those little hamlets like bunches of hay that we came through yesterday—Fiddleford and Shillingstone and Bishop's Caundle—there wasn't an ordinary name on the trail except Blandford."

"There was the loveliest old slender Cross in Shillingstone." Peggy hesitated. It must have been Surrey's words which were making her shy, for Wylde was merely punching holes industriously. Then she plunged. "I wonder why you take so much interest in all those things," she said. "And—and you know how to talk about them, too. You quite excited the Colonel at Corfe."

"I always cared for learning," said Wylde. "I used to go to elocution classes and night-school in Regina when I couldn't pay for soles to my boots."

"Soles . . . to your boots?"

"I didn't mind that so much. I generally could get moccasins cheap from an Indian woman. But I did mind when I was too hungry to go to class. It is such a weakness for a man to be dominated by his—by his appetites."

Peggy drew back a little. It seemed to her as though Wylde was showing her something repulsive—something which he had no right to show.

"I understood that Mr. Smayne provided you with necessaries," she said. "The Colonel was under that impression."

"I—did something Smayne wouldn't have liked."

Wylde ceased to punch holes, and looked out straight before him. "So I disappeared till it blew over. I went right up West and took freighting. And I would have done well at that only a soft snap came before the ice was properly set. I lost the freight and three horses and my employers took the matter to Court. The judge found that I'd been warned of the state of the ice. I had, too. But I reckoned I would chance it. If the ice went out then it'd be likely two weeks before it would be fit again. And I couldn't keep my team eating their heads off all that time."

"No," murmured Peggy vaguely. This was the kind of thing that is set down in books which a certain class of people read. Peggy did not belong to that class.

"My bosses said they'd let me work the debt off," said Wylde. "We call it working a dead horse. It took some time, and when I was near through with it Smayne got on my trail. He had been hunting me for some months, you see, and he was a bit annoyed." Wylde spread his hand against the sun, indicating the strong wrist with his forefinger. "I guess you don't know much of Canada," he said. "It's an almighty big place, but the far West is something like this. Every artery gets its blood from the main artery—that is the C. P. R. There will be other rails through directly, but it was the C. P. R. then. Smayne tapped the main at Winnipeg, and he sent poison for me down those arteries. They shut down on me, every man of them. Word had gone along that I was a wrong 'un, and I couldn't get work. I went around sort of listening for that follow-on rattle the cell door make when the warder is on to the lever. I beg your pardon;" Wylde sat up sharply, turning dull red. "I didn't mean to speak of that. Please forget that I did."

Peggy felt exactly like a fluffy kitten, soused, blue ribbons and all, in open sea.

"You—y-ou haven't been—in prison?" she gasped.

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

"No." Wylde lay down again. "No. I hadn't the pluck. I threw up the sponge and got Smayne on the wire. He settled the claim and ordered me back to Winnipeg. And then, when my hands were healed," Wylde glanced down at his frost-bite scars, "he sent me over here. He had tried it before, but I wouldn't go. I didn't know what I was wanted for, but I wouldn't go. This time he had me cold. I was in his debt for more than I could make up. So I came."

Peggy sat very still. Through the calm beauty of a summer day of soft airs, soft sunlight, soft swaying branches something charged with concrete desperate force seemed surging. Wylde spoke again, jumping a cigarette lightly on the flat stone before him.

"I don't blame Smayne. He was bound to get me at any cost, and I reckon he wouldn't have got me another way. No," he rolled over, feeling for his matches, "I don't blame Smayne. But—I do blame the Colonel."

"But you are accepting his hospitality——"

Wylde shot one look at her. Then he went on smoking in great puffs.

"I guess I have a right to this much, at least," he said, composedly.

Since that hour in Winchester Cathedral Peggy had been planning to make friends with Wylde; to explain to him, wisely and convincingly, how very necessary it was that Surrey, having never had to struggle for a living, could not be expected to begin now. Then she would persuade the Colonel to give Wylde a little money—that kind of man could not have many wants, and to send him back to Canada. In the last five minutes that plan had dropped to earth so definitely that she almost expected to hear it break. There had been much that was unintelligible to her in all this. But one thing was clear. If Wylde received everything—everything, he would accept it as no more than his due. And he meant to fight for that everything as Surrey would never fight.

Wylde tossed away his cigarette-butt and stood up. He had begun this in cold-blooded deliberation as the second step up the ladder. But Peggy's distressed, wide-eyed face, from which all the soft colour had been struck, touched a chord which he had not expected to feel. He stooped to her, and voice and face were flushed with the heat of shame.

"I am sorry," he said. "I am very sorry. I forgot myself. I should have remembered that women like you don't know——"

"Why did you tell me?" said Peggy in a strangled tone.

Wylde considered. Then he spoke the direct truth, but not the whole truth.

"I reckon I wanted you to understand why I am not like the men you know. Don't think that I can't feel the difference. I can. I'd sooner face a timber wolf in spring than some of those gentlemanly fellows Guest brings along. And Guest hates to introduce them to me. Do you think I can't see that?"

"Of course we understand that Canada is so different——" began Peggy, struggling for her poise again.

"No. It is not that. If you went to Canada you'd find dinner-parties, and men to bring you flowers, and girls with white hands and rings just as you do here. There is no typical Canada any more than there is a typical anything else. That is all bosh. There are class distinctions everywhere, and the cult of birth holds everywhere. You are more hidebound in England, and—and not so generous-minded to an inferior, I reckon. But a man with no money and no name has to battle a bit anywhere."

"No name? But——"

"I guess I was called so because I was wild. Wild as a young coyote. I spelt it the way I do now as soon as I knew how to spell. It looked more like a real name."

"But you have——" Peggy hesitated. "I have never heard your Christian name," she said.

THE HONOURABLE PEGGY

"I have one. I guess it's the only Christian thing I've got. A Catholic priest got hold of me one Thanksgiving Day and christened me Laudate. I never sign it, and not six people know it. I was Bud till I grew a man. I haven't had a front name since."

"Laudate." Peggy said it softly, musically. Wylde flushed again.

"That's the first time I haven't hated it," he said. And then he caught himself up. "I never meant to tell you all this when I began," he said. "I beg your pardon. It was an impertinence."

He lifted his cap and left her as the Colonel came through the broken wall and looked down on her. And what the Colonel saw made him speak sharply. "What has Wylde been saying to you, Peggy?"

"He—he said it was an impertinence." Peggy was struggling to rearrange her universe which this man had burst into so unpardonably.

"Was it?"

"I—I—I suppose it was," said Peggy.

Wylde walked fast, but he did not outreach his anger at himself. He had said more than he meant to say. He had said more than was wise. In all probability he had disgusted and shocked this dainty lady who belonged to that world which he knew so little. He went through the old quaint town with head low and long straight steps. Past the black-and-white slanting wood houses and the older crouching stone ones he came to the open terrace before the parish church which had been both Cathedral and Abbey in the distant days when the bishops of Sherborne took the field against the Danes and the two elder brothers of the mighty Alfred were put to rest there.

Wylde halted, staring in where the sunlight dredged through glowing windows to fling reflections on the finely-vaulted roof. Then he trod in and sought a verger.

"Most of them are liars," he told himself. "But

he'll likely make me forget for a little while what a fool I've been."

There was very much to tell, and the verger told it, with more added. Wylde, looking on the statued knights and ladies who lay, fresh-cut as though by the hand of yesterday, in the stately dresses of Queen Bess's reign, learnt that:

"Every chink of 'em was filled up with lime, sir. They was just blocks till we cleared 'em out. Here's Sir John Horsey and his son, sent up by Henry the Eighth to smash the Abbey. They sold it to the monks for two-fifty pounds, but I don't know if Henry got the money. And will you notice this lady's hand, sir? Two engagement-rings on the little finger, two wedding-rings on the third; ring on top joint of second finger to show she was wife to a knight, and signet ring on first finger, all complete."

"I guess she had no room for more to happen her," said Wylde, inspecting the pale dusky thing with interest.

"You may say that, sir. There's Big Tom striking. Since the death of the first Earl of Bristol one hundred and sixty years ago the verger has to toll that bell for six hours on every anniversary of his dying. And he don't get nothing extra for it, either."

"I should reckon he'd get muscle," said Wylde, reflectively. And then he was shown where Raleigh's "faithful servant" lay.

"Sir Walter still owes the parish one pound for funeral expenses," explained the verger. "Not his fault, o' course. He was took off to the Tower before he could pay it, and he'll never pay it now. Sir Walter hoped to be buried here himself, even after James the First took the castle what he built away from him."

Wylde looked round on the old dim place, hallowed by the dust of Saxon kings and the memories of many true men since then. And his thoughts leapt back to the headless body that lies somewhere unknown

in St. Margaret's Church, still amid the thunder of London.

In the dusk of the evening without he turned to the almshouse that huddled yet within the benediction of the grand old Abbey walls. In the fifteenth century it was sacred to the nuns who passed from thence by underground ways to the Abbey. The same great brown roof-beams shelter old men and women now, and in the men's quarters Wylde found high-backed settles and deep fireplaces, and the clay pipes of comfort. Remembering that shattered castle on the hill with the blackened rotting fireplaces whereat the great First Smoker had sat so many times, he took out his plug with swift decision and handed it round. It seemed fit to him that the brave and courteous Raleigh should so strike hands with humanity across the grave.

That night Peggy forgave Surrey in a corner of the quiet drawing-room. Then she leaned her fair head nearer.

"You were right, Surrey," she said. "I didn't know what kind of life Mr. Wylde had lived."

"You don't mean that he told you?" Surrey sat up in swift wrath.

"A little. Surrey, he is very bitter and very strong. You will have to wake up if you want to prove cleverer and prompter and stronger than he. Oh, you will have to wake up."

Her voice shook with its earnestness. Surrey's handsome face darkened.

"Peggy, that fellow has lived the roughest kind of life among rough men. He has let drop a few things which prove it. I tell you he is not a fit companion for you. And as for thinking that the Colonel will ever choose him to live at the Manor and to take his place everywhere—why, it is madness—madness. The man couldn't do it."

"But he means to try."

"Oh, *rot*. I beg your pardon, Peggy. My dear girl, I didn't mean to offend you. But I know where

I stand and I know where Wylde stands, and I can assure you that there is nothing to worry about."

Peggy shut her lips against her heart. And she kept them still shut to it when they passed the Yeo, that "clear bourne" from which Sherborne takes its name, and entered into Yeovil in Somerset, to find clay bosses and corbels in the cliffs, ancient houses lined up with the prim growth of yesterday, many glove-factories, and the Somerset burr in the speech. Hawthorn hedges came after that; dark-red cattle in green fields, and black-faced sheep in latticed folds. East Cocker was a pink-and-yellow stream laid up hill; Chinnock was a mole-colour one strung down. Crewkerne left the grey spire of a Perpendicular church on the brain-sight, and the rest was loops of fields, rounded hills and vague beautiful distances.

Surrey's arm was weak still. He sat with Peggy in the tonneau, and they made no connection with the front seat until Wylde halted where a small engine and a large number of men mended the road by the obvious process of scattering broken stone all across it. Wylde's temper was not perfectly under control this morning, and he said three things and received two answers before he rolled the car tenderly over and took up the humming pace again.

Then Peggy pushed her laughing face up near his arm.

"What voices!" she cried. "Even the trees and grass seem rough and strong here. And I can hear the burr in everything—down to the horse-chestnuts."

Wylde's face changed as he glanced down at her.

"Don't hear it any more," he advised. "For this is Chard . . . and now we are in Devon."

In the warm clear air the car fairly leapt up the stiff climb beyond Yarcombe on second speed. The Colonel watched the big hands that touched wheel, throttle and levers so surely, and he watched the glow on the dark lean face.

"The car is going well," he said, and felt surprise at Wylde's eager tone.

"Isn't she? I gave her some more air this morning, and I reckon she'll take more yet. She's running something like twenty-seven miles to the gallon. Good enough, eh?"

"I—I suppose so." The Colonel laughed. "I am afraid I don't understand the car," he said. "But you seem quite fond of it."

Wylde's face hardened again. He leaned forward to the brake-lever.

"A man must have something to be fond of—even if it is only a bit of machinery," he said, shortly.

Honiton was a highly-coloured oleograph, painted down either side of a neat wide street where children played at marbles. Peggy leaned forward again.

"I don't think there is any lace-making done here now," she cried. "But do look at those frilly tree-hedges round the fields. They are exactly like handkerchiefs with lace borders."

"I was looking at the red cows and pink pigs," said Wylde. "Devon folk do seem to have a gaudy taste in animals. I guess those pigs are more like uncooked sausages than anything else."

"Oh, they are," cried Peggy, gleefully. "And when you see a black one you think it is a sausage that's got burnt, and you feel so vexed with the cook."

She dropped back, and Wylde's brain said just one thing as he whirled past the sign-post to Ottery St. Mary where Coleridge was born at Fenny Bridges.

"I reckon it's going to be pumpkin-squash for that cynical galoot in the tonneau before I've done with him."

There were sturdy Devon men in the lanes of oak and elm and roses. There was red, red earth on their clothes and in their blood—red earth that had borne the sea-kings of England whose names hummed with the car along the ways they once had trod. Raleigh, Frobisher, Grenville, Hawkins, Drake—the names beat on Wylde's brain as the road that led off to Hayes where Raleigh was born fell away, and Topsham which sent the third largest output to meet the Armada

reeled past, and through small quaint Heavitree they whirled into Exeter and halted before the Cathedral.

Outside and inside her Cathedral Exeter has scored her story. Outside in the broad worn grey front filled in niche on niche with Crusaders, Bishops, Kings, men and women who made history and passed. And inside in the war-note which is struck so strong and boldly: tattered flags, bronzes, brasses to the Devon men who died for England. Wylde found Peggy looking up at the storm-beaten flags, and sudden impulse spoke in him.

"I guess Newbolt loves this place," he said. "Do you know his 'Waggon Hill'?"—

'Pride of the West! what Devon has kept
Devon shall keep on tide or main;
Call to the storm and drive them flying,
Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain.'

And that other—after they had done it.

'While fame's fame you're Devon, lad,
The glory of the West;
Till the roll's called in heaven, lad,
You may well take your rest.'

He moved away as abruptly and silently as he had come, and Peggy bit her lips, angry at the thrill his voice had called up in her. Then she struck her hands softly together.

"But what was that thing he did which he was afraid Mr. Smayne would find out?" she said.

Lorna Doone's creator, Bishop Patteson, slain for his faith in the South Seas, Taylor Coleridge and many more gave up their names to Peggy under that grand palm-arched roof where the painted Minstrel's Gallery still clung like a swallow's nest. But not any of these meant so much to her as the knowledge, offered by the Colonel, that never once in Exeter did the Christian religion fall to idols; never once, since it became the British Caerwisc, have men ceased to walk its streets.

The Exe ran clear and wide beneath the bridge

where the road rose through Alington up a steep long climb to the Telegraph Hill. This rough breast of Dartmoor was heather and pure air and sky-horizon only, until the way flung down through trees again. And then came the first flash of the red red Exmouth headlands; blue sea, white combers, and a sky slashed across with smoke from a dark-hulled boat. From below Teignmouth rose up, a gleam of sea and cliffs and steamers, and welcomed them with spread of white bent arms.

Wylde brought the redirected mail from the post office, and he was reading letters in the hall of the hotel when Peggy passed him by.

"Are you coming?" she said, with a sudden touch of friendliness. "Real Devonshire cream for afternoon-tea. And black-currant jam. And saffron-cake. And cut-rounds. And roses."

She was laughing as she ended the breathless list. Wylde raised his eyes. They were grave and concentrated with thought.

"Thank you," he said, absently.

Then he folded the letter, slid it into the envelope, and thrust it back in his pocket. Peggy walked straight into the room, dropped on a chair, and pulled the great bowl of roses to her, hiding her face in their sweetness.

She was telling herself that it could not have been the Colonel's name which she saw on that envelope. And yet her brain and her senses knew that it was. Wylde came in quietly, and laid the envelope at the Colonel's elbow.

"I opened this by mistake," he said. "I am sorry."

"Canadian stamp," said the Colonel. "Of course. Very natural. It doesn't matter, Wylde. Peggy, pass that cream before Surrey eats it all. Dear me, I had forgotten what a real Devonshire meal was like."

Peggy laughed. Then she slipped into the talk; gathering up and flinging out threads with her easy tact. But a little demon was sitting up in the back of her brain somewhere, exulting because her prayer

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at Winchester was answered. She had no pity, no sorrow just at this moment. Only a sweeping contempt for the man who could fall so low as to read the private letters of another man.

Past the toll-gate at Shaldon Bridge Wyld mechanically took the car up the hill beyond. He had read that letter of the Colonel's from end to end, and it had suggested to him more than even his sternly-trained will could hide. He dared not look at the Colonel sitting beside him until he had fought this new thing out and beaten it into shape; and the Colonel, all unknowing, was not looking at him, but only at the warm beauty of Teignmouth, flung among its trees and flowers along the mouth of the river yawning to the sea.

There were blue sea and white waves on a yellow bar down there: boats with sails of gold and grey and russet: steamers belching black smoke: red cliffs topped with green, red cliffs vague in distance, pallid cliffs that were Lyme Regis last of all in the far-off left. That anæmic smudge which was Lyme Regis brought rushing thoughts of the Armada to Peggy, and of words which a poet has put into Drake's mouth—

"If the Dons sight Devon I'll leave the port of Heaven
And drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

And then, along the top of this high smooth road, the great humps of Dartmoor rose shaggily to the right, while the blue dancing sea ran far below, and behind the red cliffs were blazing like a sunset in a storm.

Ahead the Shag rocks of Torquay sprang out of the sea. The road wound down and through the large flowery pretty watering-place to the esplanade where a hundred little boats bobbed together on the bright sea and the long reach of houses rimmed a splendid reach of harbour. Peggy and the Colonel had been here before, and they left the car more than once to greet a party carrying golf-clubs, or to talk with others of the yacht-races and the hunting-fixtures of a winter

which has no fury round Tor Bay. Wylde had been reading of Kent's Cavern with its stalactites and its flint relics of an ancient race; but the desire to see them was gone now, and he went on in silence round the flank of St. Michael's Hill that rose tall and white above them, and round the blue bay backed by the high ridges of trees and flowers and houses.

Relics of ancient bone-tracings and Roman remains were scattered through all the country-side, and beyond little straggling Paignton the red full sun made pictures in the glorious clouds straight before them. The air was very fresh and drenched with scents. The road unrolled, smooth and white as a shaving; blue haze clung in hedges and in trees, and the car swung finely down into Totnes across the lovely Dart lying grey—Payne's grey—among its clustered trees and houses.

After dinner Peggy evaded escort, and went down into the little town alone. She wanted to think. She wanted to marshal this last act in a line with her first dislike and suspicion of Wylde, and she wanted to see where the result would lead her. She walked fast up the one street which rises to the fine grey arch of the North Gate and then doubles over down the hill beyond.

"He is dishonourable," she said. "Dishonourable. And Surrey—Surrey would die before he'd do a dishonest thing. What shall I do? If I could make the Colonel——" She halted deliberately on a worn granite stone set flat in the pavement. On that stone Brutus the Trojan is said to have landed when there was no name of place or town in all the land. From it many kings and queens of a later time have been proclaimed to the people of Devon. And from it Peggy, unheeding a man in a cart and a small boy running down the street, gave her ultimatum under-breath.

"My idea of fair play is my own, and it won't match with the Colonel's. But I think—I really think that it is going to match with Mr. Wylde's."

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She went on, up the narrow pavements swiftly. To left and right opened narrow dusky vistas above and below old houses that leaned all ways. The red sandstone church, made a fiery column by the sunset, halted her just a moment. She craved quiet, peace, some place where she could take hold of her whirling thoughts. Then she walked in, past the ancient oak door where St. Loe of the ironworkers stands to his anvil, and horse-shoes and horses make the lock. The church was hushed and dusky. Peggy dropped on her knees in a pew. And then her eyes ran over.

"I'm only a girl," she sobbed. "And Surrey is a man. But he will be of no use against the other man. I know. Oh, I know. A perfectly honest man may be the noblest work of God, but he makes the awfulest mess of his own fortunes. Surrey wouldn't even let me tell the Colonel. And if I did tell the Colonel I would be even with Mr. Wylde, and I couldn't do any more." She rubbed her chin along her clasped hands softly. "I think," she said, "that I can manage this matter better than the Colonel. He is too good."

Then she cuddled herself close to herself with a little pæan of content.

"Thank Heaven that I am not too good," she said.

But Peggy never knew that this man whom she was dreading walked all the hot night by the river where the empty breweries stand beyond the monument to Wills, native of Totnes and first man to cross the Australian continent. Wylde was fighting the sterile desert of his heart as Wills had fought the desert which killed him; and, for the one man as for the other, there seemed no horizon but a dry sand that cut the skin when the wind blew. That letter had struck to life in Wylde more evil thoughts than he could bring to heel easily, and morning was grey on the dreaming Dart whence Raleigh and so many more had sailed down to Dartmouth before he lifted his tired eyes with quiet in them.

"I don't know why life should be made so hard for me," he said. "But I am not going to be the only

one hurt here. I guess I know how to arrange that."

He kept this decision with him all through the next day, which was filled with a journey down the river to Dartmouth with its old Buttermarket, past Greenway House where Raleigh had lived, and past that little farmhouse once the castle of Raleigh's true and gallant half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. He had talked of Holne, birthplace of Charles Kingsley, and of Tavistock, north of Plymouth, where Drake was born in Tavy Valley. And then he had brought the car through the swelling heights of Dartmoor, forgetful of the many cromlechs and rocking-stones all unseen which had made its earliest history, and planning, with determined busy brain, some check-mate for the forces ranged against him.

On all sides high hedges spoil the alluring views; on all sides were the pink sheep and the red cattle of Devon. Cuddled in a deep valley of water and trees and protected by the arching arms of a railway bridge hid a little hamlet called Bittaford; laid bare on the flat was another called Ivybridge. Close at hand, near Plymouth, lay pretty Plympton, with its ruins of a castle and of a monastery great before the days of Edgar and its cherished memories of Sir Joshua Reynolds who was born there. And then, dull and sulky with the night, came the broad sweep of the ringing harbour of Plymouth, where all the clay hills were pock-marked with little forts and menacing splashes of concrete, and all the air was full of the breath from the wide-lunged sea.

It was that letter which took Wylde to the Hoe directly after breakfast the next morning. But a spirit of half-fear balked him when he got there, and he walked straight up the great asphalt terrace, past the statue of Britannia ringed about by her cannon-balls, and halted before the great figure of Drake. It stood there, bluff, gay and dauntless, cast in gleaming bronze, looking out to sea as the man himself had looked on that July day, 1588, when the Spanish

Armada thrust its long beckoning finger out of the offing, and Wylde's glance followed that imperious one across Drake's island and the vessels that lay about it and out to the open sea beyond the curved breakwaters.

On the edge of the Hoe the Smeaton Lighthouse, once the top of the first Eddystone Lighthouse, stood up like a red-and-white lolly-stick. It was from the top of that tower that Wylde would discover something which the letter pledged to be truth; and, for the first time in his life, he was afraid to go straight to the proof of what he wanted. Then he suddenly set his chin up to take the sea-wind on his forehead, and walked across to the tower.

Near the top of the twisting stairs, in the small room which was one of those which had made the lighthouse a home he paid his penny, and took up the telescope to sweep the sea-board. His hands shook and his eyes blurred for a moment. Then something shaped along the horizon; grew, and formed into a broken column with a stately lighthouse to the left. Wylde laid down the telescope, and under the tan he was very white.

"Those are the two Eddystone Lighthouses?" he said to the caretaker.

"And every bit of fourteen miles out, sir. And a heavy mist. You have uncommon good eyesight, sir."

"I am accustomed to distances. I want a postcard of those lighthouses. Why . . . this shows the broken column on the left."

"It's originally a sketch, I think, sir. Taken from a boat. They are all like that."

Wylde got himself down to the breezy Hoe again, and there he stood still.

"That's it," he said, slowly. "The fellow saw a postcard. He can't substantiate anything, I'll bet. But I've got to have a try for the truth of him. And . . . just now . . . The Honourable Peggy wants to make friends with me all of a sudden. Well, if she

doesn't mind, I don't. And next, I'll go and see Plymouth."

In each long crooked street Plymouth holds its history; in each inch of the long line of the Hoe with its Saxon meaning clinging to it yet; in each old rotting house of the ancient Barbican, vital with memories of pigtailed press-gangs and swash-buckling gallants. It shows it in the fine George Third gates of the Citadel, and in that lovelier gate of Charles the Second, where the red coats of the sentries fleck the grey waste of asphalt and on the rough flags of the wharf beyond a stone brings a flood of thoughts by its inscription, "*Mayflower, 1620.*"

Plymouth was old Sutton in the time of Domesday, and from the Cattewater to the Hamoaze its glories are unforgotten. A fleet sailed from here to Guienne, 1295. It was fortified in 1307. The Black Prince went from Plymouth to his drawn-out fights in France. Here Drake returned in glory from his first greatest voyage, and here Elizabeth, defying the wrath of Spain, made him knight on the deck of his own ship. Every gallant old sea-dog has ruffled it in Plymouth, every eager heart of Grenville's day turned from it Westward Ho. Rich stuffs from the Spanish Indies filled smugglers' caves from the Plym away to Dartmouth and beyond it, and the names of Hawkins, Effingham, Cook and Blake are alive in the air of it still.

Up and down the "three towns," from Sutton Pool to the flanks of Mount Edgcumbe at the foreland the very burr of the Devon speech stirs the heart. Beyond the Royal Military Magazine, the Victualling Yards, the Dockyards, and away to small Budeaux on the Hamoaze, Devon's history follows, step by step. Here the black destroyers and the battleships lie guarding her, and across the ferry Saltash calls the way-comer into Cornwall.

It was mid-day when the ferry drew slowly out of Devon with the blue car quivering on her. The stumpy hull of the *Implacable*, taken at Trafalgar,

showed to rightward; the grey snaky battleships showed to left. Saltash seemed tumbling downhill in a blaze of sunshine to meet them, and the sharp run-up off the ferry was earnest of what Cornwall had to offer, even as the sight from the hill above the town was earnest also.

Just an instant the car poised, throbbing, with the Tamar stretched below, speckled with red sails, brown sails, white sails, and the green bluffs behind that shut out "Mother Plymouth sitting by the sea." Then Wylde thrust the lever down and they leapt forward into Cornwall.

Since Surrey's accident it had become the habit for Wylde to drive and for the Colonel to sit beside him through the long hours. In this way they had come to know each other superficially, and Wylde's quick side-glance often caught the Colonel's eyes fixed on him, steadily as though he would read the brain behind by sight of the long skull with its thick black hair and the set of the well-shaped jaw.

At the top of the savagely-steep St. German's hill Wylde felt the Colonel's eyes, and he resented them; for he was thinking too deeply, and his face might have shown more than he knew. He spoke, promptly.

"I reckon I'd have liked to stay in Plymouth a bit longer," he said. "It just about fills the bill, you know."

"Ah," said the Colonel. Then, carelessly, so very carelessly that Wylde was instantly alert, he added:

"Did you go up the Smeaton Tower?"

"Why, certainly." Wylde was looking at the little clean street of Liskeard, and the black bulb was shouting under the squeeze of his hand.

"It is so many years since I have been up," said the Colonel. "I remember that one could see the Eddy-stone and the broken column from there on a fine day. Did you see it?"

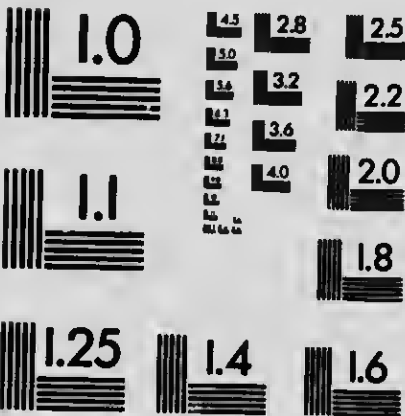
"Why, certainly," said Wylde.

"Ah." The Colonel looked on the hedges which were growing high and very narrow until they brushed



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the tonneau. "I have forgotten which side the broken column is on. Which is it?"

He turned on Wylde sharply, and for a moment Wylde's strong will failed him. He had done much that he should not have done in his life, but he had held to the truth on his tongue as his one sheet-anchor. Now, he was tempted to lie. His face flushed. He spoke slowly.

"Why . . . I guess it was on the right when I saw it," he said.

Then he drove on, taking the rough narrow track in a grim silence. Because he had held to his sheet-anchor by the sacrifice of what might have profited him more.

The Colonel sat very still. The strain which had been on his face since the car first whirled him into Plymouth was wiped away by the calm air and a calmer peace. He should have asked and verified that question in Plymouth, for the importance of it was fully laid down in Smayne's letter. But Plymouth was connected with the one great sorrow of the Colonel's life, and it made of him a coward. He knew now, for he did not doubt Wylde's word, and behind his grey moustache he said, low and thickly:

"Thank God that letter said it was on the left."

The road became suggestive of a sheep-track. From the tonneau Peggy's voice roused Wylde into attention.

"Where are we? The contour-book says there are no roads here but the main one to Dobwalls. And if this is a main road what in the name of mercy is a side-road?"

Wylde, swinging round the sharp corners with the ragged thread of track ahead, blinked suddenly.

"Why, I guess the contour-book's about right," he said. Then, past the next corner, he pulled up with a grating jarring brake in the very teeth of a low thatched cottage.

"Ask that cottage what it is stopping the way for," said Peggy's voice from the back. "Tell it to move on. Are there no policemen about?"

An old woman with a bundle of sticks showed a rough head at the half-door. Wylde leaned out to her.

"We want Dobwalls," he said.

The old woman pointed across the road to a beech-tree near the hedge.

"That is the Well of St. Keyne's, my dear," she said.

Here Peggy began to laugh, flinging quotations from Southey's poem at them.

"Go and drink, all of you," she cried. "It should be on your way home from church after the marriage-ceremony; but fate must have meant you to omit that or she wouldn't have brought you here. Go. My blessing goes with you."

"You had better go yourself," said the Colonel. But Peggy shook her head.

"I would utterly despise a man who would let me rule him," she answered, and from the clear brown spring under the stone arch Wylde heard her and smiled.

It was a side-road past the coitage that led at length to Dobwalls, and thereafter Peggy and Wylde were silent, remembering the old legends ringing them about. For St. Cleer and the strange piled Cheese-wring lay to northward, with Trevethy cromlech and the Hurlers near, and in a little a post pointing through the thick trees to St. Neot's told of Dozemare Pool: Dozemare Pool where Sir Bedivere brought King Arthur straight from Camelford, and heard the "water lapping in the crags" and saw the barge and the three queens sail outward into night and legend.

The glass in St. Neot's Church dates from 1200. There are memories of Charles the First at Boconnoc Park and at Lostwithiel, where the Puritans christened a horse by his name at the altar. But all that land belongs to Arthur firstly: a lonely land, that grew to straight white roads and moors of heather; to gaunt hills of chalk and china-clay, floating in a sea of mist. They were sickly and anæmic, these chalk hills

across the barren moors. The red sun could not warm them, the clustered factory-huts gave no life. Mount Pleasant was a grim joke only; Indian Queen suggested nothing in its blank ugliness. Beyond Fraddon, with its Blue Anchor Inn, the "best road in Cornwall" ran white and hard and level with all the red Devon blood gone out of it. Smooth tree-bunches held the hills; live oaks and hollies rose up either side. Ladock fell behind, and the small gem of Tresillian. Rivers gleamed and calm pools lay among the branching oaks and beeches. The Fal showed, sliding brown and clear under evening lights, and the narrow twisting street of Truro met them. At a corner a bell-man in top hat and boots cried something in broad Cornish; in the Fore Street a girl was driving cows.

"Every town in Devon and Cornwall has a Fore Street," said Peggy. "And postmen and police salute you, which is charming. And I never saw so many ibex in my life. What? I *will* call the live oaks ibex, Surrey. It suggests something so much wilder than ilex. And we are coming to the wildest part of England."

She knew this very fully on the morrow when they turned from Truro with its very young Cathedral and its very old old houses, and took the road through hilly Chacewater to St. Ives.

The mining land of Cornwall stretched about them, in scrub of gorse and heather, and in strange brick buildings with funnels like a shut fist with first finger pointing skywards. Naked country, this, grim and stark and grey, taking its colour from the tin that men wrest from it. Redruth once was Druid's Town, a place of stone, dull heavy stone, with its miners in the long steep winding street and its history where science strikes hands with superstition. Gas gave light in Redruth before the French Revolution, and tram-lines were laid before Trafalgar. In Gwennap Pit Wesley's voice often carried round the grassy walls to an audience many thousand strong, and on the height of Carnbrea Hill beside the town British earthworks

make a skyline with the tall de Dunstanville column and a stony knot of rocking-stones and slabs and caves to flank it.

All the tumbled harsh blind relics of an unknown history held the universe where still the pallid tin-mines drained colour from the land and still the great brick fists were clenched against the sky. The good white road wound on, through Camborne, Roseworthy, Copperhouses, and undulated swiftly into Hayle and beauty.

With the true Cornish names of Gwithian and Gwinear on the sign-posts came the first smell and the first flash of the sea at St. Ives, and then one gleam of its red roofs in the distance. In the long breakwater of Hayle the tide was out, and a little flight of fishing-boats sat on the sand.

Wylde halted, turning in his seat.

"I had reckoned to go around the coast-line first," he said. "But if we cut across to Marazion right now we'll have a chance to cross the causeway to St. Michael's Mount."

His voice was without colour, but Peggy instantly was not. She had once told Wylde of her desire to walk on that causeway, and he had not forgotten. And as he swung the car about, and spun down the dusty road where sign-posts flung such uncouth names as Ludgvan and Gulval at them, she lifted her shoulders in a long breath of satisfaction.

"It is going to be easy," she told herself. "Easier than I thought."

Before them, slow and stately as a homing ship, St. Michael's Mount swam out of haze that was the sea, with the benediction of the sun on the rugged castle roofs and on the little grey low village at its feet. It was a bronze and green Egyptian opal in the blue enamel sea, and Caidam Point was big behind it with the curve of the dark Lizard sheltering all.

Through plain little Marazion, to which the Jews who once traded with Phœnician miners there have left its bitter name, Wylde brought the car down a back-

way to the lip of the wide beach. Peggy wrenched the door open before Surrey could stoop to it.

"Why did we forget spades and buckets?" she cried. "Or a donkey? Dear, would you mind very much if I paddled?"

"Not half so much as you would," said the Colonel. "Yes, you go too, Wylde. I'll look after the car."

But Wylde dawdled behind when Peggy ran to the sea-lip and dropped on one knee, patting the long level ridges of sand.

"These are the cheeks of the Ancient Mariner," she cried. "Coleridge must have stood just here when he saw them 'lean and lank and brown as is the ribbed sea-sand.' Surrey, I'll race you to the causeway. Oh, it is heavenly to feel just eleven-and-a-half in my shoes."

She skimmed along the shoreline like a sea-bird, with the far blue sky behind her and the green weed in the russet rocks beside her feet. The water murmured sleepily and low, and on the squared stones of the low causeway where small crabs and shellfish dried in the sun Wylde saw her halt with fluttering dress and reach her hands to Surrey. Together they crossed the narrow way, leaving Wylde behind. Then suddenly Peggy ran ahead, and sat down on the stone step that led into the village.

"I am a blockade," she said. "How very easy it would be to defend this castle! One man could do it if he were fat enough. And why did Giant Cormoran ever let Jack the Giant-killer come in here and cut his head off? Yes; you may smoke, but you mustn't talk. I want to think."

Surrey let himself down in an angle of the wall which the sun had painted gold. On the beach beyond the causeway and the slimy shiny rocks some children were playing on the sand. And their voices made the only sound in the warm sapphire stillness until Peggy spoke, dreamily.

"When St. Michael appeared to the monks here it was day. A great golden hush of a day like this.

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And the monks were afraid. They hid their poor tonsured heads from him. But they were never tonsured like the men of Rome. Damnonia was the only part of England which kept to the true faith when the Saxons and Danes made it heathen again and the Normans came and made it Popish."

"Where is Damnonia?" demanded Surrey, hunting for his matches.

"You're sitting on it—part of it. Damnonia is all Cornwall and Devon, and a bit of Somerset. And that is why it has so much religious history. In the fifth century St. Keyne came to worship at St. Michael's Mount. And St. Perran came from Ireland and named most of the places about here after himself—at least, they are called by his name now. And the very first church in Christian England was buried in the sand at Perranzabuloe until they put its bits in the Truro Museum. And St. Goram had a hermitage at Bodmin. And St. Colomb—Surrey, are you listening?"

"Of course. But need you do this to-day? We are not at school."

"I believe we are meant to go to school all our lives," said Peggy, suddenly wise.

"My dear girl——" Surrey raised himself on his elbow and looked at her. "If you begin in this way what will you be like by the time we reach Scotland?" he said.

"How should I know? But really, England is much more interesting if you know what it is composed of."

"The Colonel doesn't think so, anyway." Surrey lay down again; and Peggy laughed, watching Wylde walking the long line of sand with bent head and hands deep in his pockets.

"The Colonel has something to learn yet," she said.

"And so have you."

The tall spires and grey roofs and the green earthworks of Lescudjack Castle in Penzance were all made golden by the sun when the car climbed the hill behind it, and Peggy, who by absolute command had pro-

cured the Colonel for herself in the tonneau, leaned back for a last look at the Holy Headland and at St. Michael's Mount ringed round in breaking steel of the waves. Then she bent to the Colonel, and her eyes were mock-serious.

"Dear," she said, "Sir Humphry Davy was born in Penzance."

"Peggy," said the Colonel, "is there no cure for this disease? You never wanted to know things once."

Peggy led up to her point with skilful innocence.

"Don't you like to hear people talk about history and things? Mr. Wylde seldom talks anything else. Of course he doesn't know the town things that we know. But don't you like to hear him talk history and geography?"

"I can't say that I do. He is too intense. Too decisive—and incisive."

"Don't you like him . . . not even a little bit, dear?"

"Peggy, I——" Then before those eyes which he loved, the Colonel was amazingly indiscreet. "God forgive me, but I think I almost hate him," he said. "But I am going to be just to him. And you must be just too, little girl."

"Oh, yes," said Peggy heedlessly, and dropped back in her corner. "I don't think it is going to be very hard," she told herself. "Especially if I make Mr. Wylde talk all the history and statistics he knows before the Colonel."

And then there was silence in the tonneau. What the Colonel was thinking Peggy did not know; but all this wild Cornish land of mystery and Runic crosses and strange monuments did not draw her eyes as they were drawn by the broad shoulders of the man before her who changed brake and speed levers incessantly, with eyes and ear and brain strung tight and alert.

At Boleigh, near Penzance, was a Merry Maiden stone circle which they did not see. At St. Buryan's fine old church that cut the empty skyline for many

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miles was a broad beacon-seat of stone. At every yard of the way rose steep hills with bad undergrowth, loneliness where no trees grew and the scrubby hawthorn bushes were white with dust. The graveyards were imprisoned in stone, and the rugged narrow road had become a steepening lane. Beyond a finger-post to the Logan Rock a flash of sea showed; and then, quite suddenly, came a sharp curve and a dizzy drop which tested Wylde's nerve and skill as they had not been tested before. At his side Surrey sat motionless. But Wylde, glancing at him as they passed the vineries shut in the valley at the bottom, saw the shine of wet on his forehead and understood. The two in the tonneau could not know or see the danger. But Wylde was not blind to the knowledge that he could not have steeled himself to watch another man at the wheel just then. And this angered him more than a little. For Surrey Guest could make himself chain-mail to outside influences when he chose, and Wylde was never certain when he could control his own temper.

The four-mile road beyond the vineries led at last between an old woman's pig-sties, with little stony Sennen on the right, to a knot of plain houses, a coastguard's whitened track along the rim of the world—and Land's End.

Wylde took his pipe and went alone after lunch to see one of the grandest sights of England, where the huge stacked brown rocks of Land's End stood majestic in the sun. He swung down the steep ridges of grass and rock until the hotel and the people above were forgotten, and then he spread himself in the sun and looked out beyond the Longships Lighthouse far below where the water was pale green on ochre rocks and deepest royal blue around.

This was Land's End, the old Bolerium, the Promontory of Blood; and the Scillies were twenty-seven miles away across the distance with all the faery land of Lyonesse beneath the sea between. There was no sound in all this glorious untroubled world of sun and

tall jagged headlands that were linked along the sea in rocky heights, berry-brown or shining like steel, sliced into single stacks and columns, or rising in great hurled steps to the brown and rugged crests crowned by flat giant-stones.

Many things appealed to Wylde because of the value to be got out of them. Nature and beauty appealed to him because he could not help it. Beyond himself he had never loved anything but Nature, and he lay watching the sea now with dark eyes softened to a gentleness which the Colonel had never seen there . . . and which he did not see there, for at the sound of his voice on the ridge above Wylde sat up with his face hardening again. The Colonel came down stiffly, feeling with his stick, and he sat on the rocks beside Wylde.

"I have been talking to a man I know up there," said the Colonel, "and he told me what difficulty they were having in making out their motor-route. I told him that you could possibly give him a few hints. But I had no idea that it meant so much time and trouble."

"You have got to know what you want to see, and then to find out where it is, and then to map out the way to get to it. I reckon it does take some thinking. Do you want me to go now?"

Wylde's voice was cold. He watched a black destroyer slipping along the jagged bluff line with eyes as cold. For between himself and the Colonel there was no bond of friendship. There was only a keen relentless observation which the one man knew and resented savagely, and dislike and defiance and a sullen sense of injustice such as the Colonel guessed at but dimly.

"No, thank you. There is time enough. Peggy has gone round to see Whitesand Bay." The Colonel smiled. "She says Perkin Warbeck and somebody else landed there. I think you are giving her a taste for history. She never thought it worth while before."

"Everything is worth while," said Wylde tersely.

The Colonel watched a full-rigged ship swim out of haze into sunlight and swim back into haze again.

"Are you very sure of that?" he asked.

Wylde stood up, shaking his coat straight on the broad shoulders. This cery between earth and sea had lost its sweetness now.

"Why . . . I guess so," he said. "They reckoned the Wolf Rock Lighthouse out there worth while, though they could only spend thirty working weeks on it in seventy-seven years. That is the kind of spirit that made England . . . and that makes everything else. Maybe I'll go and have a look at the car before I have to see that man."

The Colonel followed slowly up the rough toffee-brown rocks laid in great slabs at every angle.

"He is quite as hard and unlovable as Smayne said," he told himself. "Well, well; if I give him his chance I can let the Manor and everything else go to Surrey with a clear conscience."

That afternoon Wylde had no thought for more than the pedals at his feet, the clicking brass throttle-control and the shifting change-speed-levers, for they ran through a ghostly land, a rough, most desolate land. Grey split rocks stood up among huge tossed stones and rocking boulders. Barren fields held little red ant-hills of soil at sparse intervals where the cottagers grew their vegetables; tin mines beneath the sea at Botallock and Levant left fringes of mining-plant along the steep cliffs, and the grey eternal stones were shaped into hamlets called Boswofas or Porthevas, or into cromlechs and cairns and quoits which men name British dwellings or Druidical remains.

The Lanyon Quoit near Morvah was hid by the hills. But great Chun Castle at St. Just and the mighty fallen cromlech near Zennor church were so many dumb reminders of days when the wild Britons crouched in the stony hills and the pale stones ran red with sacrifice throughout this Druid's Land.

To Wylde it was a reading back through numberless generations to the stone history-book of the past, and

for sake of it he forgave the ragged narrow way with its twists as sharp as elbow-joints and its grades which were as sharp. He spoke once to Surrey as the car rushed and climbed and swung and twisted.

"Heaven send there's not much more of this. I've burnt the foot-brake clean out."

"Only one other car has been ass enough to take this road," said Surrey. He laughed as they passed it. "There is a way round, then," he said. "I have made sure we'd end up in a back-yard every minute."

To Peggy the run down into St. Ives was a coming back to life from the graveyard of dead centuries. But one memory stayed with her of a hill-line beyond Zennor; of silent crests in squared piles, stones cold grey through the soft purple light, and of a solemn brooding sadness like that of a living thing which cannot die nor speak.

St. Ives was a gleam of flowers and soft airs and bright houses that overhung the sea in steps. In the bay-loop of Hayle the slender black-and-white fishing-boats rocked in water dredged with sunset, and the peaked Knill monument to a past mayor on the St. Ives hill stood sheer against a green sky. Dusty roads led down to Helston, and past the little stony town came tree-patched downs, bare heath and moss, and the scattered lonely village of the Lizard.

Surrey looked to the right where the fine Kynance cliffs took the dull red of the after-glow.

"This was a great place for smugglers," he said. "Did you notice Helston, Peggy? Nothing ever happens there but their Flora once a year. Then all the village takes hands and dances in and out of every house. They are built on purpose—of course I mean the people."

The strain of those rough roads and more than a little nervousness had wearied Peggy.

"I don't want to hear about anything more energetic than an arm-chair to-night," she said.

But after dinner the noise and heat of the hotel drove her out with a light wrap over her head. She looked

in the dim shadows for Surrey or the Colonel. Then alone she went through the little village, taking the steep winding way down to the sea. In the shadows between tall hedges that smelt of saltness and meadow-sweet a dark figure moved, speaking with Wylde's voice.

Peggy halted, saying suddenly what she did not intend to say.

"You drove very well to-day, Mr. Wylde. The Colonel says you are the best chauffeur he knows."

Wylde's temper flared out at tone and words.

"Is that the kind of approval you give your coachman up at the Manor?" he said. And then he came close, swiftly contrite. "I beg your pardon. I have no right to say what I think—to you."

Peggy had a funny little habit of pressing her palms together with her elbows straight. Wylde saw her do it now, and his face softened, for the hands were like a child's. And her voice came small as a child's.

"Indeed I didn't mean that. But . . . I wish you would."

Wylde looked from her to a little boat tossing with a red spark at the bows just beyond the edge of the lighthouse beams that were pushing out of the dusk. He did not understand the sudden change in this girl, and the bitter he had known had blurred his vision of all life.

"I guess you likely wouldn't care to know much that I think," he said, slowly. "But I'd give a good deal to know what you think at times. May I?"

Each was guarding the real self closely, jealously. But Wylde was playing for his own desires, and Peggy was playing for Surrey. And the sheeted ghost of the Marconi station on the headland seemed to mock at both in the pulsing light. Then Peggy said deliberately:

"You know so much more about England than I do . . . and I so really want to learn—if you will teach me."

CHAPTER IV

THE SERPENTINE CROSS

"SURREY, what came after Falmouth?"

From a far corner of the writing-room at King Arthur's Castle Hotel, Tintagel, Surrey answered her.

"The Deluge. Don't you remember that it rained baths and buckets?" Then his careless glance fell on the desk where Peggy was inking her fair arms and fingers over a great coloured map. "What are you doing that for?" he said, sharply. "It is Wylde's work."

"I don't see why it should be. We go over the road just as much as he does. Don't be so modest, Surrey."

Surrey flung aside his paper and crossed the room.

"I don't see why it should be done at all, except that it is a fad of the Colonel's. Why doesn't Wylde do it?"

"He is playing billiards with the Colonel and a man—two men. Stand out of the light—please. You have a very open countenance, but you're not transparent. I never realized Raleigh's wisdom in making a port of Falmouth till I went there. Did you?"

Surrey lifted the hand holding the pen, touching the soft smudged finger-tips.

"Look at this—and this," he said. "What a baby you are, Peggy! Go and wash."

His tone was lazily tender, protectively assured. He was so certain of her; of himself. For a moment Peggy recognized this in gladness. Then she pulled her hand away. For the Honourable Peggy had set

herself to drive a team down the twisting road of Time; and if the one man needed curb and martingale the other assuredly needed the spur.

"What came after Falmouth?" she said.

Surrey laughed. He seldom lost his temper with Peggy.

"Penrhyn," he said. "It was all slipping down a hill of foot-wide streets and smelling of red herrings. Then Truro again, and Mitchell, and New Quay. Anything more you want to know?"

Peggy drew her pen sheer across Cornwall.

"I remember," she said. "All twisting roads and cropping and honeysuckle and hills. We crossed from the Atlantic to the Channel in fourteen miles, Surrey."

"Put it the other way round," suggested Surrey. He mimicked the Colonel, laughing. "Peggy, Peggy, will you be accurate. My dear child, it is a fatal thing to have a nebulous mind."

"I don't think," said Peggy, drawing a cogged wheel round New Quay, "that my mind is exactly nebulous. It is concrete on certain points."

"For instance——?" Surrey sat on the table-edge, with the light struck full over his clear-skinned genial face, and his frank blue eyes seeking hers.

"The business in hand. Don't interrupt, please. St. Columb Minor, where a fierce baby with a curly head threw rose-leaves at us. And the next hamlet was full of cows, and there was a bright red and a bright brown sheep tied together in a cart. St. Columb Major——"

She reached for the ink, and Surrey noticed a small polished cross of red and green stone that swung from her bracelet.

"Serpentine work," he said, touching it. "Quite pretty. Did you get it here?"

"No." Peggy filled her pen, and fell to her work again. Her red under-lip was pouting and the colour was coming up her cheeks. "No. At the Lizard.

That is where they grow it, you know. I wish we had seen Castle Dinas. King Arthur had a hunting-lodge there. Oh . . . and the Merry Maidens—but they looked just like broken stone gate-posts.”

“The Colonel does like to make a little barbarian idol of you,” said Surrey.

He was smiling. Peggy’s colour mounted to her hair.

“He didn’t give it to me. Wadebridge—on the Camel. No. It was Mr. Wylde. Camelford—and we didn’t go to Arthur’s grave, and I know it never *was*.”

“Wylde.” The strong masculine tone brushed Peggy’s feminine webs aside. “Wylde gave it to you?”

“Why not? I don’t believe those pink and grey and yellow bunches of houses were ever Camelot—”

“If you want to know why not . . . it was an impertinence.”

“He wished to give me something to remember the Lizard by.”

“*He* wished! And you allowed it!”

“Why—” Peggy considered the gleaming stone. “I suppose I must have.”

Surrey was fully roused. For that honour which bound him evidently did not trouble Wylde, and this knowledge gave him the measure of the man.

“He must have that back, Peggy,” he said.

“What?” Peggy was startled to anger. “And you dare to call *him* impertinent.”

Surrey leaned across the table. The light was full on his strong white wrists and those blue eyes which held a cold anger new to her.

“He must have it back. How could you permit familiarity from a man like that? You have got to keep him in his place or you’ll be sorry for it.”

“Where is his place?” said Peggy, perversely.

“Not near yours,” said Surrey, sternly. “He and I know that, if you don’t.”

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penny," said Peggy. "I couldn't be rude to him for that money, Surrey."

"I do not ask that you should." Surrey held out his hand. "I will give it back if you will allow me," he said.

"Surrey . . . aren't you trying to be funnier than you can?"

"Peggy, you do not understand the situation in the very least. You have only had to do with gentlemen before, and this man is . . . totally different. I don't care for your talking history with him, but I suppose that can't be helped. But anything more must be checked . . . at once. Either I will do it or the Colonel will. But it must be done. He would tell you the same."

Peggy gasped. Into her careless cup of pleasure had suddenly been poured two powders which fizzed fiercely. Then her face changed. She unhooked the cross and put it meekly into Surrey's hands.

"But I don't want him to be angry with me," she whispered. "You will tell him that it was your doing, Surrey."

"I think you may trust me to tell him the truth," said Surrey, only. But when he was gone laughter swept the meekness from Peggy's face.

"If I know anything at all of Mr. Wylde he will wake Surrey up considerably over this," she said, contentedly.

Then she shook her head, slowly.

"Peggy, Peggy," she said, "you are a little beast. But Surrey *won't* be afraid of that man—and he has got to be."

Her mind ran back to Falmouth, with its voluptuous sweep of blue harbours and sloped cliffs and vivid flowers and palms; when Wylde had carried her to the top of the glorious Castle Drive, and quoted Carew's old saying that "Falmouth braggeth that a hundred sayle may anker within its circuit and no one of them see the other's top," and had told her of the packet-service of a hundred years ago, when the mail-

bags came in so many times stained with blood or drilled with shot.

"And Raleigh made it out of nothing," he said. "Just three fishing-shacks. But he saw the possibilities. My word. It is the greatest thing in the world to be able to see possibilities."

Peggy had looked down on the inner harbour wedged with boats of every size.

"Do you?" she had asked, half-fearing.

"Why . . ." Wylde answered her slowly. "I reckon I am seeing some right now."

Something which Peggy did not understand had changed Wylde's tone to her. She did not understand, but he did. One short five minutes had shown him the sweet, sound, innocent heart which The Honourable Peggy carried under her native pride and her wilful girlhood and her childish impetuositities.

And after she had left him he walked that narrow dark lane at the Lizard the brief night through, seeing the Lighthouse beams jerk long and strong to sea until the fingers of the dawn snuffed them out, and seeing the tall wires of the Marconi station stand like draped ghosts against the dark.

When the dawn was rosy pink and pearls against the sea-lip Wylde turned, swinging home with his long silent step. He did not put his thoughts into words on his lips; but his heart knew, surely, very surely, that The Honourable Peggy was going to be more than a circumstance in this game which he was bound to win, more than a ladder for him to make his careless use of, more than a lever with which to upset Surrey.

And through that long day he felt no weariness. For Peggy was beside him at Falmouth and again at New Quay, where they watched the caves and cliffs of pink and russet and saffron together, and watched the tossing foam on blue sea and the piled splendid houses against tall blue sky, and felt the broad sweep of the coast-line and the rush of the air in their spirits.

She was quoting broken scraps of Tennyson at

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Camelford, and refusing to believe that Sir Launcelot had once gone singing by that river. But she was singing herself along the little narrow road which slides through the piled slates at the Delabole Quarries, and again through the hamlet at the top, with the dark wind blowing out of the night, and Tintagel on the crested hills before them. Surrey sang with her many times along the ways. But Wylde never did. Those two well-trained clear voices could not knit into tune with his rough bass, and his bitter wit tempted him to take this truth as key-note of the whole.

Next morning Surrey dawdled down the zigzag path from the hotel; climbed again, and crossed the narrow ridge of rock that led into the Castle. On the very crest of the wide grassy cliff within he found Peggy, with all the sweet winds blowing round her and a copy of old Mallory in her lap.

But Peggy had not read a word in this last hour for listening to all that wide sea and mouldered ruins and wandering breeze could tell her. The hill-top was rough grass and sun and stillness. A few sheep strayed across the stones of Arthur's Seat and the mounds where the dead of unknown days were folded within a low broken wall of stone. The smudged foundations of a chapel stretched beyond her, carrying yet some deep-scored carving on the altar-stone. The slates of the one tall castle-side were strong and thick yet, and the defence-holes stared squarely past her to the sea. Far below the combers ran blue and splendid, linking white arms idly along the rocks and the deep caves which hinted at past smuggling as they had hinted all the way round the coast from Hastings.

Peggy had pulled a handful of wide-eyed daisies and strung them into a wreath to hang about the headstone of a sunken grave. She looked up seriously as Surrey dropped on the grass beside her.

"When the babe rolled in flame to Merlin's feet in that big cave below where the yellow sand is, Merlin should have flung him back into the sea," she said.

"If he was truly a wizard—and I will believe he was—he must have known all that Arthur would have to suffer."

"He might have been thinking more of the world than of the man."

"No man should be sacrificed for another," said Peggy.

"It's often done, though," said Surrey, cheerfully.

And then Peggy's heart gave a sudden thump, and stood still. Yes, it was often done. And it would be done again if her skill were equal to her will.

"That is where the ancient people of the Castle are buried to," she said.

"To what?"

"Nothing. Just *to*. The little caretaker told me so. I don't think they could have been buried without that *to*. It is so Cornish. And these ruins are not worn away. They must have been perfectly good until Edward the First fought David of Wales here, and perfectly bad ever since, for we don't wear away in Cornwall. She told me that, too. And, while I remember it, Surrey, you will kindly begin every sentence with 'Please' while you are here, even if you are informing a man that you are going to knock him down. It is as frequent as 'Cornwall County Police' or 'Devon Constabulary' or church-spires and clotted cream and saffron-cakes and cider."

"Do you know anything more?" asked Surrey, lazily.

"No."

Surrey sat up.

"That's the first time in my life I've ever heard you own it," he said.

"I didn't own it. I only wanted to give you a shock." She held out her wrist. "I thought perhaps you'd forgotten to speak to Mr. Wylde," she said. "And he might ask me if I have lost it."

"I didn't see Wylde last night," said Surrey, calmly. "I'll tell him to-day."

And then Peggy glanced up and saw Wylde coming over the hill toward them. She pinched Surrey's hand sharply.

"Don't tell him while I'm here," she said.

"My dear girl! Yes? Did you want me, Wylde?"

"Major Thorpe is below," said Wylde, coolly.

"He wants to speak to you."

Surrey sprang up, holding his hand to Peggy.

"Let me help you up," he said. And Peggy, halting a moment between the two, put her hand into Surrey's and went down the hill with him.

A few minutes later Wylde shut one of those faded daisies from the chain into his pocket-book. Then he flung himself on the rough grass, looking out to the sea and letting pictures of Peggy float across his brain-sight.

Peggy here on the Castle cliff with a scarlet and purple sunset splendid behind her and the lights of Hartland Point and Trevoze Head making two bright tips to the long-horned coast-line. Peggy on the wet yellow sand of Merlin's Cave beneath the Castle, putting into eager words the misty legends of chivalry. Peggy with her young dignity and girlish neck and arms moving through the long drawing-room in that Honourable Peggy manner which hurt him while he smiled at it. Peggy . . . and again Peggy. These last three days were full of her here among the twisted legends and the dreams of old Tintagel.

Later Surrey came back over the hill and stood beside him, watching also a little fishing-smack dipping by on its crumpled road to Wales. Wylde did not move. He knew that Surrey Guest had not sought him out of friendship, and he had no intent to ask what else he had come for.

Surrey flicked away his cigar-ash and spoke. His position was not particularly tenable and it was certain to be unpleasant. But he believed that he had come for Peggy's sake just as surely as she believed that she had sent him for his own.

"You gave Miss Bouchier a trinket at the Lizard," he said.

"Have you come to bring it back?" said Wylde, idly.

"Yes."

Wylde had none of Surrey's grace, but he was on his feet fully as swiftly as the other man could have been, and for a moment the fury in his veins blocked his speech. Surrey did not wait.

"I have come to you as I would to any other honourable man," he said. "If I have made a mistake I will apologize as soon as I find it out."

Wylde did not answer. This man had a manner of presenting insults with the corners so rounded that there was nothing left to grip at.

"The Colonel gave us both very unequivocal directions at Netley," said Surrey. "Of course we both mean to abide by them. But I consider this rather a breach of faith myself."

He held out the little Serpentine Cross, and the red in Wylde's face deepened painfully. Already a thing which Peggy had worn meant much to him.

"It was of no value," he said, and thereby lost control of the situation.

"Don't you think the Colonel might consider it just about the value of a man's idea of honour?"

Wylde burst out with a great oath, and his hands shut up.

"If you mean to insult me——" he cried.

"I can't insult you unless you insult yourself by ignoring the Colonel's wishes."

Wylde's spear had splintered on the chain-mail again. He knew this for deliberately-intended insult, and he knew that there was no use saying so.

"Did Miss Bouchier ask you to give this back to me?" he demanded.

"No. I reminded her that in England gentlemen do not give jewellery to ladies whom they know so slightly as you know her. On the Continent and in Canada it is probably different. Here such a thing might give rise to future misconstruction. And so

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... as gentlemen don't do it, of course you will not. . . ."

Wylde had gone very white. He appreciated the smooth insolence with which the thing had been done; but his hate of this man was something alive now, and time would not kill it. He held out his hand silently; took the cross and fastened it on his watch-chain, noting the sudden tightening of Surrey's lips. It was very far from checkmate; but it was a neat and effective check, for Peggy would not forget Surrey Guest's interference as long as she saw it there.

Surrey surprised Peggy a little later on the stairs.

"Wylde is wearing that trinket on his watch-chain now, Peggy," he said. "Not very good taste, but he can't be blamed for that. I am glad he doesn't wear rings, though. They would not suit his hands."

Before Peggy's eyes Surrey's serene face was turning all manner of shapes.

"He—took it back? And . . . he didn't hit you?"

"My dear girl! Of course he took it back. And you won't find that he is angry with you, either."

He went on, and Peggy brushed invisible webs off her face.

"Peggy," she said, "it wouldn't be safe for you to go No Trumps with five covered aces."

It was only Wylde who showed embarrassment when they met again, for Peggy had been trained in a different school. And when chance and a little ingenuity put her in the tonneau with him on the day they left Tintagel she swiftly made him forget that the world held anything but a keen interest in her bright face and vivid actions and her eager chatter.

"There is a scrap of ruin of that hill where the Knights of the Round Table used to meet," she said.

"St. Nectan's Well, I think. He was the saint who carried his head about under his arm until somebody built a chapel at Hartland Point to bury him in. And we really should have gone to Hartland and Clovelly, for I'm always afraid Clovelly will slide into the sea

some day if it isn't looked after, and then one of the loveliest little surprises on earth will be lost. And wild Will Cary lived at Clovelly Court, you know, and Amyas Leigh is buried in the Northam Church near Bideford. He used to bathe on the Pebble Ridge at Westward Ho! And the pebbles would be a double armful for me. Not a bit like the little flat stones at Tintagel, and yet the same sea makes them both."

"It was no use going there when you all knew the place. I guess that must be Boscastle Priory Church all alone on the hill. Where is the village?"

"Boscastle is nearly as big a surprise as Clovelly," said Peggy. "But it makes one think of a curious sea-weed or a speckled toad. It—the real it—squats down in those brown rocks with the houses on the hill above and the boats and big ropes and nets all round it in the rocks and the sea outside. I can't think why it does it, for it must be very uncomfortable."

Boscastle Bridge was a green and brown smudge sunk in shadow. Boscastle Village was a red and white smudge flung in sunlight. And from both the white road climbed steeply up to wide expanse of sky and downs with Lundy island on horizon where Amyas Leigh went blind and the Spanish Don waits him yet in his ship at the sea-bottom. Where five roads met Surrey chose the way that led to Launceston, and Wylde put the guide-book into the Colonel's hand.

"I guess it's very near a straight run," he said. "But this makes sure."

"You seldom use the book," said the Colonel, turning round.

"I learn up each day's trail before I take it," said Wylde, and dropped back and talked again to Peggy.

The downs held a sense of free air flowing under grey skies. Rough Tor grew raggedly nearer. Brown Willy reared his huge smooth head and slowly fell behind. Haliworthy smelt of hay and roses, and at last, by the old gate of Launceston Castle, with

THE SERPENTINE CROSS

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memory of a glorious run behind them, Surrey stopped.

Once Launceston was called Dunheved, which means a city on a hill-top. It was crowned by a Norman Castle and made powerful by the Priory of Warelwast, the blind bishop. Now the thick Norman Keep crumbles in its armour of ivy; the way up to its dungeon-ruins is a flower-garden, and the Priory is gone. A portion of the town wall is left, and one old gate which let the car through into Devon again, where strong winds blew across the moors, and ranges rose long and rugged, with rough knobs and hollows breaking on them as the eye drew nearer. The road tied a half-loop round little Bridstow and lifted higher until Yes Tor and Cosdon showed their massive heads. Small Okehampton had a Castle of the Conqueror's day, and many Saxon ruins before that.

"And John Oxenham lived here," said Wylde.

"And the man who was its mayor in 1673 has to carry water in it from Cranmere every night in a thimble with a hole in it. Perhaps the men from the Artillery Camps know him."

"How he must hate that hill," said Peggy, watching the smooth humped shoulders of Yes Tor. "Just as Grenville's 'Men of Bideford in Devon' must have loved to remember it when they were dying on the little *Revenge*."

Bow was a straggling village of thatch. Cocklestone a small duplicate with a fine Runic Cross. Crediton was plain and broad and ordinary. And then came steep hills, taking all Surrey's skill at the change-levers, and a dizzy run along a mountain-flank with half Devon stretched in blue haze far below. And then the red road wound down through a delicate mist of trees, and Peggy lifted her face to them.

"They are just like the loveliest statues in green motor-veils," she said. "And isn't there a hush? Even the Blue Bird isn't singing."

"A land where it is always afternoon," quoted

Wylde. But he was watching the changing lights on her face.

Past Bickleigh Bridge over the fair Exe river, and past the fine old Church of St. Paul's the car ran into Tiverton and halted at the post office for the letters which it was Wylde's work to have forwarded.

The Colonel had business which would keep him in Tiverton for the night; but a little later he strayed into the hotel-garage and found Wylde with coat off and sleeves rolled up gouging flecks of stone and flint out of the solid rubber of a back tyre.

At the Colonel's exclamation Wylde looked up. Then he held half-inch cut apart with the instrument and dropped in solution deliberately.

"Where is Surrey?" said the Colonel.

"He has gone with Miss Bouchier to find witches and buy lace. Tiverton is famous for them both," said Wylde.

"He should have done this if it had to be done," said the Colonel. "But I thought that garaging a car included it."

"Not this car." Wylde straightened, rubbing the sticky stuff off his blackened hands. "I always like to do it right away when I come in. I've taken on the work of a chauffeur, you see."

"So has Surrey. Does he never do it?"

"I guess . . ." Wylde considered. "He did it once. But I reckon it is necessary most nights. He doesn't. That is all."

He fell to work again, and for a little space the Colonel watched the strong quick hands in silence. He had not forgotten his own responsibility and his own share in the forming of this man's life, and Wylde had begun to attract him even while he yet repelled.

"Is it necessary?" he asked.

"Why . . . we've come about a thousand miles without a puncture, and some of the roads have been brutal." Wylde jacked the wheel down and put on his coat. "I don't want to handle a sweeter running

car," he said. "Her differential gear is nearly perfect. A fellow tried to call me a liar the other day because I said she was a two-cylinder. You would think she was a four from the sound, wouldn't you?"

"Would you?" said the Colonel, vaguely. "I am sure I don't know. I hadn't thought you cared for these things, Wylde."

"I reckon I care for most things that take some sweating to get hold of," said Wylde, and the Colonel carried that remark out to the warm air which did not smell of petrol and solution and Wylde's dirty pipe.

He found Peggy in the street before a fifteenth-century stone building, sunk partly below the pavement and carrying worn figures still in its niches. Among the rubbed tracery and corbels she was picking out an inscription, word by word. "Pray for the soul of Joan and John Greenway," she read, and then the Colonel came behind her.

"Did you find any witches?" he asked.

"No. Unless there are any here. Come and see. These the Greenway Almshouses."

The Colonel disbursed several shillings within the ancient tick-walled court where they learnt from a rheumy-~~ed~~ old man that the houses were portioned off for widows, bachelors and married people.

"Where do the spinsters go?" demanded Peggy.

"They don't do no spinning in thicky place," he answered her. "Only the lace-making, ma'am."

"Let it be a lesson to you, Peggy," said the Colonel.

"There is no place for spinsters in this world." Peggy shivered as they came out to the quiet street again.

"Don't call that place in the world," she said. "Fancy waiting in an almshouse to die! No, don't fancy it. Think of something else. Think of those fluffy kittens we saw in a barn window with yellow straw behind them, and of how angry Surrey was when the dog wouldn't get out of the way. Certainly an unusual number of dogs do seem to prefer to do

their thinking in the middle of the road. And have you noticed that the sheep round Tiverton are chained in couples? I wouldn't care to be any Devonshire animal but a horse. Those brass bosses all over them make them shine like two Solomons in all their glories."

"When Tiverton was burnt in seventeen something," said the Colonel, "I think there was nothing left but these almshouses, and the church with the Greenway Chapel, and Old Blundel School, which we'll pass in the morning."

"Jan Ridd went to school there," said Peggy, and she called a halt before it next day while she read the inscription and the date of 1604 cut in the stone above the arch where the ivy dropped to half-hide the long low buildings beyond.

Beyond sign-posts presenting such names as Upplowman, Crazeplowman and Ash Thomas the tall monument to Wellington lifted itself on a hill. The road slid past the little White Ball Inn to Somerset again, and the straggling village of Wellington, and historical Taunton with its statted spires and towers.

Here Peggy bought antiques at a fine old black-and-white gable house dated 1578, and Wylde went down alone to the great Hall, made terrible for ever by Jeffreys' "Bloody Assizes" after Sedgemoor; when all the road from Taunton into Bridgewater was pricked out with gibbets, and every cross-way and market-place was awful with its dead.

In the Sedgemoor marshes where the Tone runs to meet the Parret was once Alfred's Isle of Athelney, from whence he came to slay Guthrum and his Danes in the Berkshire Vale of the White Horse. All the land was Wessex then, with the Roman Fosseway ripped sheer through it from Exeter to Bath and beyond it. A mighty road; a road of massive cubes of stone in solid causeways that never turned aside for river, marsh or forest; a road down which trod Roman legions and the feet of Saxon, of Norman and of Dane. At Street the Pomparles Bridge gave double assertion

that the road beneath the wheel was that very Roman road. Peggy sighed softly.

"Wordsworth and Coleridge lived at Nether Stowey and Alfoxden not very far from here," she said. "Doesn't that sound banal when we are so near to Glastonbury?"

Far ahead red and white cliffs had lifted and gone again in the misty distance. Then, above the trees, St. Michael's Tower on Tor Hill rocked into sight and stayed here. And after that the red roofs of Glastonbury lay in the hollow like the true Well of Blood from the Chalice brought by Joseph of Arimathea. Peggy spoke once only as they hummed down into the town.

"I feel as if all poetry and fairy-stories had come true," she said. And Wylde answered her abruptly.

"That is only for those who could find the San Greal," he said.

Once the half of Somerset was a ring of Tors set in the marshes where the waters from the Bristol Channel spread their salt. Still round Atkelay the farmers drain the land by long ditches, and still the island word clings to Beckery and to Meare—and to Avalon. It is told very simply how Joseph of Arimathea came to Britain to preach of Christ, and how Arvaragus the Briton gave to him and his men the twelve hides of land which now are Glastonbury. It is told how Joseph rested on Weary-All Hill, and how the Holy Thorn grew from the staff he thrust into the earth. And it is told how he buried the Cup of the Last Supper on Chalice Hill, where the spring-water runs iron-red, blood-red to this day.

And it is told how Joseph built a church from the wattles of the marsh—"A little lonely church, in days of yore," and how he dedicated it to Mary, and lived near with his men as hermits, workers, teachers. And from that wattled church it is said that the Church of England sprang, and bloomed, white and undefiled, as the Holy Thorn at Christmas time. St. Patrick was perhaps born at Glastonbury, and after his long

wandering life found rest with Joseph there beneath the altar of the ancient church. In about 924 Dunstan became its abbot. He was a short twenty years old, and he lived in a cell seven feet square and did wonderful things with vellum, paint and brass, and more wonderful things with England. He made the clergy monks, built schools and abbeys, forced the fleet to sail round England once a year, and King Edgar to traverse it from end to end.

Perhaps to many the legend that Arthur and Queen Guinevere lie there means most of all. But it did not mean most to Wylde when he came through the turnstile on to holy ground and saw the ruins of St. Joseph's Chapel across the green sward, with its Norman Arch of deep-set carvings and its tall roofless walls. As he passed the arch and the broken steps, worn by so many feet, he saw Peggy standing among the wrecked columns below, and a something which was not the saint in him made him bare his head and take his reward from Peggy's eyes.

"I wanted you to do that," she said. "For this truly is a church still, the 'elder church' of all England. Doesn't it seem strange to think it was so small that it could go inside this, and so light that it needed no foundation."

"I reckon itself was the foundation. It was the pure religion, wasn't it? Long before Popes and penances and all the other ways by which men try to escape their deservings." He turned, walking with her across the wide lawns sunk between the stretches of arches with their grass-tufted tops and the tall broken nave and side-aisles of the later greater church. "Where are the others?" he asked.

"They went on to see the kitchen. You remember that funny old octagonal building near the road? But—I wanted to stay here."

She trod beside him in silence. Each day she made new plans for the utter annihilation of Wylde, and each day the scaffolding of these plans fell down, bruising Peggy herself in the ruins. She had set out

to show the Colonel that Wylde was impertinent. She had ended on unexpectedly intimate terms with a man who was not anything of the sort. She had attempted to enrage the Colonel with Wylde's eagerness concerning all lives and all men. The Colonel slid out by side-doors and French windows, and left her to weather the flood. She had sent Surrey on an errand of insult to Wylde in the sure and certain belief that Wylde would shake some of the most vital tenets of his manhood into him. Wylde had pocketed the insult—priced at one shilling and a penny half-penny—and wore it on his watch-chain shamelessly. Wylde was dishonourable. He had few graces of mind, and none of body, and—he attracted her, against her will; rousing in her, slowly, a desperation which was going to precipitate into deliberate cruelty.

This last was shaping in her mind now as she walked by Wylde. But she left it for him to speak.

Behind the grey majestic wreck sunlight fell weakly on ridged lines of excavations, on tall trees and pallid skies. Here, in days misty and far-off as the skies, Arthur had found death in the Island Valley of Avalon "to heal him of his grievous wound." Here, Henry the Second sought the coffins of the King and Guinevere and laid them with pomp before the High Altar. Here the grass, growing smooth and greenly, covers and hides them, that they may not hear the tread of unknown generations passing through the centuries.

"Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of,"

quoted Wylde, with that sudden deep note in his voice that always made Peggy jump. He looked at her. "I don't believe that," he said. "Do you?"

"I—I—yes, of course," said Peggy.

"I reckon that ought to simplify life," said Wylde, musingly.

"I—don't know. I—I am afraid it doesn't." She plunged at side-issues to escape her thoughts. For

she did not desire that any one should pray for Wylde's soul until she had done with him.

"I am glad we are to stay a whole day here," she said. "There is a prehistoric village at Godney Marsh, and a Lake Village at Meare which is prehistoric. It is hundreds of years B.C., anyhow. And the devil is weighing a human soul against the world on the front of the Tower on Tor Hill. And did you know that the Old Wells way is a truly British road?"

"Do you expect to see all that in one day?" demanded the Colonel, behind her. "For I am going to take you to the Tithe Barn and the Old George Inn, Peggy."

Peggy turned with a swift gasp of relief. It had been so gauche of Wylde to ask her if she was religious.

"Darling," she said, "I saw the Old George Inn down the street. It is a fifteenth-century exposition of the twopenny-coloured, and there is a house of the penny-plain type beside it. No, you needn't buy me postcards here. I won't even try to take a photograph. I am just going to remember those broken arches and misty skies and that one lark pouring all his music down over them."

The Mendip Hills and the Cheddar Ranges called them by dusty roads and filmy distances to Wells Cathedral, set like a pearl among the green waters of its closes. One dove-like puff of smoke hung above its tall tower as Wylde first looked at it; then floated across the shorn-off spire like a rising prayer. This fancy walked with him into the Cathedral itself, and there it left him. For to him these pale great loops and arches, majestic, strange, white and wonderful, seemed more the offspring of some strong cold tortuous brain than the warm evolution from man's supplicating heart.

But the charm of the cathedral city came to him among the ancient walls and gates and cloisters; by the Bishop's Palace beyond the moated lawns, and

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round the bastioned side-entrances. And then Peggy jarred all peace and reverence out of him in a sudden upspringing of her will against his.

He came out to the car to find her with the open contour-book. She smiled, with just a gleam of little white teeth like a baby's.

"I am looking up the road to Bath," she explained. "Surrey says we were going to Bristol, but I don't want to go to Bristol."

Wylde did. And he said so, quite plainly and directly. Peggy laughed.

"But it is quite impossible," she said. "Chatterton left his curse to Bristol, and, unfortunately, I have been compelled to do the same. I spent a winter there with two old aunts, and if I had known more than one curse they should have had that too."

"There is a twelfth-century church with a leaning tower——" began Wylde.

"I have lunched on top of the Tower of Pisa," said Peggy. "But not even to drink the best Turkish coffee ever made would I go to the top of that twelfth-century church, Mr. Wylde."

"Little girl," said the Colonel, "you haven't been asked. Wylde can go to Bristol and join us later in Bath. How would that do, Wylde?"

Wylde's face lit with a glow that angered Peggy. She was very sure that she did not want him. But she was equally sure that this man from the trackless ranges and the far-blowing winds had no right to reach eager hands towards an hour of liberty.

"Thank you," said Wylde. "I guess if I go right along to Bristol now I could meet you in Bath tomorrow night. Will that suit?"

"You can leave it until the morning after," said the Colonel. And as the car climbed among the bracken and moorland of the Mendip Hills Peggy knew very certainly that Wylde would leave it until the morning after.

Past the very old church-spire at High Littleton, past the four weathercocks on Marksberry Church and

the lodges and the lines of glorious trees Peggy strengthened her newest decision with struts of spite and beams of temper. All her life men had spoiled and pampered Peggy, and that one such as Wylde should dare—should dare— Then she nodded her head.

"Never mind," she said. "The worse-tempered he is the better it will be—afterwards."

"What's that?" asked Surrey. "Here's Bath, Peggy. But you can see it about three miles before you get to it."

Along its tiers of hills, among its clustered trees Bath beckoned them as they wound down, round the flanks of many hills to the town. There was a bomb-shell waiting Surrey in Bath, but he did not guess at it when he took Peggy through the Pump-room and the walks and into the old dingy Abbey where each ghost buried on that spot since the first seventeenth-century building seemed to hang in the thick dull air.

Wylde's absence was a definite relief to Surrey. He had ceased to feel rivalry when he consigned Wylde to a lower plane and kept him there with courteous tolerant contempt. But the man's intimacy with Peggy galled and disgusted him, and he afterward regretted that passage of arms on Tintagel hill.

"The Colonel doesn't understand," he told himself. "You can't treat those kind of fellows as equals. They take liberties at once. And one has no right to level class-distinctions. It is the most vital foundation of our constitution. I made a mistake in treating Wylde as an equal over that business. He was impertinent, and he should have been told so."

Peggy was flitting up and down the length of the Abbey, looking at the tasteless smudged memorials with their Latin ornate inscriptions to the forgotten dead.

"I believe that every one who knew they were going to die must have rushed here with their last gasp so as to be buried in Bath," she said. "I never saw so

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many monuments on one set of walls—and all so hideous.”

“These walls adorned with monument and bust
Show how Bath waters serve to lay the dust,”

quoted Surrey. “Garrick’s epitaph to Quin is the best thing here.” He halted before the vigorous marble face, reading the first line. “The tongue that set the table in a roar. . . . We have a fellow something like that in our mess. What do you think of that pompous inscription to Beau Nash?”

“I like his set of rules in the Pump-room better,” said Peggy. “Oh, must we go in? I am just loving Bath, Surrey.”

Surrey’s blue eyes were tenderly protective.

“I can’t think why girls always like to live on the knife-edges of love or hate,” he said. “I shouldn’t wonder if you said ‘I hate Bath’ just as vehemently before you left it.”

That very night Fate sealed truth to Surrey’s words. This was after dinner, when Peggy was wedged into a cushioned curtained alcove in a lounge at the Empire, with Surrey on one side and the girl from Montana on the other. The girl from Montana had more jewels and less education than any one in the room. But, quite innocently and effectively, she routed old Lady Thrale when all Peggy’s light and well-aimed artillery had failed completely.

Lady Thrale had known Peggy from infancy, and she would not take the girl’s pretty apologies and regrets, even when aided by Surrey’s.

“ . . . But I truly truly can’t play Bridge to-night,” said Peggy. “I feel like cheating, and I have to resist those symptoms. They are not good for me.”

“Bridge?” said the girl from Montana. “My; I dropped a thousand dollars at Bridge in Paris one night. Ever been to Paris? We-el, I guess if you owned any blushes you’d hang them out over there. My-y sakes!”

Surrey began to choke. Peggy watched Lady Thrale stiffening audibly.

"Americans like Paris as a rule," she said.

"I never saw anything that looked as if it belonged to a rule," said the girl, reflectively. "No, I guess I'm not stuck on Paris. I enjoy Bath better, though they do charge an almighty lot for a wash. And then they omitted to give me the soap. I guess I'll take some in my pocket next time, though it is not easy to get up a lather in that hard water. And I do like a good lather, don't you?"

Surrey fled precipitately through the curtains. Lady Thrale was creaking with emotion.

"I am waiting, Peggy," she said.

"Sakes, let me come instead," cried the girl from Montana. "I want to get back some of that thousand dollars."

And then Lady Thrale went away—quickly. The girl from Montana dropped back among the cushions, looking critically at Peggy.

"Say; I do admire you," she said. "You are real elegant, and yet I guess it costs twice as much to dress me. That fellow who was here just now is a soldier. 'Well,' I said to him, 'I guess you're too lovely to stand up and be shot at or have sharp things poked into you.' And he said that it likely might be the best thing he could do. I guess he was funning, though. My; here is your popper coming. I am scared of your popper. He does look like a foreign royalty pretending to be a gentleman. I'm off."

She disappeared as the Colonel sat himself down by Peggy, but it was some minutes before Peggy could give him the explanation he desired. Then he smiled, shaking his head.

"She certainly is the prettiest thing I've seen this year," he said. "And Surrey seems to think so, too."

"I hate second-class Americans," said Peggy, viciously.

"Well, of course, she is no more a typical American than Wylde is a typical Canadian. And one can forgive much to a girl when she is young and pretty."

He hesitated. "How do you like Wylde, little girl?" he asked.

"I don't like him. I—I don't think he would be honest, dear."

"And that is the only virtue which really matters," said the Colonel. "We must not deny it to Wylde without good proof. And he is—is a fine fellow in many ways."

"But you don't like him," breathed Peggy.

"No," said the Colonel, slowly. "No." Then: "I have something to tell you from Surrey, Peggy. I would not let him tell you himself."

"Surrey? He was here just now."

"Yes. His regiment is ordered to India, Peggy, and he joins it in September. I have suggested to him that he should try to exchange into a native regiment. There are often little skirmishes along the Frontiers, and it would give him more chance of promotion. Besides, it would be cheaper if——"

"Ah, don't," said Peggy, suddenly choked.

The Colonel stirred restlessly. Then he looked away.

"Surrey has got to take a grip on his life," he said.

"As the two stand now Wylde is the better man, Peggy. He is the kind of stuff which a nation must use if it means to build for a sound future. And—just at present—Surrey is not."

CHAPTER V

'THE HONOURABLE PEGGY'

THROUGH the next two days Bath was a haunted place to Peggy. A place dull with memories of David, patron saint of Wales, who fought a battle here in A.D. 520. Of Roman emperors whose statues looked down on the yellow cold waters of their ancient bathing-places, where broken columns, figures and bits of a mighty Sun-god told of past glories, and the great waste of dim light, black pipes and pavements hollowed by Roman feet told of a day dead, dead, and its story with it. The memory of powdered hooped ladies in sedan-chairs, come to be painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence while he was yet a boy, walked with her in the enclosure without the Grand Pump Room; and within, where people sat to drink the yellow waters, Chatham, Sir Sidney Smith and Moore seemed to move with others, proving to her, mercilessly, unfailingly, that a man must wake and do the thing that he is born for; must work out his salvation or be utterly condemned.

Wylde took her along the North and South Parades one morning, showing her where Nelson had lived; where Coleridge stayed, and Chesterfield and Scott; where Sir Lucius O'Trigger swaggered and Mrs. Malaprop passed in her Bath chair.

"For Sheridan has made them as real as Goldsmith and Landor and Wordsworth," he said. And then he laughed. "Did you read Beau Nash's list of rules in the Pump Room corridor?" he asked. "I think they tickled me more than anything at all. 'Gentlemen are not supposed to ask any but ladies to the balls—except those who have none of their acquaintance.' And 'All whisperers of lies and scandal to be

accounted the authors of it.' That is not quite rightly quoted, but it's the best bit of horse-sense I know."

"I wonder if there is anything you don't know?" said Peggy, sharply.

Wylde drew back. His face changed.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I had forgotten that England does not mean as much to you as it does to me."

"You have no right to say that. I am English."

"Perhaps that's why," said Wylde. But he gave no explanation, and she was too proud to ask it.

And yet she guessed quite clearly at his meaning. Every great man leaves his blessing to the next man who can take it. His blessing of virile life; of courage; of that power to grasp at the essentials, though the way lies through blood and sweat and pain. Wylde accounted all these men his heritage and the lesson they could teach to him his right. He wrested meaning and effect out of everything, and he would not let life run by on idle feet. He had frightened her more than once; often he tired her, yet drew her interest again as a bird draws a snake. Sometimes he angered her, as now.

"You will never let things go," she cried. "It is such bad form to make life so—so important. I have told you so before."

"You will not have to tell me again," said Wylde gravely. "And you are doing your country an injustice. It has bred the finest men in the world and it is breeding them still. And if I have learnt not to let things go it is they who have helped to teach me."

To justify her sudden fit of temper Peggy danced half the night with Surrey and cried the other half solely because Surrey would not descend to that bad form which she had so condemned in Wylde.

"My dear girl," he told her, "the leopard can't change his spots, and I can't learn to like history and messing round with that car as Wylde does." Then his big genial laugh rang out suddenly. "I ran the Colonel and some fellows out to Corston this morn-

ing," he said. "They wanted to see the farmhouse where Southey went to school. Gad, they were a good deal nearer seeing Southey himself if they'd only known it. I'd put too much oil in the petrol-tank, and if Wylde hadn't drawn some off just before we got to the hill it would have jerked through the air-hole into the silencer, and then I think things would have happened."

"How can you let that man know more than you do?" cried Peggy.

"Well, he likes it and I don't. And he'll never play polo. I hope I'll be able to run a pony in India. They have ripping horseflesh out there, but it's so confoundedly expensive." He stood up, offering his arm. "The next dance," he said, "and I'm engaged to the girl from Montana. She is a pearl, Peggy. No fellow could feel dull with her."

A few weeks back Peggy had told the Colonel that she would always have the wit to laugh at herself. Now her laugh had more of the bitter in it than she cared to realize. Her keen desires, the love which she believed so strong, the matters which had seemed of such importance began to savour of the ridiculous, of hysterical extravagance under Surrey's easy careless touch. After all, perhaps it did not matter. There was always plenty of time to face a thing when it came near, and there was not any doubt that, be it what it might, Surrey would face it with courage. But would that be his only weapon?

She cried herself into a state of headache which made her heavy-eyed and silent when the car climbed up through Box next day, leaving a glory of green and blue hills and a mist-sunk valley behind, and running through the yellow stone quarries to the white perfect roads of Wiltshire. A patch of narrow street and grey stone thatched houses flung the name of Pickwick at them, bringing a memory of galloping horses and swaying red-coated postilions, and of Mr. Pickwick's round face at the coach window as he rattled by on his visit to Bath.

Past big cheerful Chippenham the road lay straight away to Malmesbury. Once Wylde would have turned aside to lovely little Lacock, which told its history in its ancient nunnery and fifteenth-century houses. Now he said nothing more than was strictly necessary until he swung the car past a ruined church and gate and stopped before the wall of Malmesbury Abbey.

Peggy rallied her powers as they passed through the magnificent South Porch with its eight carved arches.

"It makes the door look like a wee wee face inside a very big bonnet," she said. "I know something about Malmesbury Abbey. The first organ ever known was built and played on here in the seventh century. And a monk here made the first flying-machine in the reign of Edward the Confessor. He flew over the tower and fell and broke his legs. There's the verger. I'm going to talk to him, but the rest of you can go out into the ruins if you like."

She found them later on the grass in the hot sunshine. The men were smoking and looking across the little valley to the slopes where vines had once wreathed along the sky-line and the brown bare-footed monks had brought down the great purple clusters to the winepress. Beside them rose broken columns and great arches, and Peggy flung herself down near the Colonel.

"I know what you're thinking," she said, and tweaked his ear as she sang it—

"Peggy is dead, God rest her bier.
How I loved her forty years syne.
The Montana girl's married, and I sit here,
Hearty and hale at seventy year,
Dipping my nose in the Malmesbury wine."

"It was Gascony," said Surrey, with a sudden jerk of memory.

"It is Malmesbury to-day. It couldn't help it when the very grapes that the Duke of Clarence was drowned in a butt of were grown on that hill."

"He was drowned in wine according to the legend. Peggy, Peggy, will you be accurate?" said the Colonel.

"Dearest, I couldn't. I am so *sick* of accuracy. Now, listen to a story. I have just got it hot from the verger. King Athelstan left eight hundred acres of land to some people here more than a thousand years ago. I saw his mouldy old tomb inside just now. And every New Year's Day the mayor gives seisin to the descendants of those people by putting a sod on their breasts and a stick on their backs and saying—'Turf and stick I give to thee, The same as King Athelstan give to me.' You must say give twice, I believe. It is like the Cornish 'to.'"

Wylde was watching her stealthily. These last days had scored a change in Peggy. She was feeling more, much more than she cared to show, and he had no clue to the trouble in her heart. And, because he did not know of Surrey's future, he was letting a daring unwarrantable hope grow up within him. His breath came short, and he jerked up little grass-tufts with strong rough fingers. For if The Honourable Peggy had hurt him because his brief flight of liberty had hurt her, then there would be a day in the wonderful future which would pay for all the days that were past.

The lovely evening hung about them all along the road to Tetbury, through sleepy little Avening and Nailsworth into Gloucester. Here Surrey swung into the courtyard of the New Inn, and stared round, blankly.

"Good heavens!" he said. "It is ten hundred years old, at least."

"Six, I think," said Peggy. "But we never call a thing 'new' in this country until it is really really old."

"That explains the New Woman quite perfectly," said Surrey.

But Peggy refused to be drawn. She retreated with a packet of letters to a chair in the old quaint Pilgrim's Gallery which runs right round the courtyard, and Wylde went out to find peace in the "fair city of the Romans."

Once men swore the oath "So sure as there is God

in Gloucester" in token of the many churches there. But Wylde passed by them all until the Sanctuary knocker on the door of St. Nicholas arrested his eyes. The thing was half man, half bird, and the ring was rubbed and flattened by the numberless desperate hands that once had gripped it. For a long while Wylde watched it. Then he put out his hand, grasping it slowly. By such a little thing men had won physical salvation. By what did they win spiritual salvation? By power? By love? By faith? Wylde had desired the first all his days. Now the second was coming unbidden, drawing the third with it. For Wylde had lost belief in mankind in his boyhood. But The Honourable Peggy was giving it back again. He went into the Cathedral later, drawn by curiosity to the tomb of the second Edward, misnamed Saint and Martyr, and stared long at the beautiful marble face of the man who had been first Prince of Wales and heir to the "Hammer of the Scots," and who weakly lived and weakly died, slain by his wife and his subject in Berkeley Castle.

"Why . . . he was never a man," he said, and left him, having branded him with the last word of contempt.

But he found a man later in the chancel centre. For here lay Count Robert of Normandy in red cloak and chain mail, drawing his sword before the high altar. From Gloucester that great Crusader had led the first of all the knightly army to the East. From Cardiff Castle, after an imprisonment of twenty years, he had come back again to Gloucester, dead.

The tomb of Osric, founder of the ancient Saxon building, was there, and many others, all up and down the stately columned naves and chapels. Then Wylde strolled into the cloisters, and for a little forgot about all else.

The technicalities of architecture were dumb for Wylde. But those glorious cloisters where the bold and delicate imagination of the monks had run free, making a new thing for all the world to worship, spoke

to him with eloquent tongues. He went round the great hollow square twice, three times, feeling with his hands over the stone water-trough in the long rough lavatory where the men who had done this exquisite thing above had once washed, like common men. For the conception of the Perpendicular style was brought to triumphant birth in the cloisters of Gloucester, and Time has placed his mellow crown of life on them.

And then Wylde went down into the crypt.

It was that destiny which is supposed to shape men's ends which sent Peggy to the crypt, all alone. For Surrey had taken the Colonel to Tewkesbury, and she was too heartsick to struggle on with her last plan against Wylde. Love of Surrey had grown into her life, and she dared not face that dark cloud which was sinking lower with the days.

There were broken capitals in the crypt. There were images, and other pledges of a long-dead day. Beyond the heavy Norman columns the place was black as night. Suddenly it lit two red flaring eyes and a snorting roar like that of an animal. She cried out; something stirred in the darkness; and then, as she turned to run, earth sprang up and hit her, sending the darkness into night and sleep.

Night drew off later, leaving her on her bed in a room at the New Inn with faces that she did not know about her.

"Surrey," she said, feebly. And then the Colonel's face came close.

"Peggy," he said. "My darling, it is all right. You feel all right, don't you?"

Peggy's hands groped up to her head where the bandage across her forehead made her look like a pale nun.

"I—I feel like a poultice," she said. "What am I tied up for?"

"You fell in the crypt and hit your head. Wylde brought you back, and got a doctor. I was away. Peggy, I shall never leave you again. . . ." The

Colonel's voice was uneven. Peggy was dearer to him than anything on earth, and both knew it.

Peggy blinked hazily. She reached her hands round his neck.

"Dear," she said. "Did you mind? Your Peggy isn't very good, you know. I don't think she ought to make you feel like that face you've got."

"I think you could make me feel anything you chose, little girl," said the Colonel.

Peggy's mind was not quite under control, or she would not have given her heart away as she did.

"Could I make you feel that my happiness was more to you than your Experiment?" she whispered.

"Dear, don't be cruel to Surrey. Oh, don't be cruel to Surrey."

The voice was very low and broken. But it turned the Colonel white and stern.

"Has Surrey asked you——?"

"No. But we understand. Words don't matter. Oh, don't send him away . . . and make him poor."

The Colonel sat down on the bedside and gathered up her hands in his.

"Peggy," he said, "I would not give you to Surrey as he is now. My darling, if he would win you he must work for you. Surrey has never done one day's work in all his life. I think he could not. He will have to be the man I expect him to be before he is worthy of you or of anything else."

Peggy had courage and quick intuition. Besides, she loved the Colonel.

"Poor darling," she said. "Poor darling. I was a little beast to ask you, and I am going to ask you again. I am content with Surrey as he is, and—and if he had money he would not need to work."

"Surrey has great powers, and he is killing them with apathy. Little girl, if I was vexed with him before I am not the more likely to be lenient now that I know that great thing he has to work for . . . and does not work for. He is a dear fellow. He is absolutely straight. He is very charming. But there are

two lines of Kipling's which just fit Surrey. Of the greatest curse which can come to mankind he says—

'And they shall be perfectly pleased with themselves,
And that is the perfectest hell of it.'

Surrey will have no right to be pleased with himself until he has ceased to be so. For his own, and now for your sake, I cannot have any mercy on him, my Peggy."

There were tears in Peggy's eyes. But her love for the Colonel drove them back. She would not use her woman's weapons on him while there was yet another way. The Colonel cleared his throat. There was something still to ask.

"I—must know how far this has gone, Peggy. I never knew—anything."

"There was not anything to know." Peggy's pale cheeks had flashed to flame. "He has never—kissed me since we grew up. But we—we just couldn't help it. Dear, if there had been anything more don't you know I would have told you?"

"God bless you, my Peggy," said the Colonel. "I know you would."

When he was gone Peggy turned her face to the wall.

"Now," she said, "I will have to try what I can do with Mr. Wylde."

It was the next afternoon before she saw Wylde. Surrey had put her into a long chair in a corner of the Gallery, and the Colonel had brought flowers and smelling-salts and novels and other things until the table and the floor around her were heaped up. And then he had kissed the lips he loved and gone out again with Surrey to Tewkesbury.

"I have set Wylde as watch-dog," he said. "But I think you should be content to meditate on your sins for this week, Peggy."

"I will," promised Peggy. But when the car had hummed out of the yard she lay still, and meditated on Wylde.

A little later Wylde's soft familiar step sounded along the Gallery. He came close and his voice was very gentle.

"Send me away if you like," he said. "But I had to come. I am responsible for this, you know."

He motioned to the white linen folds, and Peggy sat up in amaze.

"You—why, *no* man could snort like that," she cried.

"Oh, that was the dynamo," said Wylde, and laughed. "Didn't they tell you? But I should have spoken when you cried out. Instead of that I just came forward, like a fool, and frightened you."

He leaned his arms on the rail among the roses.

"May I stay a little while?" he asked.

"If you like," said Peggy, indifferently. Then memory quickened in her. She opened her eyes, half shyly.

"I—I should be glad," she said.

Wylde flushed the dull heavy red she had grown to look for. Then he slid into talk, slowly, naturally, putting his thoughts into words without waiting for an answer, as Peggy had taught him to do. And he did not know that often she did not hear when his masculine mind poured out facts and statistics, and traced loose ends of history to their beginnings, and there nailed them flat triumphantly.

Each individual thing that walked or stood had interest to him, and Peggy listened, and thought of other things, and listened again, and wondered and resented and gave admiration which was all the greater because it was reluctant. It half-fascinated, half-frightened her to lie as it were in the little boat of her own silence and let Wylde's rough strength sweep her out into the billows.

"... And Gloucester is such an ordinary little place," said Wylde. "Just a kind of grey pebble flung down in the grass. And yet so much history has gone through it. Deorham is not so far off, where the Wessex kings broke the Welsh and Damnonian

Britons apart in the sixth century, and so saved the pure Christian religion for England, if there's any truth in history. The first Christian King of Mercia founded a church here a little later. But I reckon its chief value lies in the fact that most of the learning must have filtered through Gloucester into England. There were some sort of colleges in the Vale of Glamorgan four hundred years before Alfred the Great founded Oxford."

"It must be such dull work making history," said Peggy. "For you are never really sure you've made it till you're dead. And then you should be too good to care."

"I should be content to make it even so," said Wylde, and a thread in his voice made her shut her eyes with a swift spasm of shame. For she knew that she was going to spoil his aim, to destroy that single-hearted purpose in him if her woman's wit could do it.

"Everything that means fight and struggle appeals to you," she said. "I—I have thought it might be rather fun myself, but . . . it takes a great deal of courage . . . to fight."

"Women don't fight as men do. And man and woman don't fight as men do. I guess you needn't be afraid. The world is not made rough for such as you." There was no bitterness in his voice. Only a grave gentleness which Peggy tried to shut her eyes and ears to. Wylde went on: "I guess a man don't ought to ask more of life than battle and death in the open. That's what those old fellows always looked for. Browning says: 'I would hate that Death bandaged my eyes.' Ah! I reckon I couldn't forgive anything that bandaged my eyes before it hit me."

"But perhaps it might know that it couldn't hit you if it didn't," said Peggy, quaveringly.

Then Wylde laughed. A long hearty roar such as swept all the harshness from his face. He sat down beside her.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "But I don't think you have the least idea how funny that was. It—it

was so absolutely like a woman. And that is why I am afraid of women, you see. They can argue what they like from any standpoint at all and be perfectly and honestly in earnest all the time. Your sex is so much more complex, you know. And when you do wrong you blind yourselves with the belief that it must be right because you're doing it for others. I give women the palm there. They're generally doing things for others—good or bad."

"H-how do you know all that?" Peggy looked away from him to the roses.

"I read a good deal. And I have seen—much." Then his manner changed. "Did you know that Old King Cole of the nursery rhyme was grandfather to the first Roman Emperor who ever became a Christian?" he asked. "He was a Welshman, and founded Hereford and Chichester in the third century, and his daughter Elen was the mother of Constantine the Great. Uthyr, father of King Arthur, was a descendant of his, too. Seems strange to think of Arthur as a Welshman, doesn't it?"

"He was not. Why—why, the thing's preposterous." Peggy greeted the way of escape eagerly. "Merlin found him at Tintagel. Have you forgotten that already?"

"Merlin was a Welshman too. He was born at Carmarthen."

"Go away." Peggy shut her eyes again. "I refuse to learn any more Welsh history. You'll be telling me next that the Taffy who stole a piece of beef was Arthur's grand-uncle!"

"I guess you'll likely change your opinion about Wales in a little," said Wylde. But he went away with that swift dull flush on his face again. Because, for the first time, Peggy had touched him of her own accord, when she laid her hand on his sleeve as he left her, and whispered—

"I—I want to thank you for carrying me out of the crypt."

Peggy's resentment towards the Welsh for their

possible production of Arthur did not lessen on the day when the blue car took the road again, and faced in the teeth of a screaming wind for Monmouth. Through Huntley into Dursley Cross short steep hills and nasty corners met them. The trees strained beaten branches before the gale; under the thick pall of dust the land was desolate and pallid. To the left the Forest of Dean lay out to the Severn; once a royal demesne, and scattered now with iron and coal mines. There was no beauty anywhere, and the unfailing dust gritted in the teeth and stung the eyes.

"This is ugly. Ugly," said Peggy, vehemently. "When a woman calls another woman 'so good-natured' it always means that she's very plain; but I can't even put it like that for this country. It isn't good-natured, and it is insufferably ordinary. And that's worse than being plain any day."

"There are heaps of churches round Ross if you want to see them," shouted Surrey, twisting round in the front seat.

"I'm sick of churches. They take away all the desire to be good that I ever had," retorted Peggy, and Surrey twisted back with a laugh.

Through Ryeford they ran down into Ross, and Wylde halted before the beautiful old Market Cross with its fine worn stone arches and deep-trodden pavement.

"The church is worth seeing, perhaps," he said. "It is thirteenth century, and its spire is taller than the London Monument, and there are two elm-trees growing in the pew of 'The Man of Ross'—"

"I am tired of 'The Man of Ross,'" said Peggy. "Pope had no business to immortalize him. The guide-book says that 'he enjoyed remarkably good health all his life and never married.' He must have been a very dull man."

"I don't think we are eager to patronize Ross today," suggested the Colonel, with due gravity. "You'd best drive on, Wylde."

The wind screamed louder. It buffeted the car, and

took Wylde's breath, and made steering a flagrant impossibility. Once he spoke through set teeth.

"I'd be ashamed for any one to see our tracks," he said. "This wind slams me all over the place."

Surrey opened his eyes. Then he said, "Good Lord!" Then, "Wylde, we are running into Ross again."

Wylde swept his startled glance over the straining landscape. The clumped trees, the long hotel on the hill, the slender spire upthrust through greens were mercilessly familiar.

Then Peggy pushed her face between the two. It was pink under the thin mauve veil, and her eyes were full of laughter.

"I told you that I didn't *want* to see Ross Church," she said. "What a very determined man you are, Mr. Wylde."

All the road beyond that was full of story; full of gorgeous history now dead. Old Roman Ariconium, with its tessellated pavements lay to eastward; naked brown and red hills where Romans and Britons fought long since rose up for mile on mile. Seen and unseen castles stood proud in ruin along the hill-tops, guarding yet the silent valleys; Roman roads, and roads before the Roman day threaded the same winding track which they took now. The wind was dead behind the hills, and a sense of secrets long held, of strength and hidden tragedy came with the first breath of Wales and the first sight of the Welsh names.

A new world met them at the toll-gate that led by Kerne ridge over the Wye: a world of brown water that rippled and green hills that lay softly and yellow corn that swayed along the lower lands, taking colour from the sun. Birds were singing, and the world was still and warm as dreams. Up this very valley might Sir Launcelot have ridden by the river when the shining of his greaves brought the Lady of Shalott to her window. Peggy got out of the car in the little steep village of Goodrich, and her eyes were rebellious.

"Why should a woman be punished for doing

things?" she said, under her breath. "It is hateful that she must only watch others do them—or not do them."

"What's that?" said Surrey. "It's a stiff half-mile up to the Castle, Peggy, but I fancy it is rather good. Early Norman, don't you know, and——"

"One of the last places to hold out for Charles," said Peggy.

"Is it? I——"

"Every castle always is," said Peggy, with conviction. She kissed her hands to the Colonel. "Good-bye, dear," she cried. "We'll tell you all about it when we come back, and then you'll be so sorry that you can't say, 'Peggy, Peggy, I knew all that before you were born.'"

When the last flutter of her veil and the last sound of the men's voices sounded up the little narrow lane the Colonel walked the quiet green street with head bent and hands linked behind him. Peggy's piteous face on the bed at Gloucester was never very long away from his memory, and the gay courage which she had caught up since for her daily weapon gladdened and grieved him. Surrey he was studying with remorseless exactitude. And he faced the result as he smoked one cigar, and the second.

"A life of petty things," he said. "Surrey has never harmed a soul. I could almost wish he had. He never gets to the deeps anywhere. He does not fear outside powers, because he will not consider them. And Wylde is a power."

He flung the last butt of his cigar away as voices and laughter came down the lane again. "I have warned him," he said. "And if he won't take the warning he must suffer for it. But the mischief is that we so seldom suffer alone in this world."

Peggy caught the Colonel's elbow, half laughing, half in tears.

"It truly *was* one of the last to hold out for Charles," she cried. "And it is so terribly sad, for the custodian has been there years and years, and he put all the old

old dead men and women back into those skeletons of rooms again. And it has a gorgeous dry moat and a drawbridge and portcullises and jackdaws nesting in the great entrance-towers where the guard used to put out their heads and shout 'What ho! Varlet!' just as the custodian did to Surrey. And *memento mori* spelt with a 'y' was scratched on one of the walls before the time of Charles the Second. Oh, and Wordsworth met that stupid little girl of 'We are Seven' at Goodrich. Go on, Surrey. He has got to hear it all."

"Surrey says one word at his peril," asserted the Colonel, tucking her into the tonneau. "Can't you ever play fair, Peggy?"

"Certainly. When I can get what I want that way." Then, as Wylde swung the car about, she added: "The piscinas in the upper walls are extremely rare."

Through the sweet valley of the Wye the road climbed sideways to Symonds Yat and made an end at a knot of cottages drowned in a sea of flowers. Wylde walked to the rim of the bluff with eager feet. Below, deep in the golden sunlight on the placid water, was Huntsham Ferry, where Henry the Fourth, returning from sport in the Forest of Dean, heard of the birth of his son in Monmouth Castle, and straightway gave the land round the Crossing to the ferryman and his sons for ever. Left away the bluff of the Dowards, once the Slaughters, clipped the Wye. Peggy spoke at his elbow.

"Who was Caractacus? He fought some one at the Slaughters—horrible name. It suggests so much—like Slaughter Bridge at Camelford."

"He was a British king, and his father, Bran the Blessed, went to Rome as a hostage for him in A.D. 60. That's all I know of him." Then he turned to her eagerly. "I like to think that this place was called after Sigmund the Viking," he said. "There is something brave and big and free about it. And that should be Offa's Dyke across the river. It runs all the way from Chester to Chepstow, and Offa shut the

Welsh in with it in the eighth century. There are prehistoric men buried on the Slaughters, too. I guess every inch of this land was fought over more than twice."

It was an evening of gold and green and beautiful calm when the car ran into small crooked-streeted Monmouth, laid among its steep slopes on the banks of the tidal Wye, and gave up its breath in the yard of the Beaufort Arms. Peggy was alert and gay. She caught the Colonel's hand, dragging him out to the street again.

"I am going to see Monmouth Castle before I sleep," she cried. "Come. Oh, there is Harry of Monmouth himself."

But the Colonel looked aside, hearing Wylde's step, and surprise edged his words.

"I thought you'd want to overhaul the car after today's dust," he said.

"Why, I reckon she won't hurt for once." But Wylde flushed, and then a sharp puff of wind blew Peggy's long veil-ends over his face and neck. They were warm and soft and scented faintly, and Wylde's senses were giddy as he looked up at the strange bronze of Henry the Fifth in its niche above the Shire Hall: a vivid figure, stooping a little, with out-thrust crowned head and left hand on sword. The church bells pealed suddenly out in golden clamour, and Wylde rallied.

"Those bells once rang a peal of joy in Calais when Prince Hal was leaving it," he said. "But they rang rather uncivilly, to his thinking, I guess, and so he brought them over to do their duty in his native town."

Peggy laughed. Her feet were dancing, and a sudden recklessness had taken possession of her. For the first time Wylde had left his self-imposed woin to come when she had not called. She pulled off the filmy veil and rolled it in a little wisp, holding it to Wylde.

"Please put it in your pocket," she said. Then she thrust her arm through the Colonel's. "Come," she cried. "We three are going to explore."

While Surrey smoked three lazy cigars and played a game of billiards, Peggy the willful led her two captives round the length and breadth of Monmouth. In the narrow street the irons of the awnings were so low that Wylde stooped to pass them. For the Welsh are a little race, principally, and those who met them were pale and pinched. They found a deep-dipping lane that led to a white-mushroom camp and khaki sentries in a green field. They found the little steep Castle Street and the harsh naked remains of the Castle, with the window from which the creator of England's imperial spirit first saw the light. The greater part of its stones have gone to make the barracks across the plateau, and they left it to a pale sunset of bird's-egg-blue and lemon; passed the fine old Monnow Gate that spanned the bridge, and sought in the dusk of a little old church for the Norman work which the shadows made invisible.

"The Castle is eleventh century and the gate thirteenth," said Peggy. "But I like to think of them when 'John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,' lived here. Oh, just imagine the plumed knights riding through those heavy arches. And now we'll buy some postcards and go home."

That evening the Colonel exclaimed at the piles which Peggy sorted on the table.

"You have got one of every village we have passed through, I believe, and about two dozen of every town," he said. "What are you going to do with them, Peggy?"

"The villages are such darling things," said Peggy. "I don't think they are really real, you know. I believe the angels just take them out of the big toy-box every morning and put them down by the road to make us glad, and then at night they are dusted and put away again—and they'd need lots of dusting after we have gone by."

"Then what happens to all the money you pay to them in postcards?" demanded Surrey.

"It's fairy money." Peggy turned a black-and-

white of Netley east window in her fingers. "You don't suppose a mortal could buy all that beauty for a real penny, do you?"

"What kind of pennies did you pay for your own?" said the Colonel, and Peggy laughed.

"I leave you to do the paying for my things, dear," she said.

But by the morning Wylde had begun to understand that he was to do some of Peggy's paying for her. The faint odour of violets in the mauve veil had explained it to him, and he went down to find her in the courtyard with it hidden still in his breast-pocket. The yard was full of bustle, life and colour. A gorgeous coach was tasseled in many colours and trimmed by white-wigged, huge-calved footmen. Bay horses pranced; white-wanded policemen paraded solemnly, heralds in brave uniforms blew bugles with the coat-of-arms on the tabard. Wylde asked questions in amaze. Peggy shrugged.

"Only the Assizes," she said. "Not like Jeffreys', you know. This will be quite a dull affair in the Shire Hall. But pomp is as ubiquitous as the other human passions."

"What others?" said Wylde, daringly.

"Hate, and love, and deceit," said Peggy. Then she crossed "the square called Agincourt" to meet Surrey as he came down the Castle lane. She was twisting on a green veil with the quick dainty gestures that Wylde had learned to love, and the fine breeding of man and maid showed in their very poise as they stood together in the splash of sunlight. But that sight could not bring bitterness to Wylde to-day, nor could her words hurt him.

"She knows I have her veil, and she doesn't mean to ask for it," he told himself. "I reckon she *will* ask for it before she gets it. And will I give it to her, I wonder?"

The eight miles out to Raglan Castle were a pure joy to Wylde. Already the land had a different look, the air a different taste from England. Past history was thronging round him, present history was sweet in the making. He went to make some more of it

within the great sweep of the walls of Raglan, when the little town and the stretch of field and the majestic gates were passed, and the long terraces and bowling-greens led on to the stately ruins. Last week Wylde had given Peggy Macdonald's *St. George and St. Michael*, and to her the broken walls and grassy floors, the piteous fragments of fireplaces hanging to the upper floorless rooms, and the rotting grand staircases breathed yet of Herbert, Baron of Raglan, who set up his mysterious engine by the moat, of his sweet and stately wife, of the little maid, and of brave Dorothy, the young kinswoman. Large and splendid and vital still its ruins lay to the sun. Prisons where light and air slid in thin as a thread through the thick of the wall. Staircases leading out to grassy wall-tops with sweeping views of glory. A burly keep, with water in the moat of it yet.

Here the old Marquis of Worcester died, knowing that his son was betrayed by the king for whom he was fighting. Here Cromwell's men had slain and burnt and destroyed, plucking the brave heart out of the old place and leaving it for the fox and the rabbit and the wild birds. Along the broad pleasaunce topping the inner wall the view lay clear to the outer curtain-wall and the deep lines of entrenchment. In the hollow of the elms seats were placed. They too were ruins only. But they yet lived. For a moment Peggy stood very near to Wylde.

"It is more beautiful than any living castle I have seen," she said. "Ladies walked here 'with their petticoats of satin and the stately grace of yore.' And think of the men who have been here since first it was built in thirteen hundred."

"There are half-a-dozen castles near here," said Wylde. "The trilateral—Grosmont, Skenfrith and White Castle—were big fortresses. . . ." Peggy shook her head.

"This was a *home*," she said. "We shall see plenty of military places, but there were not many homes such as Raglan. You did just the right thing when you gave me that book."

Rain drove them back to Monmouth. But they faced the road later, through Halfway House with St. Briavel's Priory, associated with King John, and through little quaint Llandogo, until the Wye, running softly, led them down to pretty Tintern where the grey crest of the Abbey reared beyond.

The rain had drawn off, leaving dripping trees and grey and lonely skies about the Abbey. Peggy gave one word of warning as she came near.

"Guide-books say that Wordsworth's lines on Tintern will naturally occur to every comer," she said. "They haven't occurred to me yet, and it is just possible that they won't, for I've never read them. But I will not have them occur second-hand. I mean to enter Tintern with an open mind."

"Why not say an open mouth?" suggested Surrey. "That is one of your chief characteristics, Peggy."

His lazy geniality was not much altered since Tintagel, but a new element had come into it. He was watching Peggy in these days, and he was watching Wylde. And slowly, very slowly, his half-tolerant dislike of the man was ripening into something that might be bitter fruit.

There is dignity and quiet grandeur in Tintern Abbey. Simple, direct, and beautiful, it tells its meaning yet. Tells how when the monasteries along the land sank to disgraceful luxuries the new sect of Cistercians awoke, strong, manly, and humbly great, to raise through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries places in which they could bear out their belief; their belief that labour is prayer, that purity must clasp hands with simplicity or be sullied, that love for God goes best with love for man.

Along the broken wall-tops trees were growing; fox-gloves thrust out from every chink; jackdaws nested in the holes from whence the beams had rotted; grass lay green in the aisles where monks had trod. Beyond the choir a few grave-slabs scored the level ground, and beyond again wound the once well-worn way to the hospital. A strong and stately mass of columns,

piers and arches, perfect in Gothic lines against the sky; a shimmering of pale mouse-greys, dark ivy, light-filled corridors; a forgotten dream of close-robed brown labouring monks; a sense of length and width and height and vigorous age—this was the Tintern that Peggy carried back to the car.

"The gods loved Netley and she died young," she said. "But Tintern was just a monk always. He lived and worked as a man should do, and he died at last as a man must do. But I wish it hadn't been begun by some one named Bigod. That is so obvious."

Through the forest the way ran on to Chepstow, with the river winding far below on the left and the grand hills beyond. From St. Arvan's road a river seemed in haste to reach the sea, and the car fled down to mighty Chepstow Castle, circling its inner buildings with the knotted muscled arms of giants.

Chepstow is said to take its name from Chepestowe, the no-man's land of sale and barter through the old wars between Wales and England. The Castle owes its fame to Richard Strongbow, who became its lord 1170; to the Domesday Book, and to dim histories of Edward the Second, of the Royalists, and of the prisoner Marten, who signed the death-warrant of King Charles. Here, not far above the railway tunnel, the tidal Wye goes to its death in the Severn; and farther down, across the water, clings Clevedon, where the Hallam of Tennyson's love lies buried. A scrap of *In Memoriam* came to Wylde—

"Here twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the habbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills."

Then, through the silence of the full tide that washed the flanks of Chepstow Castle, they left it, grim, menacing and mighty, and took the road again through a sheet of rain.

This brought Wylde and Surrey to the front, and

they accepted the position with a restraint which strengthened their dislike as the car ripped and splashed through ancient ruined Caerwent, whence many bricks and tiles had gone to the making of Chepstow Castle since the days when it was a Roman post against the Welsh. Fragments of gates, of walls, of excavations, showed raw and ugly through the rain. Caldicot's glorious military castle fell behind, and the level road slunk through webs of telegraph and tram-lines into busy Newport, which holds its history in the docks founded first in the twelfth century, its Chartist Rising of 1837, and its sweet old parish church of St. Woolos, where the welding of some Roman work with sixth-century building is unique. Three towers of the old castle, now a brewery, made the second point of definite age in Newport, but all round it was romance beyond history.

Wylde found Peggy alone that evening and startled her with a suggestion.

"You know we passed Caerleon about four miles out to-day," he said. "But I reckoned that was not the right time to see it. Will you come out with me at day-break to-morrow? There is not much to see. But it is Caerleon."

Peggy hesitated. Surrey would be so angry. And Wylde . . . then she looked up.

"If I don't feel too lazy perhaps I will," she said.

That night Wylde dreamed of ancient Caerleon, where the lad Arthur had stood, ringed by doubting knights and priests in the Great Hall, and proved his birth by the drawing of Excalibur from its glittering sheath; where Launcelot brought Guinevere through the glamour of a never-forgotten summer to be "queen to a kingly bridal," and where the glory of chivalry and the beauty of purity blazed up into one dazzling light that struck its beam across the centuries before it crashed down into night and sin and sorrow.

Chivalry was waking in Wylde now. Where he defied the Colonel he did it openly, that the Colonel might reprove if he would. And neither in word nor

manner had he said anything that could offend Peggy. When she came down to the still grey deadness of the streets at morning he took possession of her with a grave gentleness and repression that disquieted her more than the familiarity Surrey hated. And then she laughed as the car slid into the morning mist, taking the ancient way to Caerleon.

"I feel like a ghost myself," she said. "Look at the mist in my hair."

Her face was very sweet and near in the close blue bonnet, and memory of a little blue wild-flower called "love-in-the-mist" came to Wylde's brain. But he kept his lips very reverently from anything which might frighten her. He did not doubt her now. That sending back of the cross was Surrey's doing alone, and some day he would take it from his chain and put it back where it belonged. And now . . . she was The Honourable Peggy to his heart and eyes, and she had not done this and a thousand sweet lesser things if she had not forgiven him . . . and much more than forgiven him.

Where the bridge led them into Caerleon, still asleep in its sheets of mist, he pointed to the Usk, running full and silent between dim banks.

"Don't you think Elaine drifted down there with Launcelot's shield?" he said. "Arthur certainly held his greatest courts at Caerleon—if there was an Arthur, and it is good for men to think there was. Somewhere around those high walls is Hanbury Inn, where Tennyson wrote part of the *Idylls*. I reckon he must often have come to see Caerleon as we are seeing it now."

Past a church, and up a little road with a race-course to the rightward he ran the car, and stopped. Then he gave his hand to Peggy.

"You are not afraid of the mist—or the wet grass?" he asked.

Peggy was beginning to believe that she was afraid of something more than either. Of something undefined, but very strong. After this day she and Wylde

would never take quite the same place again. And what would the new place be?

His hand-grip was very warm and close as he helped her across the slab of slate struck down between the stone posts in the wall, and went with her over the tangled grass. The distance of trees and hills was vague, impalpable, silent. A veil of mystery, a shadow of dream hung in the chill close fog wrapping them round. Before their feet rose the grassy amphitheatre with the earth turned back here and there as flesh is turned from the bone, laying bare the fibres and muscles of the lengths of bastioned wall. High, then low across the mounds the pale mist moved; sweeping into thickened knots of figures, fading again into thin floating mantles and sword-like gleams of light. Peggy pressed close to Wylde, craving the touch of life and warmth. Wylde spoke with lowered voice.

"So many of Arthur's knights really lived, you know. Geraint fought at Longborth, near Portsmouth, and Bedivere was killed in Glamorgan. I like to believe that Launcelot died in the battle against Arthur at Joyeuse Gard. Some say that is Craig-y-Dinas, you know. And there's a legend that Arthur and his knights sleep there in a big cave under the hazel-trees until the black-and-gold eagles of their banner shall blow out again and rouse them to defend the Kymry. I reckon perhaps that's finer than his burial at Glastonbury."

"I think," said Peggy, feeling for words, "that idea has grown because Arthur is meant to represent chivalry. And chivalry is not dead in any age—for many men. It only sleeps, at most."

Wylde looked down on her.

"That's a fine thought," he said, slowly. "I guess I won't forget it."

And then they turned and went back, brushing the long wet grass with silent feet, and leaving behind them a kingly ghost and gallant knights who, having received the accolade of Death, were made free to hold undying court at old Caerleon-on-Usk.

CHAPTER VI

FIRE AND EDGED TOOLS

"I WENT out just now and bribed a boy in the street to tell me how to pronounce this place," said the Colonel. "He appeared to have his mouth full, but at last I grasped the fact that it was Bweeth. Then I went into a shop to get cigarettes. The woman said they hadn't any of my brand in Beeth. So I tried farther down the street and learned that I would not get any nearer Bilth than Hereford. Then I came home. But I shall never be able to tell my friends where we stayed in Wales, Peggy."

"Poor darling," said Peggy. "I felt much the same when a boy in a shop asked if he should button-up a parcel for me. I said 'Yes, please,' for I wanted to see how he did it. But he only tied it with string."

"The object of words appears to be to conceal their meaning," said the Colonel, sorrowfully, and he retired into his paper again.

Wylde and Surrey were out in the vivid moonlight which was turning all the outside world into fine black-and-white etchings. But Peggy was very sure that their paths led different ways, and she knew, well she knew, that this was principally her doing. As yet she faced the storm that she was raising with an undaunted front. It was necessary that antagonism against Wylde should be roused in Surrey. It was necessary that Wylde should be led to displease the Colonel. Peggy rocked in her low chair, telling herself that she was content with this day's doings.

And it had been a long day. One which had begun with the flight at sunrise and the after explana-

tions at the breakfast-table and the somewhat explosive courtesy which had succeeded. The next stage had come when Wylde forgot to post the Colonel's letters, giving as his excuse that run to Caerleon. Then Peggy had slipped into the back seat with the Colonel, and wheedled him into tender forgiveness of her small self. In remembering this she suddenly pressed her fingers over her eyes.

"Is it wicked?" she whispered. "I'm afraid I'm going to feel wicked very soon. But Surrey can't fight for himself. And . . . I can fight for him."

Over and again over she told herself that she must fight Wylde with such weapons as he himself used. She conscientiously put her own interpretations on all he did, and there was enough truth in them to make her believe them fully. Wylde had only learnt such perfect control of the car that he might better himself with the Colonel. He had only laid hold of each microscopic bit of duty for the same reason. He was only thoughtful and primed with knowledge to her for the same—here Peggy's belief balked. She turned aside and slid her mind idly down the thread of the day again.

It had been a divers day, such as only Wales can give to man. A steep morning run by lovely fields linked with elms to Bassaleg and through a tangle of Welsh names at pretty Lower Machenfach and Bedwas among the hills. Then the big broken giant of Caerphilly, looming up beyond, above the little town. Surrey went with her through the corridors and broken stairs and towers of Caerphilly, and in that gigantic place of burst walls, huge keeps and bastions, gripping together yet in defiance of age and destruction a sense of her ephemeral life pressed down on Peggy. The bluish-stone heights stared pallidly; blind eye-sockets goggled from the rooms. It was like some enormous brain blown into bits, and left a meaningless wreck.

In the thirteenth century Wales knew no better fortress than Caerphilly. It dominated the Roman

road from Chepstow to Brecon, and from the summits around it were flung out the beacon-fires—a ring of flame that called men from Penarth Head to Cefn Onn and beyond that to the core of the Brecon Beacons. Among the tangled grass and dull walls, with the valley stretching round to reach the feet of the hills, Surrey had given her some facts, plain facts.

"This is one of a group of concentric castles," he said; "and the idea is supposed to have come from Palestine. It's amazing how such an enormous place should have so little authentic history. It covers thirty acres, I believe, and they don't even know who destroyed it. Did you notice that tower split in half and about nine feet out of the perpendicular? Gunpowder must have done that, you know. Cromwell, I suppose. By Jove, it would be a fine place to defend."

"There are said to be thousands of tons of coal under it," said Peggy. "Wouldn't it be terrible if they swept it away for that? All the witches meet here, and what would they do after flying through the storms from all the hills if they hadn't got these dark corridors to flutter in as the bats are doing now?"

"And Owen Glendower and Llewelyn are supposed to have lived in it——"

"Of course," said Peggy, tartly. "They were the Welsh heroes. They are as tedious as the castles that held out for Charles."

Then, quite suddenly, Surrey had put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't, dear," he said, gently, and Peggy knew that her morning defiance had hurt him more than a little.

Her eyes swam now as she ticked the next names off on her memory. Penrhos, with that steep drop of one in nine, in twelve, in ten; where the first glory of red cliffs, arsenic-green grass and distance bathed in blue mist began. Nantgarw, where they tried vainly for a cup of tea. Pontypridd, with the old quaint bridges over the Taff, and the graceful new

one which gave the town its name. Then the climb, up, up, into the desolate coal and iron country; with railways screaming in the valleys far below, and great cradles of coal swinging overhead from mountains of coal above to more black mountains below. All the world was an irruption of coal-faces that gleamed and man-faces that glowered and were every whit as black; and of the blank hideous faces of cottages that stretched in a straight narrow line for nearly five miles of hopeless ugliness through Ynys Owen and Merthyr Tydvil. In the fifth century the virgin Saint Tydvil had lived there. . . . Peggy shuddered at remembrance of the pinched blackened faces of men and women and the crowded stunted children. She had never in her life seen so many children, and never in her life had she had stones thrown at her before. Then past the fine grounds of Cyfarthfa Castle, and the Cardiff County Reservoirs, where all the hills were seamed and scored with water-courses to feed them.

The earth grew leaner and blanker after that, and the long long pull up the Brecon Beacons began. Wonderful red-purples and royal blues on the desolate hills; grey shining breasts of out-jutting rocks; sheep flecked like snow-spots among the barrenness, distant storms brooding ink-black in the grandeur of silence. Up, and up still, a grim long climb, with the world sinking farther and farther below, rugged, scored with deep splashes of colour. Peggy was trying to pronounce Cefn-Coad-y-cymaner when Surrey cut off the engine just beyond the Storey Arms, and began that long wonderful five-mile downgrade which was worth coming to Wales to experience.

She remembered the joy of that long coast keenly; the noiseless gliding, twisting down, with a perfect road beneath the wheels and a perfect view before the eyes. Hills on hills with glowing valleys dipped in sunlight, swathed in mist. Raw red fields and purple tree-clumps; dove-grey rocks and steel-bright rivers, all softened and drawn to agreement of beauty by the clear sun-drenched air.

"But what are you to say when there are no adjectives left and you don't know German?" Peggy had demanded. And at her side Surrey had laughed. "Use Welsh," he said. Wylde scarcely looked or spoke to her that day. But she knew, and hated herself for knowing, that the hour at Caerleon was as vivid to himself as to her.

Brecon was a clean, happy town at the hill-foot, where they found refreshment at the Castle Hotel, and Peggy wandered in the ivied ruin of the Ely Tower, where that same Buckingham who suffered in the market-place at Salisbury once plotted with the Bishop of Ely for Richard the Third's downfall. There was an old priory in Brecon and the house where Mrs. Siddons was born. But the sun was yet high in the westing when the narrow tree-looped road led through Troed-yr-haru and Bronllys, where houses stood in parks, to the sweet valley of the Wye again. Here wild roses, honeysuckles and foxgloves reached at them from the hedges. Between fair-limbed trees the river gleamed, winding on, winding down to distant Tintern. Then past Llyswen and Llangoed and the deep-coloured rocks of Aberedw into Builth.

And here the end of Peggy's memory dropped from her with a sigh. Three times she had read in the book on her knee that "The history of Builth takes us back into the nebulous past," and three times she had been content to leave it there. Present and future were too nebulous just now. The Colonel laid aside his paper.

"Come here, little girl," he said; and when she stood before him with her slim close dress and the banded fair hair which was Wylde's daily worship and puzzlement, he looked at her, half-sadly.

"Were you kind to Surrey this morning, Peggy?" he asked.

Peggy dropped on his knee and shut both arms round his neck.

"Yes," she whispered. "I am helping him. But I always do things my own own way."

"You do," said the Colonel, grimly. "And you generally make others do things your own own way, too. Peggy, you are flattening my nose."

"Then you shouldn't be so very dear," said Peggy. "When I've been doing something I don't like I always want to come and kiss you to take the taste of it out of my mouth."

"Peggy," said the Colonel, "you are becoming a diplomat—which is another word for enigma. I can't see why you went if you didn't want to. History is a very good thing in its place. But that place should not be five o'clock in the morning."

"It shall not be till eleven to-morrow," asserted Peggy. And it was eleven precisely when Wylde walked them across the bridge into Radnor and climbed the hills among the bracken and scattered oaks. Far below ran the Wye with that green mound which had once been the Castle. To left the highest peak of Hereford thrust into the horizon. Behind the rough crests of the opposite hills were sunk the Brecon Beacons. It was a day of large spaces and clean air and sunlight swept out by flying scuds of rain, and it was a day on which Peggy, partly against her will, was taken "back into the nebulous past."

From somewhere Wylde had unearthed and brought over the bridge a Wise Man who talked of trilobites on the Welfield Hill; of lava and moraines and rocking-stones on the Carneddau Ranges; of the artificial mounds of the cave-dwellers at Builth Road. And then he thrust aside the golden bracken at their feet, showing a ridge that humped itself for some fifteen feet along the hill.

"An Iberian grave," he said. "They came from Africa, and killed out the cave-dwellers. They were the men of the Stone Age; long-skulled, lived in long huts, and buried in long graves. You see the Iberian trace in the Welsh yet. There are plenty of these graves near Builth."

He led up the hill to more naked country where

oak and bracken grew sparsely. Peggy whispered to the Colonel.

"Dear," she said. "He doesn't put any vowels into the word at all."

On the hill-top the Wise Man was digging up some black earth with his heel. It showed like a bruise in the red-fleshed earth about it.

"This is how the Goidel huts were first discovered," he said. "The Goidels were the Celts—the early Britons, and they came about eight hundred years B.C. to wipe out the Iberians. They had iron and bronze weapons, and to this day you'll find a superstition about old iron in some Welsh houses. Their forefathers suffered from the application of it, you see."

"Yes. But I don't see the hut," said Peggy.

The Wise Man pointed to a circle sunk in the hill. It had one narrow opening, and the dark earth was just beyond.

"This is a Goidel hut, and that dark mass is the ashes they threw out," he said. "Possibly a thousand years old, and they blacken the earth still. The Goidels were round-skulled, and they lived in round huts and buried their dead in round graves. Curious analogy, that. The round barrows are quite common. I can show you one."

It was a broken circle of upright stones containing a small cist with a capstone beside it. Stones big and little lay pitched for some distance round it.

"There were ashes in it when it first was opened," said the Wise Man. "The Goidels cremated their dead before putting them into the cist, which is still the Scotch word for chest. A chief must have been buried here, from the great number of stones. It was etiquette for each passer-by to throw a stone as a mark of reverence. We have degenerated into flower-throwing, but the Scotch held to the cairn-system until a century or two ago."

He talked then of the stone circles and cromlechs on the Eppynt and at Radnor Forest. He talked of

the Celtic religion where the Druids "read Heaven's will in quivering human flesh," and he talked of the Romans who came after, thrusting their roads straight through the waste and wiping out the past with their swords. And after this Peggy went to see Llewelyn's Cave at Aberedw with a sense of something like contempt.

"He was killed in 1282," she said. "How modern I"

Wylde was beside her for the first time that day. He looked with her into the dark narrow rock-split.

"I reckon it was heathenish," he said. "Llewelyn was a brave man who took on his father's job and fought for a United Wales. He got paid in kind for it, too. Hiding in here like a dog; betrayed at Cwm Llewelyn by one of his own men; hung and quartered, and his head watching from Tower Bridge till his brother's joined it a year later. And he went to die knowing that he would likely be the last ruler of a race that was about two laps and a half ahead of the Normans."

"And that was when you said it would be hard to die—having lost," said Peggy.

Wylde turned to her quickly. But he shut back the words on his lips and would not let his eyes speak. Since he had brought her out of the crypt at Gloucester he had found it necessary to guard his eyes when he looked at Peggy.

"Welsh history is pretty tragic, I reckon," he said. "Do you remember how Taliesin sings of the Celts that—"

"Their Lord they will praise, their speech they will keep,
Their land they will lose—except wild Gwalia?"

"But I could wish they hadn't kept their speech," said Peggy. "Just think what a terrible thing it must be to be a Welsh baby, and start life on a language like that. I can't see how they ever find time to cut their teeth and make mud pies and all that sort of thing."

"They have compensations," said Wylde, and

Peggy found some of the compensations that afternoon along the glass-smooth roads that undulated up through sweeping parks; through broad masses of sun and shade on far blue hills and red cliffs and deep-sunk woods; through scent of honeysuckle and clover in the glad-blowing air, and sight of buttercups and daisies in the little tree-linked fields along the slopes.

Newbridge-on-Wye gave them to the river again, sending them to follow it upward through the golden sunlight, where it curved brown gleaming arms about the soft limbs of the hills. The Birmingham Waterworks at Cwm Elan beyond Rhayader poured floods over their massive concrete dams to make thunder for them among the lonely hills. Villages were grey and white flecks on far brown nakedness as the road lifted, and lifted again. Shy children waved hands of welcome and grinned broadly when Peggy blew kisses in answer. Gold-quarries, long-tailed sheep and all the rest of life sunk behind, below, and the desolate grey slopes of Plynlimmon called them to its windy heights.

Where the curlews screamed as they fled over the wastes of dead earth Wylde's fancy heard again the gathering shout of Owen Glendower, who had made these fastnesses his home when he rallied his men against Henry the Fourth. And then, from the tonneau, Peggy's voice rang out, clear and high.

"Cadogan! What thy battle-axe," she called, and the swerve of Wylde's hand gave them a moment of danger along the high thread of road. What power had made Peggy's thought march with his just at that moment?

The Wye grew narrower, shallower. They were behind Nature's curtain, watching the making of a river in the dumb rugged ranges. And then the water-shed, white and bare, turned them over the ridge to follow the beginnings of another river past the yellow gold-washing at Castell-Duffryn and the slope beyond Rhyd-llyadan until nakedness and

desolation were forgot and the broad blue glorious sweep of Cardigan Bay ran below, kissing the little town of Aberystwyth with eager lips.

One of Strongbow's twelfth-century castles stood a defiant hulk on a cliff above the sea; the ridges round the town took the shapes of rugged forts. Beyond the hills of Bow Street and Tal-y-bont the long blue width of Cardigan Bay sank to shimmering horizon. Ahead lay the wide Dovey estuary with Aberdovey huddled, blushing, in its arm. Then a run among green hills led into Machynlleth, and here the Colonel made his protest.

"You must give us some place which I can pronounce to-night, Wylde. I shall have to hide the fact that I have been in Wales unless you do."

"Why," said Wylde, "there is a place called Dolgethley a bit farther on. You can manage that, I reckon, so long as you don't see how it is spelt. There are very fine walks all around it. And we pass along the flanks of Cader Idris."

Dark clouds and hills thickened round them, brushed through by spattering rain. Corris was a world of slate, roads, houses, fences, mountains roughening to the sky-line in the one deadly colour. Round the corner came a great height and a great depth made mysterious with heavily-massed clouds.

Peggy looked up and across the valley with a shiver.

"The earth has such a way of pulling out the bung and letting you through into something quite different," she said. "Oh, see that lake right away to the left. It looks so young and little and white among these old mountains. I am sure they are telling wicked stories with their bald heads all put together like this."

The road led sheer up the pass. A made road on the flank of a granite hill. And all the rugged length of Cader Idris heaved up opposite, spreading its knotted limbs and huge head in a bed of mist. And after that came rain in blackened cloud-bursts, to

chase them down the winding road to little quaint Dolgelly.

The car was dirty and wet, and for the first time Wylde did not watch its cleaning. He gave curt orders at the garage, and hurried to dress, that he might see Peggy for just a little space before dinner. He knew now that he could not do without seeing Peggy. And he knew that in a little he would not be able to do with seeing her. For a natural defiance of law and rule were bred in his blood, and he fully expected to break the Colonel's command.

In his first finding of Peggy on the broken floor of the crypt at Gloucester he had kissed her: kissed her until the memory of those kisses which she did not feel brought the blood to his face and his heart every hour. He made no attempt to excuse himself. Long since he had told Peggy that he had done, and would do, much that he knew to be wrong. By and by he would tell her that he had done it, and drive away her anger by lawful kisses, sweeter still. Now he played with fire and edged tools and all such things as heat and quicken the spirit because they are dangerous handling.

But it was not at Dolgelly that he next spoke alone with Peggy. From that torrent and precipice land sunlight went with them past sea and yellow sands to Barmouth, and then northward by the open reaches of Tremadoc Bay, with sea of a bird's-egg blue, and the dark promontory of Carnarvon beyond and the humped golden sands close beside. Mountains stood big to the right; the road dashed among shadowing trees and out to broad vistas. It swung left; it swung right; and once it swung the bold rock-height of Harlech Castle into view and would not let it go again, but ran straight through the little scattered town to its feet.

On the wide grassy top of its foursquare walls Wylde found Peggy a little later. There was a dash of excitement in her manner which struck a note in him, and she was arranging her camera with nervous

hands. She glanced up where she knelt on one knee, and her laugh did not ring true.

"Surrey and I have quarrelled," she cried. "I wanted him to sing 'The March of the Men of Harlech' with me, and he said it would be bathos. And, do you know, this is the real Jack the Giant-killer Castle, with its moat and narrow gate and those two big towers like cylinders. Edward the First set up five great gun-barrels on this rock and joined them together with straight lines of masonry and called the thing a castle. I know they were gun-barrels, because you can see the rifling inside every tower where the stairs have been."

Wylde laid a strong brown hand on either side of the camera.

"I'll hold it steady while you take the snap," he said. And he watched her while her eyes travelled over the wonderful panorama of sea and sand and rolling yellow dunes where pale grass gleamed and the line of the railway cut, dead-straight, to the dark far hills. She moved the camera a little, feeling the strength of his hands. And at so slight a reminder as that her nervousness grew.

Peggy was doing what she had set out to do. She was driving her team; but already the reins were cutting her fingers. Wylde's dominant assertion and half-reverent daring frightened her. The thing was becoming too real, too close. Surrey's lazy contempt was growing deep and personal. Five minutes since they had had their first definite quarrel, and Wylde was the cause of it. Peggy would not give Surrey anything but a wickedly elusive defiance such as angered him the more, and she had come up to the top of Harlech Castle to cry. Now she spoke up gay and bravely.

"Can't you think of Owen Glendower thundering up out of the Welsh Marches to batter this place into submission?" she said. "I don't suppose his men would have a pair of shoes between them, or more than a crust to eat. And they would be shouting their

'whet your battle-axe' cry, with the White Lion ramping above them on the banners."

"Did you know that Owain, father of St. Kentigern, invented the White Lion device before it became the tavern-sign for half the inns of Wales?" said Wylde.

"And did you know that this castle was the last——"

"Oh, don't;" the mirth in his eyes told Peggy whither he was leading her. "It wasn't really?"

"Baedeker says so. The last castle in North Wales to hold out for Charles."

"It is extraordinary," said Peggy. But her laugh fell dead to earth, and Wylde's face changed. He put the camera aside.

"What has hurt you?" he said, and his voice was very deep and tender.

Peggy fought her tears. She stood up, gasping. Then Wylde was on his feet before her, and her blinded eyes shrank from his.

"Go away," she said. "Go away. Go away."

Wylde hesitated. Then he turned, walking round the walls, and standing, looking out to sea. Peggy dashed in swift desperation to the nearest cylinder which masqueraded as a tower. But it was only too truly a gun-barrel with most of the rifling worn away. There was no road down except past Wylde, and he knew it. And she knew that he knew it.

Her tears dried in a flame of anger. She was The Honourable Peggy Bouchier again as she walked along the wall with her head high. From below Surrey, standing in the door, caught the flutter of her dress against the skyline and glanced up. But the man and woman on the broad wall were looking only at each other.

Wylde had turned as Peggy came near. He barred the way.

"Why were you crying?" he said, gently.

The tone quenched Peggy's flame. Her eyes suddenly ran over. She dropped her handkerchief, and Wylde stooping for it, saw Surrey. Then exultation welled up in him. He moved to hide Peggy, and

bent close to her. He did not speak, but when he shot down a glance an instant later Surrey was gone.

Wylde's content was legitimate. Surrey had hurt him by every means at his command, and he retaliated gladly. How much Surrey cared for Peggy he did not know. How much he cared for the money that would come through Peggy he did know. But he was yet uncertain if the man connected the two in his mind. Peggy spoke brokenly—

"Please go down. I—I am so silly. I'm feeling tired. I'll come directly."

"I hear the horn going," said Wylde. "I reckon the Colonel is afraid it might be late before we get to Anglesey. But if you care to sit in front you needn't talk. I guess I know better than to worry you."

Peggy hesitated. But that doggedly-courageous strata in her was rousing again, and it told her that this was just what she wanted. Surrey must be made angry, if that would bring him to his feet. He was letting so many many little things go. By degrees the whole conduct of the tour had dropped into Wylde's hands. It was Wylde who wired ahead for rooms. It was Wylde who ordered lunch-baskets when a long day was before them; Wylde who forwarded to London their changes of address. It was Wylde who kept the car supplied with books and papers for the Colonel and fresh guides and magazines for Peggy. It was Wylde who always remembered the Colonel's own particular wines. Once Surrey had shared these tasks. But he had let them slip to Wylde with an easy indifference, for at the back of his brain hung the belief that Wylde made a quite decent chauffeur and footman, and was really well fitted for that sort of thing.

He was not unjust to Wylde. He simply graded him into a lower class, and judged him accordingly. Therefore he stood secure and serene in his own conceit, allowing Wylde to filch from him this power, another power, and then a third, until, against their

will, both the Colonel and Peggy were learning to depend very thoroughly on Wylde.

Peggy had remembered all this in an instant. For she knew Surrey better than he guessed, even as she loved him better. And the whole beginning and end of her thought was the same. Surrey must be made angry with Wylde.

She sat by Wylde as the road took the way to Penrhyn. In this world about them all that man touched seemed stone. The fields were cut by stone fences; the whitewashed cottages were stone, and the square sheepfolds were stone also. And all these stones were rubble in Merioneth and flat slate in Carnarvon. Peggy noted it with dull eyes, even as she noted the flowers over and around them; lush honeysuckle, poppies, foxgloves, and the harsh tints of the blackberry. Across the estuary Harlech Castle squared its broad shoulders to the sky. And then, beyond Penrhyn-deudraeth, the bluff brown bulk, the yellow sand and far blue sea gave place to a deep gorge and a rushing river and a steep slope purpling over with foxgloves.

Beddgelert was a small sweet village in the heart of a wooded valley where a stream ran brown and bubbling. Peggy and Wylde paid tribute to the few rough stones in a field which legend calls Gelert's Grave. But Wylde, keeping his word, was silent, and Peggy was grateful and softened by his silence as the mountains rose about them, old and grave and hoary; with Snowdon, like a wide-limbed sleeping bear taking up the skyline to the right. Near Rhyddhu it seemed to raise its head, a mighty purple crest shredded about in pale cold mist against a darker sky. At its feet the pass was sunk in heaviest richest blues, and a ledge of hill on the nearer side was struck sharp yellow-green with sunlight.

From Waenfawr the heavy purples and the pale greys still held horizon in a stately loneliness thick with memories of that Llewelyn who had fought and suffered up and down its naked distance until death

found him in the Welsh Marches seven hundred years ago. Then, over the crest lay Anglesey, ringed by glittering amethyst water. The Menai Strait unfolded in a thin steel wire as the car rushed down. Bright sharp points of colour shot from street and river and sea against the broad-flanked Castle, lifting the turrets, the towers and spacious walls that had grown white with years as it had lifted them when Edward the First was king.

On the Seiont river which guarded half the Castle yachts and little boats glanced and swung against the wooded hills. All was warmth and glow and sturdy strength: all was cleanliness and smell of the sea and sunlight.

It so occurred that when Peggy passed the deep moat and the huge entrance gates with their battered wreck of the first Edward above Wylde only was with her. Surrey chose to stay in the car, and though his manner had been calmly genial as ever Peggy did not misunderstand him. Surrey was not one who did his washing in public, but when his washing-day came Peggy would be there.

Below the gates a woman sold postcards and little Welsh dolls with tall steeple-hats. Peggy chose out a handful. Then she sought for her purse, finding a half-penny stamp and a watch-key. She looked round for the Colonel. A new-met friend was holding him without the drawbridge. She looked for Wylde. He had seen her at the counter and he had walked away with both hands deep-thrust in his pockets. Then she remembered suddenly. The Serpentine Cross hung on Wylde's chain because he was a coward, who would let himself be bullied by Surrey even while he was attempting to rob him.

"I am perfectly right to despise him," she told herself. "Every time I begin to like him something new proves it. Nothing I could do against that man would be wrong." She put the dolls aside and smiled at the woman. "Wrap them up for me, please," she said. "I will get them when I come out." And

then she followed Wylde into the wide-spaced grounds.

Within the walls the Castle was a huge cheese-rind, tall and strong, and pierced once or twice with holes. Away left across the grass-plat rose the round-towered Queen's Gate where the "Prince who had never done wrong" was shown by great Edward to his subjects. That baby was to do much wrong before the sin of "the she-wolf of France" brought him at last to an irrational sainthood in the marble shrine at Gloucester, and Peggy had not forgotten this as she climbed the Eagle Tower to the small bare stone room where he was born, unless tradition lied. Little chambers opened out at each turn of the stair, and from one of them Wylde saw and joined her. Together they looked through the narrow window on the sparkling Strait, and Peggy, fearing silence, spoke quickly.

"It does seem fit that this place should be mixed up with so many Princes of Wales," she said. "The first one was born here in 1284. Then in fourteen-something came Owen Glendower, calling himself Prince of Wales, to batter it down. And Harry of Monmouth, fourth Prince of Wales, was the man detailed to check him."

"There has been more fighting than that done here. Its very name means 'the fort near Mona.' And when Anglesey was Mona it was a stronghold of the British and of the Druid faith. I guess Suetonius was making things hum a little when he had to leave here to fight Boadicea. Why, every bit of its history smells of fight."

Wylde's voice was eager, exultant, and Peggy drew in herself. The very breath of fight was in this man's nostrils, and what was she to hold him back?

From the tower-top they saw the old town walls knit in with the houses, and, vague among trees and buildings, a trace of the Roman Segontium. Here the Colonel joined them, and they walked dark corridors and climbed darker stairs and groped in darkest

rooms, until Peggy lifted up her voice in complaint.

"The people of those days must have had cat's eyes that could see in the dark and shine in the dark. Oh, why don't my eyes shine in the dark!"

"They shine everywhere—to me," said Wylde, low at her side.

Then, in the blacks of this corridor that ran in the thickness of the wall she heard him stumble ahead, blocking out the pin-prick of light, and she clung to the Colonel's arm.

"Dear," she said, breathlessly. "Did you ever sing that hymn 'Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile'?"

"Why, I can't say that I ever did," said the Colonel. "It is hardly applicable just now, is it, Peggy? What a nuisance Wylde is. He is making this place darker than it was meant to be."

He was making Peggy's heart darker than it was meant to be when they left the great majestic old castle to its fadeless memories and swung along the lovely Straits by sycamore lanes and ferny roads. The air was thick with the dust of motors. And then way and air were suddenly clear to the left and a sharp pull brought the mighty foreheads of the Bridge Towers frowning before them. Peggy had put her team in front, being just now incapable of control or direction, and it was Surrey who paid the two-shilling toll and took the tread of the right carriage-way at a ten-mile pace which dropped to four where the great chains and rods began to swing.

Far to rightward big steamers, white yachts, little red fishing-boats dotted blue water between green trees sheer away to Great Orme's Head and sunny Puffin Island. Deep down on the left, near the red tubular bridge, the infinitesimal ancient church of Llandysilio sat on its rock in the Strait centre, guarded by a little wood of Scotch firs. There were white clouds and blue sky, shining roads and sparkling water. There was sense of glad sunlight and the

strong clean breath of the sea and of warm-blooded life in the scattered dwellings of man. The power of this great bridge of piers and iron bars and gripping chains in the subterranean caverns tingled Wylde's blood in response, and that plain tablet which had greeted him at the Bridge entrance, saying only "Thomas Telford, 1826," roused his envy. Through the small dingy town of Menai Telford Street signed the last page of that history, and Wylde shut his lips together. Power meant so much; money meant so much. But, until he had let his tongue say what he had no right to say, he had not known that Peggy meant more. She meant more: more than those two things which had been the two desires of his life. And, beyond that, she meant the real beginning of honour to Wylde. Twice, since he had begun to see things true, things lovely, things altogether pure through the light in Peggy's eyes he had sinned against her. And, because he knew the nature that was in him, he dreaded that he might do it again.

This dread took him through the pale after-gleams of twilight to the old ivy-softened ruins of Beaumaris Castle. The whole little town was full of nameless charm. The topless grey walls set among the shade of thick trees in the dusk were full of nameless peace. But Wylde lay long on the broken crest before he found it. Down below were dead-black dungeons whence a man once lowered could never get out again, and Wylde was to think of those dungeons in the days that were coming. Now, in the calm night, when the bats flew low and the song of the sea came fitfully, caressing "Mona, the mother of Wales," he marshalled certain facts, and set them before him.

That letter read at Teignmouth might mean much or little to him. Whether the Colonel had taken heed of it he did not know. But he himself had set in motion all the machinery at his command; and for good or ill, the result would affect him deeply. Now, before he could go to Peggy with the clean heart and reverent lips he was beginning to want to give her, he

must tell the Colonel the whole of that story. He must tell him of those kisses in the crypt at Gloucester. He must tell of how he had broken faith and said love in tone and words to Peggy. He must tell him of other things which had blackened his manhood. Always he had considered himself a man made hard and brutal and entirely selfish by rough contact with the world. Now love had gripped that other side which was so much stronger than he had known, and chivalry, honour, reverence were demanding heavy toll of him.

The last saffron lights were long dead in the sky. Mist crawled close, wetting him with damp-breathing lips. In the ivy an owl rustled, calling once. Wylde felt his way down past the gaping chimney-tops and rotting steps heedlessly. He was strung-up to great deeds. Loud in his ears rang the clarion-call of Paracelsus, "I go to prove my soul." Past his repentance and his confession to the Colonel he would go to prove his soul to Peggy. For no power on earth should keep him from her once he had purified himself.

Among the ghostly trees with the old stone lodges vaguely big through the mist at the entrance he stood a moment. Down beyond, at the Bulkley Arms, Peggy would be sleeping, with all that wealth of fair hair unbound and those dark eyelashes low on her cheeks. Wylde bent his head, and the first prayer of his life spoke on his lips.

"God bless you, my Honourable Peggy," he said.

CHAPTER VII

THE GIRL FROM MONTANA

"LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLL —" spelt Peggy, solemnly.

"Peggy," warned the Colonel, looking up from his paper.

"gogerchwyrndrobwltsi —"

"I don't think I deserve this," said the Colonel, plaintively. "Is it a new society for the Prevention of Something?"

"—liog—og—og—och l No, it's the name of that village in Anglesey I wanted to go to." Peggy threw aside the postcard and dropped her chin in her hands. "I would have liked another day in Wales," she said. "We didn't even see the stone coffin near Beaumaris where King John's daughter was buried after she married Llewelyn the Great and he refused to do homage to John."

"She couldn't very well have been buried before, could she? And her son fought Henry the Third all round Chester. Won't that content you?"

"I am tired of fight," said Peggy, gravely.

The Colonel looked over the small soft length and breadth of her.

"You kitten," he said. "Where do you find anything of your own size to scratch?"

"I'm bigger inside than you think." Seriousness was deep in Peggy's voice.

"Concentrated essence. Do you fancy I don't know that?" The Colonel selected a fly from his mental book and cast it. "Perhaps I had better have let Surrey go on to Inverness alone instead of making this rush through for it," he said.

But the fish would neither rise nor bite. Peggy gathered letters and postcards together and dropped a kiss on the Colonel's forehead.

"Good-night, dear," she said, and shut the door behind her.

The Colonel lit another cigar. Since the wire demanding Surrey's instant presentation of himself at Inverness had come through to Beaumaris in the evening before the Colonel had remade his mind several times. But it was Peggy's final decision which had brought them from Anglesey to Chester in this day, with the promise of a longer run to-morrow.

The Colonel got up. He was tired and very stiff. And then Wylde came in, his dark face looking harsher than was usual.

"May I speak to you?" he said.

"Well;" the Colonel stifled a yawn: "will to-morrow do, Wylde? Frankly, I have no brain left. Too much mountain air and scenery."

"I rather wanted it to-night;" Wylde's voice dropped sullenly. "It would not take more than half-an-hour, I reckon."

"My dear fellow, I hope to be asleep in a quarter of an hour. It is not absolutely imperative, I suppose?"

It was, because Wylde, having keyed himself up sternly to the highest that was in him, would of necessity suffer a severe relapse very shortly. His hands twitched. Then—

"No," he said. "Good-night."

He was gone before the Colonel could answer. The Colonel yawned again in the passage.

"Queer fellow," he said. Then his eyes softened as he passed Peggy's door. "Light out," he said. "Well, she wanted all the sleep she could get, bless her!"

But Peggy was flung face-down on her bed, fully dressed and very fully unhappy. She had made Wylde love her. There was no escape from that knowledge any longer. And be the man as sinful and

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dishonourable as might be by this thing she had proved herself no better than he. She had set out to make Surrey angry and the Colonel dissatisfied, and for the last time Wylde had met and conquered her. Conquered her by a real reverent love such as she had not guessed could come from him. But it was there. She had learnt it to-day, and there was no forgetting, no avoidance. He had said nothing: he had seldom looked at her. Then where was it, when was it that she knew so very surely?

She lay still, ticking off the hours of this long day by one and one to see if there was any loophole in them at all. Pretty Bangor, all blue sea and beech-trees, where Wylde, brushing an occasional glance across hers, had talked of cromlechs and menhirs on Anglesey, of the days when Bangor was Cdr, or college—circle of ancient learning. And then, laughing in a new nervousness, he had said—

“Beaumaris Castle did not hold out for Charles. It capitulated to Cromwell.”

“Isn't it often best to capitulate?” asked Peggy, with a whole plan drawn up behind the words.

“Why certainly—if you'd sooner save your hide than your pride. I reckon I'd want to kick the man who talked to me of capitulating.”

Peggy was silent as they climbed by splendid roads past Penrhyn Castle, and past the thousand-foot-deep slate quarries at Bethesda that breasted the world like an enormous amphitheatre where giants had sat. The conviction was forced on her that she could not tell to Wylde the frank truth and throw herself on his mercy. Wylde had no mercy. Lying on her bed she remembered how that cold knowledge had sunk into her among the tall bare mountains where bleak featureless Ogwen Lake lay spread in utter silent loneliness of grave hills, straight white road and one dark three-headed mountain with two stone figures that watched and watched, until the little car along the white line seemed no more than an ephemeral beetle buzzing through its life of one day.

It was Surrey's fault that Peggy sat in front with Wylde during all that long run down into pretty Capel Curig and dear Bettws-y-Coed tucked in the hollows of its leafy hills with the Conway brattling through it and mysterious glens and black cataracts behind its smiling sunniness. For Surrey had been in the tonneau with the Colonel when she came out, and he had made no effort to move. She had been too shy and too proud to ask it, and bitter tears came now at the remembrance. Surrey was slow to anger, but he was just as surely slow to forgive. Her heart was sick at thought of what she would have to say to him, and it was sick at thought of the touch of Wylde's hands when he had pulled and given to her great masses from that wonderful stretch of purple bell-heather which grew on a grey stone hill beyond the Conway Falls.

Perhaps it was that touch which had made her so certain. Or was it later, after the vague misty humps of Snowdon had finally died among cold bare hills beyond tiny Pentrevoelas and Rug, and the keen rare air of nine hundred feet had dropped at Corwen to five hundred. For at Corwen they had stopped by the Owen Glendower Hotel that they might see the mark of his dagger, broad-handled, long-bladed, sunk in the stone above the south door of the little old church: Owen Glendower, the patriot who had taken his name from the Welsh earth and given his blood to the Welsh earth and his memory to its history for ever.

Wylde had spoken of the mark as legend, and Peggy had no spirit to contradict. To her this fierce fourteenth-century fighter, defiant, lawless, courageous, leading a "rascally bare-footed rabble" to victory, knighted by Richard the Second, dying deserted but unconquered still, was such a man as Wylde might have been. Then she felt Wylde's eyes on her, and she tucked the Colonel's arm into hers.

"Well, indeed," she said. "I think that it is true

whatever, and there's sure I am. Dear, I am beginning to understand why the Welsh have to embroider our language. It must sound so bald to them after their own."

"You manage to put some fancy-work into it, Peggy," said the Colonel.

And Peggy had laughed, springing before him into the tonneau.

"Well," she said, "when the only English name in Wales is Jones you have to do something. Dear, I am afraid you must go in front. I want to sit here."

She did not want to sit there. Quite frankly she knew that it was a choice of the devil and the deep sea. . . . "But I chose the devil," she decided. "I suppose I know more about them. Anyway, I know that he has got to apologize and I know that he won't."

Surrey had partly desired, partly dreaded that he might have to go north alone. He was angry with Peggy—sternly, sullenly angry; but pride and a certain disgust forbade him show it. And so he had talked civilly, pleasantly, as the car dipped along lovely roads of hazel and beech and fern and pinkly-seeding sycamore, through sweet little Berwyn on the slopes of the Berwyn mountains and Llangollen with the Dee winding through it in calm loveliness. Wylde had halted a little here that they might see Plas Newydd, once home of the quaint Ladies of Llangollen, and might see also the little British coracles which the fishermen yet use on the river. It had been a place of winding beautiful ways and mountains lapped in forest, where the dead broken bone of Dinas Bran Castle stood unburied on the hill-top, still linking memories with Valle Crucis Abbey beyond the hill and with the man who had built them both seven hundred years ago. But to Peggy, lying drenched with tears on her bed, that road along the Berwyns, through big assertive Wrexham and along the tramlines into Chester, had been haunted by two lines of a silly little song—

“And there no more thy face I see,
So Berwyn Banks are sad to me.”

Without foundation and equally without doubt she knew that these next few days would sweep her into that flood of circumstances which her own acts had brought on her. She had believed that she could take two men and pinch and pull them into plasticine figures as she thought best for them. And some unknown Vulcan had lifted her hands aside, and hammered those two men into life on the anvil of passion—passion of love, of anger, of hidden depths where her feet, reaching down, found no foothold.

It was the Colonel only who that night slept the sleep of the just. But Peggy had buckled on her armour before she came to the breakfast-table; and she fenced gallantly with fear and danger and turned the steel of her breastplate to the sun until Wylde was dazzled. She talked recklessly of the days when Chester was the Celtic Deva from which Suetonius and Agricola went out to crush the Druid faith in Anglesey. She talked of the days when Chester was the Roman Circa or Castra, filled with the breath of the Twentieth Legion and later with banners when King Edgar came for homage by the tributary princes of Wales. She talked of the preaching of the Third Crusade in Chester, and her eyes lit suddenly.

“Oh, I wish I’d seen it,” she cried. “They were men then. *Men*. Think of the white Archbishop standing up in the market-place and all the men flinging aside their clothyards and their drinking-mugs and their bargaining and the women who would have held them back, and rushing out, buckling on their swords to ‘Follow the Cross, and win them Paradise.’”

“They more often won disgrace and dishonour,” said the Colonel, dryly. “For more sin has been done in the name of good than in the name of sin, Peggy.”

Wylde glanced up sharply. He was going to believe the truth of this in two days, but at present he did not know it. Peggy laughed, springing to her feet.

"Dear," she cried, "you don't seem to belong to yourself when you moralize. And we have only half a day to see Chester in. We must leave after lunch, mustn't we, Surrey?"

Surrey finished rolling his cigarette and crossed to the door.

"I am afraid so," he said. "We lunch at one, do we? Very well."

He went out, and the blood stung Peggy's face. This quiet leaving of her to Wylde hurt more than any words. Then she rallied, because the Colonel was watching her.

"Dear," she said, "we passed the other end of Offa's Dyke yesterday."

"Are you sure it wasn't this end?" suggested the Colonel. "Peggy, Peggy——"

"I will not be accurate. Bare accuracy is like lamb without mint sauce. I believe that the Rows in Chester were built to force home to the people the distinction between the upper and lower classes when they began to be. Everything had to be done in parables and literal explanations then. And I believe that the Jolly Miller who lived by the River Dee was contemplating suicide when he sang that he cared for nobody. And I believe——"

"You little pagan," said the Colonel; "what unhallowed book do you take your creed from?"

"The book of Mine Own Self;" she thrust her laughing face back through the door. "I shall be ready in exactly one and a half minutes," she said.

"And then we are going out to buy history and Cheshire cats."

They bought Cheshire cats in china, in silver, in bog oak, and Wylde saw the Colonel hang one of these last on Peggy's wrist where the Serpentine Cross once shone. Some day he was going to ask Peggy to wear it again—— But when, out in the Rows, Peggy suddenly lifted her wrist to his eyes, he all but forgot that the day in which he would ask her was not yet.

"It has a pane of glass right through it," explained Peggy. "Poor little pussy-cat. Just see what it is there for, will you?"

Wylde did not touch her, but he lifted the cat, holding it close to his eyes against the light. Peggy stood very still with her breath fluttering. A sudden irresponsible demon had driven her to this last defiance against Wylde. Perhaps he might do something, say something which would give her a definite weapon. Perhaps he might show a weakness which would prove her power and explain to her the way out of this. Perhaps—— She shivered, looking beyond him down the narrowing vista of the low-beamed corridor, struck into light and shadow by the sunlight between the pillars. In the little balconies that clung to the skirts of this long ancient mother was stowed the over-flow from all the shops: perambulators, dolls, books, furniture. Past the rubbed wooden railing and the worn stone steps, once trod by thirteenth-century feet, the noise of the street came fitfully. The Colonel leaned on the rails, looking out. Along the patched aisle of light and dark, indistinct in distance, a few people were moving.

Then Peggy brought her eyes to Wylde's face. It was warm with blood, and gentle as the touch of his hand when he loosed the bracelet, bending his head with a slight reverent gesture.

"Six pictures of the city," he said. "Rather a cute idea, I reckon."

His voice was low, and not quite steady. He turned, seeing Surrey and the girl from Montana coming down the Row, and seeing also, for one instant, the cold anger on Surrey's face. The girl from Montana flashed by him to snatch at Peggy's hands.

"Sakes!" she cried; "this is an elegant surprise. Why, I was aiming to do Chester in an hour, but I guess I can make it two if you can. Isn't this a cultured town? I do admire a place with history, don't you?" She plunged her question at Wylde.

"Why, I saw you in that Cathedral where they keep the crematoriums top of the screens. I guess you remember me?"

Wylde said that he did, without addendo. She was prettier than ever, and her gay breeziness seemed to blow all conventionality before it. But he had no thought to waste on the girl from Montana. She pulled Peggy forward, chattering rapidly, and Wylde hesitated, ran down the steps into the street, and turned towards the walls that ring in ancient Chester. The girl from Montana laughed, darting her glances from Surrey to the Colonel. But she did not loose Peggy's hand.

"Well, I will say we haven't got anything like this in Montana. I carry Baedeker and a history-book every place, and I've had hymn-book covers made so that I can take them to church. I do work hard. M-y-y sakes! I guess I know all about the Danes holding Chester against King Alfred in 894, and King Edgar being rowed around by nine kings A.D. 973, and about that skunk, Richard Two, being brought here to have mud thrown at him by Bolingbroke A.D. 1399. My popper says I have a fine head for figures. I tell him I have a fine head for hats. Say, that girl in front knows how to put on a hat, doesn't she? Should I call her The Honourable when I speak to her? Why . . . certainly; I do feel that I am assimilating English history in chunks."

"What good do you expect to get from it?" asked Surrey.

"Why . . . I guess I just want to know things. I guess we are all built that way. I don't aim at remembering it, you know. My brain is like the recording ribbon at a cable-station, and I don't imagine I know now which of those dots and dabs and dashes is Salisbury or Wells or Warwick. But I've done them all. You can see the labels on my trunks."

Wylde had been quite correct when he guessed that Surrey placed the Canadian's knowledge in the same category with that of the girl from Montana. And

for this reason it is not very clear why Surrey dropped behind the Colonel and Peggy and flirted with the girl from Montana up and down the length and width of the city.

The unnameable charm of old Chester discovered itself to Wylde only on that forenoon. God's Providence House, bowing out its brown-and-white timbered front to the street, oldest and quaintest of the many old and quaint houses along the ways: the wide-sweeping time-roughened arches of St. Werburgh's Abbey, founded by Anselm, Abbot of Bec. The Water Tower where the sea, now far distant, once had beat, lifting the moored vessels: the rooms over the Northgate, whereby Wylde climbed to the Walls, with their hideous tragedies of prison-days clinging to them yet.

Beyond the ivied Water Tower relics of a Roman Bath showed on the green. Wylde saw them from the Walls, and then he continued round them; those broad red sandstone walls, which carry their history back to Agricola's day in their earliest foundations; which have been rebuilt and rebuilt, from ever the same root, until their last bud and bloom came in the fourteenth century. Britons had died grimly without those walls; the red rose of Lancaster had flaunted there in the troops of Henry the Fourth. Charles had trodden that way to see the defeat of his army from the bare squat block of the Phoenix Tower. It was a plain road, that ancient causeway on the wall-top—a road edged with roofs, and peopled with ordinary passers-by. But Wylde halted for a little in one of the bays, and listened to the folk of other days go past him: Rollicking prentices, with leathern jerkins and the soft flap of long-pointed shoes; trim-tripping maids in duffle and high heels; soldiers roystering with ring of steel and rattle of oaths; soft-stepping silken lords and ladies; Charles with his long face and mild eyes; Cromwell in buff and burliness; the first great Edward and his fair Eleanor of Castile; Llewelyn of Wales, and a thousand more.

They passed him by with their swagger and their state and their slow steps of age, and presently Wylde turned and went with them, down into the life of the Now again.

The Old Dee Bridge, once the only link to Wales; the Cathedral with its thousand years of associations and its four hundred more of tradition; St. John's Church ruins, the Castle, and the many more things that called him had not any answer at all from Wylde. His mind was seeking Peggy, to tell her all that he had seen, and at lunch he found her, gay with talk of Eaton Place and Hawarden, where the old Plantagenet Castle defies time from its hill-top yet, looking across the mist of years at the turrets of the new.

Here Wylde heard, and did not heed, that the girl from Montana was coming with them so far as Stirling. This was Surrey's doing, solely, in his bitterness against Peggy; and he had the girl from Montana in the front seat beside him when he took the flat ugly road to Birkenhead, and proceeded by a heaving half-mile-length of pontoon to the ferry. The hidden sea made wooden mountains that melted as the car touched them; Peggy shut her eyes, and the Montana girl full-stopped her chatter with little screams of fear. It was a nightmare of heavy carts and uneasy horses on the ferry; of boats fading in the grey mists on troubled water to left and to right; of a great steamer casting off and nosing down to the Atlantic; of a sharp run ashore and the horror of the Liverpool slums, where all was filth and naked poverty.

Children swarmed round the car, leaving dirty finger-marks along the hood; mud was thrown twice and again; the squalor of these streets and streets and streets seemed to eat into the brain. Peggy caught her breath suddenly and pointed.

"Look," she said.

Over a fountain stood a slender, delicate little water-nymph, fouled with the flung refuse from the streets. Peggy's lips quivered.

"Oh, poor things, poor things," she said. "The only beautiful thing they have."

"The rest of the town is very fine," said Wylde. "I saw it when I came over from New York."

"But there is this too," said Peggy, and fell silent as they ran on, through plain Ormskirk and plainer Preston, birthplace of Richard Arkwright, with the dreary dingy flatness of a manufacturing county about them.

Dim sea showed on the left. Lancaster left a memory of spires and river, trees ringing the pretty town and a castle that struck a thought of John of Gaunt across the centuries. Peggy glanced at Kendal lightly, not guessing what would be before she saw again that round hill crowned by the wrecked castle where Katherine Parr was born, those winding roads and green softnesses of slopes and tree-blocked distances. The land beyond offered stone fences and stern climbs through barren country where a cold wind blew in long shrill notes. Here brown Highland cattle raised wide-horned heads from the rough grass, staring peacefully. The thread of road trailed white and narrow, across the bare Westmorland hills with valleys as bare sunk below. Ahead, by the road-side, stood a car, with two ladies muffled in the tonneau and a man stooping over the open bonnet. According to the law of the road Surrey halted.

"Can I be of any use?" he asked.

The man came out of the bonnet promptly, and offered blessings in advance.

"We have been here an hour," he said. "She is weak as a cat and spitting just as savagely. But I can't locate the trouble."

Surrey, springing out of the car, knew that the odds were a hundred to one if he could. And he knew also that the odds were quite even that Wylde would.

"Back-fire or miss-fire?" he asked.

"Back-fire. But I forget how to locate it. I—I am new to this kind of thing."

He looked new to everything, including existence.

He was an immature weak-kneed man, and to Wylde's certain knowledge he had no business to be driving anything more dangerous than a push-cart. Surrey went to work in a serenity which he did not feel, short-circuiting with the screw-driver until he found the fault in the second cylinder. Thereafter he boldly cleaned the plug, and it was only Wylde who felt hidden joy when the result showed not any improvement at all.

Surrey turned to the brush on the magneto. He knew that Wylde was watching, and at the back of his head those brutally-direct lines of Browning began hammering in time with the gasping spit of the car—

"And the sin . . . I impute . . .
To each frustrate . . . ghost . . .
Is the unlit lamp . . . the unlit lamp . . . the unlit lamp . . ."

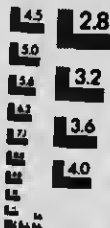
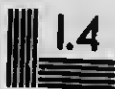
The spitting of the car got on Surrey's nerves. Of course the whole thing was a silly mockery. The Colonel loved him and trusted him, even though he could not locate troubles in this intricate kind of machinery. Peggy loved him, dearly, dearly, though she flirted with Wylde just to make him angry. His hold over these two was strong as ever it was before Wylde came in the way. Then he began to talk of pre-ignition and carbon on the cylinder-heads, and Wylde knew that he had come to the end of his power. It was a severe ordeal for Peggy. From eager hope and half-shaped prayer she had slid down, down, to dread and an overwhelming hate of Wylde. Because she knew what the last act in this little roadside play was going to be.

It was a curious picture, up there among the strange wind-swept silence of rough blowing grass, of naked hills where beacon-fires had once ringed horizon, of shaggy cattle moving slowly half-down the steep slopes, and of curlews calling, calling in the loneliness beyond the edges of the wind. For the red car and the blue car, the well-dressed men and women and the panting breath of machinery seemed an anachron-



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ism, a petty foolishness; although because bathos and pathos are often more near akin than the inversion of their initial letter makes them, there was tragedy as well as comedy there on the mountain-side.

The Colonel was watching with that face which Peggy called his Face of Judgment. Wylde was watching, narrowly and impassively, although he appeared to be talking to the girl from Montana. Then Surrey came forward, speaking frankly.

"I have set out to do more than I can," he said. "Will you come and try, Wylde?"

Peggy felt the bitterness of that acknowledgment on her own lips and heart. For it meant much, so much. She saw the Colonel's face change, and he looked away. And then resentment welled up in her again. For all his sins Surrey was no coward. He was straight: straight as his broad back and the look in his blue eyes. And Wylde . . . Wylde was going forward to the red car, and Peggy sent a spiteful prayer after him.

"Don't let him find it. If we have to stay here till we starve don't let him find out what's wrong."

To Wylde's knowledge there was not much more than one thing left to look for, and very presently he found it. He turned to the weak-kneed man, who was preparing for utter collapse.

"The exhaust valve spring is broken," he said; "have you a spare one?"

The weak-kneed man was not quite sure. But he discovered it, and for ten minutes Wylde screwed and unscrewed caps, handled valves and springs and cot-tars and washers; finally put the whole together again and sent the red car off with a cheerful hum that grew thin and thinner until it faded into distance.

The Montana girl was clapping her hands.

"Why," she cried, "what a perfectly lovely man you are, Mr. Wylde. Don't you feel as if you had been delivering somebody or taking a castle or something?"

"I guess he would have managed his way down,"

said Wylde. "It would have been slow; but he could have done it if he hadn't been afraid of the car. A man has no right to be allowed a motor-licence unless he can prove that he's capable."

"Did you have to prove it?" asked the girl from Montana.

"No," said Wylde, only; but Peggy guessed the reservation. It was not Wylde who would fail in any test to which he chose to submit himself.

She put the Colonel as buffer between herself and Wylde as they dashed down steep grades from the windy hills through Shap, strung plainly along the road with its Spa and Abbey ruins, and ran on by the light of a fiery sunset that poured across fields and wooded hills to redden the white perfection of the roads. The Valley of the Eamont, once a secret Druidic retreat in the heart of the Inglewood Forest, rolled out on either hand, and over Eamont Bridge an old quaint inn gave welcome into Cumberland. There was history of all ages flung about this peaceful land, where Prince Charlie's army on their disheartened return from Derby had met Cumberland's troops at Clifton Bridge and scattered from them, and where Fergus MacIvor had seen the Banshee of Death on that bridge before he went to his death in the Carlisle dungeons. Wylde was thinking of this and much more when he showed to Peggy a plain stone standing in a field.

"A Plague Stone," he said. "Where country folk left produce and townsfolk left money in a bowl of vinegar in exchange. There were hundreds died of plague in Penrith. And this is Penrith right ahead, you know."

It was an amazingly clean and quaint cluster of pink and green and blue and white houses, picked out in doors and windows of all colours, and looking like a picture direct from the crude but enthusiastic hands of a child. In the front seat Surrey turned.

"We arranged to get our letters in Stirling tomorrow night," he said. "So I think we might stay

here. Then we could run out before dinner and see the end of Ulleswater. It is only a few miles."

Past the Plague Stone again, and past the green mound called Arthur's Table the road ran down lovely ways to Pooley Bridge, where Peggy forgot her troubles for a space and forgot even her camera until the Montana girl brought it to her.

"For it certainly is a very elegant piece of scenery," said she.

To Peggy that long sapphire serenity of Ulleswater, with hills, purple and blue and green and slashed with red at gaze about it under the changing sunset, was a benediction and a lesson. Very nearly, among the clear calls of the blackbirds and the singing of one sleepy lark she heard Pippa chanting, chanting from out of her peaceful land of dream—

"All's right with the world. All's right with the world."

And then she looked at the Colonel, strolling on the bridge with his cigar, and at Surrey, laughing with the girl from Montana, and she knew that it was not right, but wrong, bitterly wrong. And at that moment Wylde spoke beside her.

"It was a cunning hand mapped out this lake, wasn't it? That old hump of Helvellyn frowning over there, and all the mass of hills with just that narrow strip of beauty to draw you right along till you reckon that you want to know right now what is waiting around the corner."

"Oh," cried Peggy, with a sudden gasp. "Do you feel that? I want to know what's round the corner too. Oh, I want to."

It was the stronger notes of life that always struck answers from Wylde. He glanced at her sharply, guessing the meaning that she believed hid. Then he saw the Colonel coming near, and he trod beside Peggy to meet him.

"Don't fret about what is around the corner until you have come around to face it," he said, gently. "Then—don't be afraid of it. That is one of the

biggest things of life . . . to learn not to be afraid."

He saw the red and white flicker on Peggy's cheeks, and he spoke again, lightly.

"I hope you'll look around Penrith a bit," he said. "It is a fine little old town. Cookson, the guardian of Wordsworth and his sister, lived there in the Burrowgate, and Wordsworth used to come over the hills to see Miss Hutchinson when she lived in Penrith. Do you remember how he once walked to Keswick with Southey in his carpet slippers and never knew when his feet were bare and cut? There was a lot of the sheep about Wordsworth, but he could get inside Nature. And that is a more difficult thing than getting inside human nature, for you have the key to that in yourself."

"But it won't open any but its own lock. You couldn't understand——"

"I reckon I could understand any special individual if I set out to do it. I believe I understand you, if you won't think me mighty impertinent to say so. You have taught me to know myself better, you see."

"You don't understand me," cried Peggy vehemently. "Oh, you don't—indeed you don't!"

She sprang from him to the Colonel.

"Dear," she cried, "give me my camera—quick. There is a perfect little duck of a steamer coming down the lake, and every colour that the gods ever dreamed of is upset over all those hills."

"How many snapshots and postcards do you expect to have before we get through, little girl?" demanded the Colonel.

"They are my memory. I have everything that I want to remember on them," asserted Peggy. And this clearly explained why, in all her sheafs of films, she had not one which held Wylde.

Wylde had told her not to be afraid. But she was afraid—afraid of him. She could not defy him, she could not stand against him, she could not overturn

him. He was coming so near, so near. And Surrey was going so far off.

All her courage could not hide the dread pressing on her, and Wylde, smoking his pipe down the dusky history-threaded streets after dinner, puzzled over this with eyes and lips growing grim.

The old Gloucester Arms where Richard the Third once lived, stands with his cognizance and the date of a century later on the open space that was the bull-ring in the days when Warwick the King-maker, who has left his device of the ragged staff on the church towers, hunted with his royal son-in-law through Inglewood Forest even as William the Red had done. All the hills, from the Beacon away to Scratchmere Scar, have rung to the horn and the gallop of horses. A boy passing Wylde was whistling "John Peel," and Wylde stopped with a sudden shock of remembrance. Then he walked into the dim churchyard where those dead lay whom Peel's "Tally-ho" had not waked "when it rang o'er the hills in the morning."

The Hutchinson graves were there in the long grass. And round the corner he came to the hog-back tomb of Owen Cæsarius, that giant of the dim old days before dates. Spaced fifteen feet apart two rough-shaped stone needles pointed skywards, with the hog-back stones laid double in between. And over the whole was woven in mystical parable the story of sin with chained figures linked, and linked again in unending loops to the Evil One, and the story of redemption with winged figures rising, broken and uncouth, but visible, above the grave of this wild man who once slew wild boars in the forest of Inglewood.

Wylde knew of the ancient statues in the old parish church; of the coins of earlier than Norman days found among the graves; of the windows showing pale portraits of the parents of Richard of Gloucester. But they meant much less to him than did the rough crosses, dim in shadows, set above some Vikings of an earlier age who had shaped their tree Igdrasil into other than that sanctioned by Thor.

Without the gate Wylde came on a red cigar and a dim flurr which spoke with the Colonel's voice.

"Have you been inquiring your way round this town?" demanded the Colonel. "Well, don't. Every one asks you if you know the Clock. The whole of Penrith seems to start from the Clock. I have been directed to it seven times, and I can't get away from it. Here it is again."

Wylde peered at the tall turret vague above its lights in the street-centre.

"I guess I read about this," he said. "It is in memory of young Musgrave of Edenhall. You remember that yarn of Longfellow's about the goblet taken from the fairies and the curse they flung after it—

"If this cup should break or fall,
Farewell the luck of Edenhall!"

I reckon the folk of Edenhall take some care of that bit of Venetian glass."

"Probably. Where are you going now?"

"I—I thought I might take a walk up to the Beacon Hill. They used to send the fires right along to the Pennine Range from thence. It is too dark to see anything of Penrith Castle or Brougham Castle." Then he halted. "Just look at those kids," he said.

Up and down the ironstone pavements small boys were striking sparks with their nailed boots into the night. The scarlet flashes cut the dark as the grate of feet sounded and dulled again.

"They are lighting their beacons," said the Colonel. "I think I won't go up with you, Wylde." He hesitated, then said: "You had something to say to me, had you not?"

Wylde felt his face burn. Then he looked away. Already the reaction had come, and he was back in the sloughs again. Not now could he make his confession to the Colonel.

"I guess there's no hurry, thanks," he said. "I won't keep you to-night."

Morning scents of white and red clover dipped in dew, breath of the meadowsweet and the hedge-roses went with them past the scattered villages into Carlisle. Every inch of that white smooth road to Greta Green had once throbbed to the hoofs of racing horses and the thunder of rocking wheels. Every inch of it had rung to the tread of Cumberland's men bringing the scattered edges of Prince Charlie's army to the Carlisle dungeons.

From the empty sockets of those dungeons at the Castle utter horror discovered itself to Peggy: horror in that terrible ledge running round the inner room and worn by the feet of those who stood chained to the walls by staples that rust in the sockets yet; horror in the ghastly iron chair wherein men were locked that they might be tortured by the drip of water from the trough above; horror in the curious wet stone in the wall, worn to the shape of an insunk handle by the thirsty tongues of prisoners, unless tradition lied.

". . . Which it often does," said Surrey, cheerfully. "They say a hundred men were shut in here after Clifton, and forty were dead in the morning. I should have put it down at forty living. That slit wouldn't let in air enough for one man. Good Lord, what brutes we English have been!"

"Why,"—the girl from Montana fluttered over to him—"you mustn't be too hard on your folk, Mr. Guest. I reckon the Romans were as bad. Part of this floor is Roman. Well, now; that Fergus MacIvor out of *Waverley* was shut up here, was he? And his head was put on the Scotch Gate after he had suffered the traitor's penalty outside the walls. My! they did go in for gory horrors then."

"Take me away," said Peggy, groping in the dark to an arm that she knew for the Colonel's. "Oh, take me out. Do you remember how Scott says that he 'looked after death across the Solway to the blue hills of his own country'? And he was a real man, but I forget his name."

"There were plenty of real men," said the Colonel,

sadly,—“men who fought with dirk and claymore against cavalry. This road made men’s hearts ache all the way from Shap to Inverness, Peggy. Except for Falkirk it was retreat, retreat, each step of the road for the Highlanders until they made their last stand against Cumberland at Culloden.”

“Somebody said that those bullet-marks on the outer walls nearly killed Cumberland,” said Peggy. “I wish they had. No, I don’t want to see the Norman Keep or the Roman Well, or the place where they shut up poor Mary of Scots. I wonder if Scott remembered these dungeons when he was being married in the Cathedral here?”

“I hope not,” said the Colonel, and laughed. “And we must leave the Cathedral for another day, little girl, for we have to make through to Stirling before night.”

The girl from Montana was crooning “The sun shines bright on Carlisle Wall” as they ran out of this city which was once the British *Caer Luel*; and Surrey joined her along the good white road pricked out with little villages deep in trees until Solway Firth showed blue and bare to westward, and across Esk Bridge and the little Sark their song swung suddenly into “Blue Bonnets over the Border.”

Peggy sat up sharply.

“Are we in Scotland?” she asked.

From the front seat the girl from Montana shot a laughing glance at her.

“Why, *certainly*,” she cried. “Here’s the toll-house where they sometimes had the marriages. And Gretna Green is right along the road. My! I feel just sick, I’m so excited. I feel as if I was going to get married myself. But they never did it in an automobile.”

She was vivid, glowing, electric. Surrey looked down on her with more than amusement. But Peggy neither heeded nor heard. She was pinching the Colonel.

“Dear,” she said, “you took me all over the Continent and half over India, and you have never showed

me my own country before. How dared you! I thought England was London and a few watering-places and country-houses. And I didn't know what Scotland was."

"You don't know now," said the Colonel.

"I—I believe I do. The air tastes different." And then she turned suddenly. For at her side Wylde was humming in his grumbling bass—

"We'll up and we'll gie them a fa', a fa',
Wi' a hundred pipers an' a', an' a'."

"How did you know I was thinking of that?" she asked.

"Were you?" Wylde looked eager. "But I guess it was likely. It was on that strip of Debateable Land between the Esk and the Sark that the Jacobites 'danced themselves dry to the pibroch's sound.' If they ever did. They'd have little heart for it on that march."

"Here's Gretna," cried the girl from Montana, and broke into song as the way swung through the little pretty village to the long low white cottage, grey-roofed, backed by trees and fronted by a quick hedge and wicket gate.

"How far, how far to Gretna?
It's years and years away,
And coach and four shall nevermore
Fling dust across the day. . . ."

"My! what a cute little place. Is this the real blacksmith's shop?"

She dived through the dark door-place where the red of the forge flung light on piles of rusty iron, on the shining coats of waiting horses, on the great wedges of cobwebs, thick and black as the beams of the roof, exactly as it had done when the desperate lovers of past centuries knit trembling hands to eager hands and said breathless words in the misty dimness.

In the room abutting on the smithy, where hats, aprons and chairs of many Gretna priests stand ticketed

and the unregenerate buy postcards, the Montana girl proved herself utterly unregenerate.

"I guess I'm going to send about two dozen to my friends," she said. "I shall tell them all that I've come here to get married. Sakes I won't they sit up!" She looked round, laughing and impudent. "It does seem a waste of a good chance, don't it?" she said.

"I daren't say a word," remarked Surrey. "You are quite capable of taking me at it."

For one instant the Montana girl's glance crossed Peggy's, and she saw more than she was intended to see.

"Thanks," she said. "I'd rather have the Colonel." She took his hand across the old anvil that had seen so many hands joined in marriage. "Colonel dear, there hasn't been a marriage here for a fortnight," she said.

"I should be only too happy to break the record," said the Colonel; "but I have a superstition against breaking anything. I shall always regret the fact, I assure you."

Peggy went out swiftly, with her lips set. There was a kink somewhere in the fate which had not given Wylde to the Montana girl from the beginning. Then, out in the clear grey air, with yellow Solway sands linking the horizon, she found the village shoemaker-priest and posed him before her camera. Glancing up as the shutter snapped she discovered Wylde, innocently strayed into the picture. And though she took another of the old man alone, she did not destroy the first when it came back from the photographer a week later. And this was an oversight which was to have due effect later on.

"You know that it is asserted that marriages never were performed here by a blacksmith," suggested the Colonel, when the blue car took the road again. But the girl from Montana was undaunted.

"Marriages were celebrated by weavers and shoemakers and stonemasons, and in that very shack," she said. "I reckon that if I choose to believe a black-

smith had a hand in it there is no law to prevent me. The smith must have been a fool if he let other folk come in and take his fees. Isn't that so?"

The Colonel admitted that it was so, and looked across the Solway to Burgh-marsh, where the first Edward, the Hammer of the Scots, died swearing young Edward of Carnarvon to bear his bones before the army into Scotland that, though dead, he might yet strike terror into the Bruce, and from whence his coffin was taken back to London by a son who had broken oath and a king unfit to rule. Behind again, from the Solway to the Tyne, were scattered the dried stone husks of Hadrian's Great Wall, which had made Strathclyde into the battleground for Scots and Britons since A.D. 117.

And then, among the undulating hills and little valleys came memories of Canonbie Lea and that Young Lochinvar who had plucked his bride from Netherby Hall; quiet Kirtlebridge, where Fair Helen died on Kirkconnel Lea to save her lover, and the small staid white and grey village of Ecclefechan, with the stream running through the centre of it as it had run when Carlyle's toddling feet brushed its banks, and when, in later days, the men trod by who brought him home for burial.

Wylde hated the Montana girl very fully in the little double house where Carlyle was born. For she sat on the chintz sofa where he lay as a child; she handled his ink-pot, his tobacco-pouch, the pewter "that he supped his tea out of," and all the valueless priceless things which made that huge struggling half-expressed intellect so near and dear to Wylde again.

The old woman in charge spoke of him simply, in the first real Scotch that Wylde had heard.

"He used tae gang by in the conveyance mony times," she said. "Tae see his auld schulefellows, ye'll ken. But we never thought muckle of him."

Wylde got himself out alone to the graves in the old cemetery beyond the new church, where the worn body lay amongst its own flesh an' blood even as Jane

Welsh Carlyle lay among hers, at Haddington, near Edinburgh. For the grim tenacity of the Scotch ties prove strong, even in death. There were other plain granite slabs within that bare roughly-grassed enclosure, and it was only the lettering of the central slab which told, without embroideries, of the birth of Thomas Carlyle, 1797, and his death 1884. The Border hills were all about him in the silence, and the Lowland air was strong with meadowsweet. One white butterfly balanced on the spiked rail-top, and Wylde went away, quietly. All earth and heaven were giving him of their beauty since he had learned to love The Honourable Peggy and to believe that she loved him.

Bare little grass hills smudged with rain, fresh wind across wide spaces and the black snake of a railway-line rose and flattened and rose again through the long miles past Lockerbie, past the high desolation of Beattock Summit; and so, with Ettrick Vale to rightward and all the Black Douglas country behind and before, the way slid beyond the square block of Fatlips Castle—lonely ruins in trees—and the prehistoric memories on Abingdon Hill.

Wylde was driving at Lamington in the lovely valley of the Clyde, with the wet distance blurred darker by smoke from nearing manufactories. The hills were blue haze and vital greens through the rain, bringing a sense of cleansing in the solitudes. Hedges of honeysuckle; fair-haired children waving rosy hands; stone walls and stone sheep-folds reeled past: iron and coal works stood up with huge hills of coal-dust drawing veils of thin grass across their nakedness. Children swarmed in the villages, running barefoot, and Wylde remembered how in the country round Carlisle each man and child wore thick leather, shod at the heels and over the toes with brass.

Lanark went by along the Clyde river, flinging to the eye one glimpse of an ugly statue of Wallace, overlooking from the parish church the town in which he first called men out to follow him. History mixed here

with romance along the Falls of Clyde and Mouse Water, and reality drew them from the sweet hills and trees and rivers through Carluke, Newmains, Airdrie with perfect roads below and black smoke belching from tall chimneys about them.

In the rain and the man-made dusk Airdrie slums were a Purgatory where pale slouching men showed and passed among tall columns spitting smoke and furnaces spitting fire and a growling and clanking of engines, human and hideous as a Frankenstein.

The way dipped down to ruddy sunset and wet scents from thick-clumped trees and grassy distances. Peggy felt like a soul which has come through mire and struggle to the quiet valleys of new-washed purity. She nestled close to the Colonel.

"There isn't anything better than the smell of the country after rain," she said. "It is the kind of scent glorious music makes you feel like."

"Something is making you feel like a Peggy that isn't you," said the Colonel, fondly. "What is it, little girl? Are you tired?"

"J—I suppose so," said Peggy, and again the Montana girl shot a swift glance at her. And thereafter the Montana girl formed a plan which was not destined to fall to earth as Peggy's plans always fell.

Scotch names flickered about them; Dennyloanhead, Auchenhowie, the Whins of Milton gleaming with wet roofs in the light. The Gillies Hill and the tall staff on Bannockburn Hill rose to leftward, and beyond a white street set with close white houses Stirling Castle Bluff breasted the air, with misty hills behind it and blue mist drawing round the town at its feet.

The glamour of history was thick about them in the closing twilight: history from the time when Stirling was first the Key of Scotland and one of the stone forts flung across the forty miles of land from the Clyde to the Forth by Agricola: history of Wallace, of Bruce, of Covenanter and Jacobite; of martyrs dying for their faith and murderers dying for

their sins; of laughter and revel and royal pageants; of black war and red death and despair.

It was the Montana girl who tapped on Peggy's door that night, and had it opened to her by a small slim thing with a silk kimono and loose fair hair.

"My! what a wad of hair you've got," said the Montana girl. "May I come in? I reckon there's a hook some place in the back of my waist and I can't reach it for sour apples. Thanks, awfully. You don't mind if I stay a spell, do you?" She dropped on a couch and stared at Peggy. "I do admire you," she went on. "You have such style. And knowing your history makes it all so much more interesting. I'm real sorry you're going on to-morrow morning."

"Knowing—my history?" Peggy's five-feet-two looked something like seven. But she did not alarm the girl from Montana.

"Why, certainly. That bunchy old woman at Bath—Lady Thrale, I think—she told a friend of hers all about the Colonel and the young men and you. Oh, you needn't think I listened behind doors. The friend told me. I never heard anything so perfectly ro-mantic. Don't look like that, you sweet thing. Sakes! I wish I'd got your eyes. Mine are just as big, but I can't put what you can into them."

Peggy turned to the dressing-table and by means of a brush hid herself behind her hair.

"I do not know what you mean," she said. "Lady Thrale had nothing to tell."

The Montana girl watched the wall. And this was good of her, because she was desperately curious as to results.

"Why," she said, "every one can see that the Colonel worships the very dust you blow in his eyes. And Lady Thrale says that every one knows that the young fellow who is to be his heir is the one which marries you. I suppose you know it yourself, and I suppose they know it. Do you reckon the Colonel would let his money go away from you? Not for Joe! You have made your choice, and it is easy to see that

it is the Colonel's. I saw that in Bath, before I was certain of you. I reckon it's a pity, you know. I'd have had the other. But I always doted on fair men and soldiers and Englishmen, and when you get the three packed into a fellow like Mr. Guest, why——"

The Montana girl threw out her hands, and continued to look at the wall. Peggy tangled her hair with trembling hands. Then, because she could not help it, she spoke with trembling lips—

"You accuse me of something very—very un-womanly."

"Sakes alive! no, child. You are all woman where you're not baby. But when a girl puts in all her time talking history and ro-mance with one man and gives the other cold pie you can begin to smell at the meaning of it. I'd take the other myself, but I know when I'm beat. You have them both lassoed with that hair of yours. My! you look as pretty as a peach with your arms shining through it. So few girls look well in negligent. I would scare a back-wall cat." She rose up, and fluttered to the door. "I reckon it must have been nervous work deciding which of those two was to git out and git," she added. "But it must have been exciting, too. I have had plenty of romance in my life, but it didn't take a man's fortune along with it."

She left an odour of fresh roses and a wild whirlwind of storm behind her, and out in the corridor she giggled, dancing a few steps.

"Coralie," she said, "if that doesn't do the trick The Honourable isn't a woman." Then her bright face fell. She gathered her laces and silks about her, and went forward slowly.

"I don't mind her thinking me an outrageous little cat," she said. "But I do hate that she will have to think me a fool."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MORNING AND THE EVENING

ALONG the Castle Wynd, through the cemetery sunk in the cold dusk before dawn, and up to the Ladies' Rock, Wylde came with that unexplainable seeking for Nature, alone, mysterious, direct from the hand of God, which is bred in the blood of the children of the Outer Worlds. Each day was wrenching him farther from the self-centred desires of the body and brimming his heart with a love that purified him and puzzled him. For the delicate, the innately-refined, the beauty of thought and flesh had stood far off from him all his days, until The Honourable Peggy had brought them near with a wonderful clearness which made him giddy and blindly grateful.

Peggy meant everything that his starved life had lost. She meant bitter made sweet; roughness made tender; coarse thoughts made reverent, unbelief made faith. She meant to Wylde all that woman is intended to mean to man when he stood on the Ladies' Rock near Stirling Castle in that strange hour between the night and day. He did not understand himself, and he did not try. He was content to be there on top of the world with all the dreaming land charged with the virile passions of men who had loved and fought and suffered and died there, below him in the mist.

The air held the dead chill; waiting for the dawn-wind. The breath of other centuries was heavy in it: centuries when every race that has trod the English soil fought across the Links of Forth; from Roman and skin-clad Briton to the Highlanders of the Forty-five, desperate, hopeless, but still unbroken. Sunk in deep night on the left lay that octagonal smudge

of green mounds, green banks, green ditches, which, men say, earned its name of The King's Knot in Arthur's day or before it. On this hump of ragged rock the ladies of another age had watched steel strike steel, hoofs thunder, banners and favours toss and gleam in the lists where now the headstoned dead lay quiet.

Overshadowing the cemetery and the Ladies' Rock, the Castle was a huge dark blurr against the paling sky. Out of the mists below stole a thin thread, glancing whitely as the Forth wound down, wound down to the open sea. There, at the battle of Stirling Bridge, Wallace and his men had swept the army of the first Edward like torn paper before a furnace blast. There, just so little farther down the river, was fought the mighty battle of Cambuskenneth which stamped the Pictish dynasty under heel. Behind it, in the Ochil Ranges, was Sheriffmuir, deep in forest that had once rung to the gathering-cries of the Highland clans. Bannockburn and Sauchieburn, scenes of glory and disgrace for Scotland, lay near to leftward; and the dawn-wind, blowing freshly on Wylde's face and loosing the mists about the Castle, seemed to bring faint wild echoes of the skirling of pipes, of uncouth battle-cries, of Jacobite songs and oaths, of the battering of cannon on the Castle flanks.

And then dawn came; shy and flushing before the face of man, touching the Trossachs and the Grampians in the west with her own rosy colour, and unveiling the great mountains one by one. So Wylde saw first the broad forehead of Ben Lomond, dark and strong, the bare peaked skull of Ben Venue, Ben Ledi's huge mass, and many more, all deep-furrowed with night and vital with dawn and gloriously misty with colour.

Trees took shape; the Castle sprang to sharpness against a golden shield; the Forth ran dazzling through rich pasture-land; day swept the last films of mist out of the cemetery below, laying bare the glimmering marble and the mounds of grass and

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flowers. Something drew Wylde's feet through the sweet scents and sunshine to the Martyr's Monument in memory of the girl Margaret, drowned for her faith in the Solway tide. Such a little while since he would have passed unheeding. Now, because of the spell on him, he uncovered before he went back to that curious headstone which asserts that

"Our life is but a winter day,"

and makes ending—

"Large is his debt that lingers out the day,
He that goes soonest has the least to pay."

And here Wylde, swinging down the path with quick feet, laughed contentedly.

"I reckon I'm going to want all the time there is," he said.

This exultation held with him through the good-byes of the Montana girl some hours later and the run out of the town across the Forth, with the ancient Bridge of Stirling, once the only dry key to the Highlands, grey and humped to the left; set about its bases with trees and flowers and grasses, and flung in sharp reflection on the wide stream below. From that bridge Archbishop Hamilton was hanged for his share in the murder of the Regent Moray, and near by had once stretched the bridge of Wallace's day. Wylde looked back on the huge bulk of the barrack-crowned Castle with the tragic Heading Hill in the foreground, and then he looked ahead to Abbey Craig, whence Wallace's men had swarmed out against Edward's army, and where Wallace himself now stands in a tall ragged monument of bold rough stone. Everywhere was struck the note of men, of fight; of courage and blood and brutality. And Wylde, for the first time in his life, was repelled by it.

The Colonel turned round. He was in the front seat with Surrey, and this had been a piece of merciless skill on the part of the Montana girl.

"You will have to learn to know Stirling when you

come back, little girl," he said. "And that will be better, for you will love Scotland then. Where do we lunch to-day, Wylde?"

"I ordered a basket. I reckoned we might want to push on. And it should be fine outdoors."

The Colonel nodded, and Wylde and Peggy were left to their own world as the car took the good white road which climbed up and out of the valley, leaving the greatest battle-land of Scotland sunk in peace and utter beauty below; with the winding silver Forth swelling wider to the sea and the sapphire blue Grampians breasting the darker lower Trossach Range to westward.

All the world was swamped in a calm glory of golds and blues, of murmuring greens and the scattered bold notes of red roofs and white rocks; and Peggy was in a numb peace with herself and with the world.

Last night the Montana girl had left her at the parting of the ways, and she had fought the knowledge out through a passionate frightened night. Then, as Wylde had bidden her, she had faced the danger that lay round the corner, and she was not afraid of it any more. For there was just the one thing left to do, and she would do it, and she did not let her mind run beyond the doing of it.

Wylde was silent as they flashed through handsome long-drawn Bridge of Allan with its Spa and its ancient home of the Stirlings of Kier, and took the banks of sweet Allan Water into small pretty Dunblane. At his side Peggy was humming Scotch songs; and the tragedy of Lord Drummond's three fair daughters who lie murdered under the blue flags of Dunblane Cathedral came to Wylde's memory as the Grampians faded farther and fainter, the dark haunts of Sheriffmuir passed by, and the hills grew near and smooth and ridged with plough-land and green wheat.

Past far-stretched Greenloaning rose the huge Roman Camp of Ardoch, edged with thick sycamores and oaks, and grown over with heather and pansies.

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The space measures one thousand feet by nine hundred in walls and mounds and deep-sunk irregular trenches, lapped and plaited one into the other round the guarded grassy centre. From the hills beyond those great strange ridges showed still; scored by a force that no centuries of storm and burning sun could smooth away; huge limbs of a dead dismembered animal which once had been a Roman Legion.

It was in little Muthill that Wylde spoke first to Peggy as she hummed—

“Will they a’ come hame to their ain dear glen?
Will they a’ return, our brave Highland men? . . .”

“Drummond Castle, seat of the Earls of Perth, is near here,” he said. “They have fought all up and down Scotch history, the Drummonds have. And there is an old belfry in Muthill with Norman or Roman windows, and another Roman Camp at Comrie where Agricola is said to have met the Caledonian forces. But I guess we don’t want anything better than Ardoch.”

“Things are cheap once you get out of England,” said Peggy. “There are earthquakes and standing-stones at Comrie, too. And you can see them all for nothing. And Beaumaris was a twopenny castle, and Harlech a threepenny—and so was Caerphilly. Do you remember how the King’s men ‘swore Caerphilly’s sod should feel the Norman charger’s spurning heel’? and how young Clare and Neville of Scotland rode out of Chepstow when every stamp of the hoof on the ground was filled with Norman blood? I am beginning to understand that now that I am in Scotland. The Scotch know how to revenge an ill.”

She was talking with a freedom that had not been on her tongue for days, and Wylde’s mind leapt to meet it as they swung through Crieff.

“I guess they know how to remember,” he said. “They called a gibbet in Crieff ‘the kind gallows’ because so many of their kin had suffered on it, and every Highlander touched his bonnet as he passed,

with a curse and a blessing. This is the ancient country of the Murrays and the Drummonds, and all the Stewart rulers have been their guests at Drummond Castle."

"In Scotland a long pedigree is a prouder thing than any gold," said Peggy.

Wylde's silence brought the scarlet to her face in a sudden lash of remembrance and hurled her into hurried speech.

"General Wade drove his military road through part of Ardoch at the end of the seventeenth century," she said. "Is this it?"

"Certainly—what isn't Roman. But this was always the main trail to the north. Wade's road went through Sma' Glen. And so do we. I reckoned to have lunch there."

He stooped forward to speak to Surrey as the road flung to right and left down a steep way of fir-trees and hills to a long narrow valley smothered thick with the bright bell-heather, and a little stream purling clear and noisily

The sun poured down on white road and blue car. Across the silence one sheep bleated from the hillside; white butterflies were chasing in the vivid heather, and they swarmed round Peggy when she brought a double armful to the car with its faint scent thickened by the heat. Wylde took his after-lunch pipe down the little steep drop to the Almond Water, and sat there staring up on the big stone set, flat and grey, half-way in the purple hill.

Tradition named it Ossian's Grave, and Wylde felt sharp disagreement with Wordsworth's assertion that the man who sang of battles should have been laid

"Where rocks were rudely heaped and rent
As by a spirit turbulent."

To him this great smooth cloak of kingly purple was the one fit shroud for Scotland's earliest poet.

Down the Sma' Glen the hills wound on to Amulree; past Logie Almond, the Drumtochty of romance, with

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history everywhere: in the ruins of Inverchaffray Abbey, not far distant, whose Abbot carried the arm-bone of St. Fillan at Bannockburn; in Birnam at the foot of the hill that was sparsely clad by the descendants of those fir-trees which Macduff's army took to Dunsinane; and in little Dunkeld, with its ancient Cathedral like a broken statue on green lawns by the lovely Tay, and its tombstone of "the Wolf of Badenoch." By the long wall of the Duke of Athol's park huge beeches, limes and larches swung above the road. The hills grew nearer, darker, higher, and fir and beech clothed them thickly to the feet. And everywhere the tinge of Highland life and air was stronger: in the voices of children, in the smell of peat, and the springy walk of the men.

Past the small stone houses of Pitlochry Surrey rushed the car upwards by perfect winding roads with hills set close until a deep cleft showed ahead sunk in black-greens brushed with sunlight. Then the road swung round where the Tummel river roared in white foam far below through the Pass of Killiecrankie. Up the pass a high viaduct sprang its white arch against the dark breast of the forest, but all else was nature only: tall mountains with firs close-marshalled in a stern army; young fair larches peering down the giddy height to the water; cold winds blowing down the grand lonely glen from the knolls and stone-edged fields where "Bloody Claver'se," the dread of the Covenanters, fell, as men aver, shot by a silver button from his own coat on that July day of 1689 when his "bonnets of Bonnie Dundee" scattered the forces of Dutch William.

Grim memories of that charge with the claymores filled the pass, and beyond it old houses spoke of skeletons and rusted swords found in hidden closets. Glen Tilt and five-headed Ben-y-gloe closed in behind, and Blair Athol with its golf-links, its Salmon Leap on the Tilt, and its Old Blair church where Dundee lies buried, drew itself along the road on either side. Back of the town rose the castle and grounds of the

Duke of Athol, whose forefathers "roofed a hundred hills and valleys with larch and fir." But to Peggy it was just a pretty Quaker, this simple town of grey Spas fronted with quaint-cut cypresses; deep-sunk fences, gardens, grey slate roofs, grey stone walls. Through the trees beyond came a flash of boy-scouts in kilts playing cricket. Then beyond the tall stiff haycocks and the stream at Struan, Peggy sang again—

"Came ye by Athol, lad wi' the philabeg?
Down by the Tummel, or banks of the Garry?
Saw ye our lads wi' their bonnets and white cockades,
Leaving their mountains to follow Prince Charlie?"

Then, because there were none to hear and the Highland air quickened their blood, the men dropped into the chorus—

"Follow thee! follow thee! wha wadna follow thee?
Lang hast thou loved and trusted us fairly;
Follow thee! follow thee! wha wadna follow thee?
Lad o' the white cockade, bonnie Prince Charlie."

Peggy's hand was on the Colonel's mouth as he ended.

"You shall not say that he was a reprobate," she cried. "I know you want t', but we are only remembering nice things to-day."

"Did you remember Blair Castle at Struan, then?" asked the Colonel. "It was built by a relation of that Red Comyn whom Bruce killed in the Dumfries church as the first step towards making Scotland a kingdom. It was held by Montrose, by Cromwell, and Dundee; and your Prince Charlie's men lost it in forty-five on their retreat to Inverness."

The long road of desolation which had led the Jacobites to Culloden Moor twisted on, twisted up, round the flanks of naked hills where great rocks were lined as though by the hands of giants. Mighty Schiehallion of the Grampians raised its bare head beyond the nearer hills; all trees were gone, all signs of life. Far below the Garry tumbled through a

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narrow glen beside the cold gleam of the railway-lines. Peaty moss made occasional smudges on the grey stone that grew intense along the stretched-out distances, until a sparse clot of purple struck the eye like a blow. Stray sheep leapt out, wild as deer, springing down-hill past rocks blurred with a scaly lichen. A glacier slashed the grey on the near left, and the faces of the mountains showed furrowed with tears as the road climbed up on their shoulders.

Below in the stony glen dim mounds seemed like the graves of the hopes of Charles Stewart's soldiers who had gathered near here in their pride to take the march southwards and who had passed again so few months later with their backs to victory and England.

The wind was keen as knives at little Dalnaspidal, where General Cope, being tricked across the hills to westward, had left the way open for that dispirited marching army. Beyond the board at the summit which asserted the height at 1,484 feet the way lay cold and drearily toward lean Ericht, "the grisly mother of lochs," stretched to leftward, with the snow on Ben Alder's brow behind her, and the humps of the Badenoch Hoar and the Athole Sow at her head and foot.

Da!whinnie was blown through by a bleak wind that seemed to have turned it livid with cold. And still the land was bare, bare, with never a tree.

"England is like a big billiard-table where children have been playing Noah's Ark," said Peggy. "But Scotland is a Norseman's play-box where Thor built bricks with Wodin. I hope they are suffering for this in Valhalla."

"I like it," said Wylde. "It proves the strength of Scotland. They were no wasters who marched this trail twice."

Stone fences began to cherish and guard the desolation; the heather blots grew thicker; the glen widened and dropped to a levelling strath flecked with trees. Mountains stepped back into hazy distance, and rough hills made sentries in this land of Badenoch beyond the Grampians. The Garry had long given place to

the brawling Truim. The Truim knit with the Spey in a stony bed where once the Macphersons of the Clan Chattan had met the Camerons of Lochaber in fierce clan feud, when the ragged Black Rock, their gathering-hill, blazed its beacon-fires at the night.

Warmth and sun and shelter came at populous Newtonmore when fresh-built houses, golf-links, and all the beginnings of a health-resort struck a strange uncomfortable note among the old sad hills, where Charles Stewart, the man with a price on his head, hid himself for weary months before he could pass through Cumberland's troops to the west. And then, set among the wide circle of the Grampians, the Cairngorms, the Monadhliath Mountains, came Kingussie, "the head of the C. wood"; a grey and white town flung along the hillside with the broad Spey winding past, and big hotels, big distilleries, big bowling and tennis greens to speak of a Highland pleasure-resort with all that it may mean.

There was light still, warm and golden, across Cairntoul and Ben Macdhu in the Cairngorms when Peggy came over the lawns of the Duke of Gordon Hotel after dinner. Up and down the walks the Colonel was talking fishing with a loud-voiced man: through corridors and lounges and gardens knots of men and women used the familiar ways and talk of Town, strong on a somewhat stronger, more buoyant note. But it all jarred on Peggy—jarred harshly on the nerves now taut as piano-wires. She thrust the gate open as a red cigar passed it for the third time.

"Surrey!" she called.

The red light disappeared as Surrey came near.

"Isn't it a lovely evening?" he said. "Would you care for a walk?"

Just a moment Peggy hesitated. Woman-like, she was thinking of six things at once, and already she half dreaded that which she had forced on herself. Then she stepped out, shutting the gate. And she felt like that courageous but unwise person in history who burnt his boats behind him.

"We might go down over the Spey," said Surrey. "I came out to get away from the talk of fishing, don't you know. I haven't got my Scotch licence yet, and some of those fellows made me feel quite beastly envious."

He strolled beside her, talking with the lazy conventional ease which eternally disconcerted her. There were no heroics in Surrey's life. He would go to battle or to a ball with the same bored serenity. She had never gauged the measure of him. She had never seen him shaken out of his poise. But, if such a thing could be, she was going to do it to-night. Her voice was uncertain, nervous, as she answered him. In these last weeks he had grown away from her. He had taken his stand behind his wall of courteous reserve; and the hot blood and half-curbed daring of Wylde had become so much more real and vital than Surrey—than Surrey whom she had loved without thought or questioning all her life.

In the strath by the Spey black cattle moved. A fisherman reeled his line down-stream, making a sharp whirring noise across the stillness. Left of the knot of trees beyond the bridge the ruins of Ruthven Barracks crumbled on a huge green mound that rose from boggy rivers. Behind it the mountains lapped one on the other in browns, in purples, in blues, sliced through with dark clefts and glens. Glorious clouds began to build along their foreheads, and the Spey was blotched with scarlet and pale blue.

Peggy turned along the road to the barracks.

"The Comyns have had a castle here nearly ever since Bruce slew the Red Comyn in that church at Dumfries," she said. "And the English made it a barracks after the Rising of 1715. I want to go to it, please, Surrey, for it was very near that mound that Prince Charlie disbanded his men after Culloden. It seemed a terrible thing to do, but I suppose he couldn't help it."

"No," assented Surrey, "I suppose he couldn't help it. This is a hideous old place, isn't it?"

They crossed the narrow ridge which linked the barracks to firm ground, and, on the steep slope with the rough grim loopholed ruins above them, Peggy sat down.

"I—I am tired, I think," she said.

Her voice shook, and Surrey noted it. He lit another cigar and spread himself on the grass, looking across the flats to the pale town under the flank of the hill. He was sullenly angry with Peggy yet, and he meant to make her feel his displeasure before he gave the forgiveness which she would ask for.

He lay still and smoked, and Peggy sat still and quivered. And around them the pewits swooped and called, and the lights shifted and deepened and dulled, and the great hill looked down, untroubled at the fleeting ghosts of the past and the petty troubles of the present.

"Surrey—I—I would have done anything rather than have hurt you. But I thought it was good for you. I—I mean——"

"When did I say that you had hurt me?" asked Surrey, flicking off his cigar-ash. "You have disappointed me."

"You have hurt me," said Peggy, growing white.

"You never asked me not to talk to the Montana girl," said Surrey.

"I—I—oh, if I could make you understand——"

"There are still some people who don't think me a fool," remarked Surrey to the curlews.

Then Peggy moved, quick as a flash, dropping on her knees beside him.

"Don't," she gasped. "Don't. I can't bear it. I—I know you won't say anything because you—you might have to go away and be poor. But I don't care——"

She grasped his shoulders with both hands, and there was a Peggy he did not know in the desperate tear-drenched eyes. "Surrey . . . don't make me have to say it. It wouldn't make any difference if you—you hadn't a postage-stamp. Oh, be good to me.

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Be good to me. I've been doing such dreadful things." Then before the half-blankness of his face she shrank away, hiding her eyes.

"I—I—perhaps I've made a mistake," she said, faintly.

Surrey understood then, and he did the one and only thing a man could have done. And then, a little later, recollection came to them both, and Peggy drew back, flushed and dimpling and wet-eyed, and Surrey loosed her hands. He was not thinking of his explanation to the Colonel. There was that to face when it came. But he was thinking of something which had troubled him more.

"Now you will tell me about Wylde," he said.

"It—it's going to be so hard to tell," said Peggy, in sudden weakness.

"I think it is going to be hard to hear," said Surrey, grimly. "You have let that fellow into closer intimacy with you than you had a right to do with any man unless you intended to marry him."

"I—I had to do it—for your sake."

"What do you mean?"

It was a new note. Peggy quailed before it. Then she rushed into blind justification.

"He—you knew he was trying to get the better of you in every possible way. And you wouldn't wake up and fight him. You let him learn to manage the car best; and you let him say where we were to go, and how, and what we were to see. And you let him take control of affairs that ought to have been yours. And you did nothing. So then I—I saw that I would have to do it for you."

Surrey moved so that she could not see his face.

"Go on," he said.

"I thought that if I could make friends with him and explain it all he might—might—— But I couldn't do that. And then at Teignmouth he told the Colonel he had opened one of his letters by mistake. And I knew that he had read it. And I thought that it didn't matter what I did to a man like that. And then I—I

thought that if I learnt to understand him I—would know how to get the better of him. And he was so clever. And—I *couldn't* make you afraid of him."

Her breath sobbed between quivering lips. She jerked up the little pink daisies and flung them away. Surrey did not look at her, and these great mountains were growing so tall and grey and so close where the lights had fallen off them.

"I tried to make him forget the things he had to do, so that the Colonel should be vexed with him. But I only made him forget once or twice. And then I thought I could make you jealous and angry with him, and then you would try to be—to be more of a man. But I couldn't do that, either."

The penitent purposeless recital might have moved the gods to laughter. But it did not have the same effect on Surrey.

"Naturally I am much obliged to you for your opinion of me and your attempted management of my affairs," he said. "May I ask if it was Wylde or the Colonel who suggested that I was not enough of a man?"

"Oh, . . . don't! It has hurt me so——"

"And what about Wylde? Was he equally interested in the experiment of making a man of me? Or is he tired of offering himself up for the public good? For I am not rude enough to suggest that you've come to the end of your resources."

Peggy did not answer. She could not. Surrey turned on her suddenly.

"What have you done to him? Have you made him care for you?"

There was nothing but cold rigid anger in his voice and in the face which was as white as her own.

"Does he love you? Tell me. Women always know that. Does he?"

"Yes," said Peggy.

There was a quite absolute silence, except for the curlews calling, calling across the empty hills and the bogs. Then Surrey said, deliberately—

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"I do not think that I care to accept what you offered me just now—at the price."

Peggy sat up straight. She pushed back her shining hair with both hands and her eyes were perfectly blank.

"I—think something hit me," she said, weakly. "Surrey—I do feel so funny in my head. I—don't know—what's the matter——"

She swayed, and Surrey caught her, holding her close.

"Peggy! I never meant to be a brute. But a man can't take . . . can't take . . . what you have just told me. . . . Poor little girl, poor little girl; don't cry like that. Peggy!"

"If you don't love me——" she whispered.

"I do love you. And I am remembering what you have given Wylde the right to think of you. Do you imagine I don't *know* what the man will say? What you have given him the power to say?"

Peggy shut her eyes, leaning against him.

"That doesn't matter," she said. "I only care what you think."

She did not know what he thought, and she loved him too well to guess at it. But the stiff-necked heights of his pride in himself and in her had been roughly assaulted by a shame which he would not forget.

"What could have made a baby like you . . . Good Lord, why didn't you leave Wylde and me to manage the thing in our own way?" he said.

"But—you were letting him do all the managing.

"What did you expect me to do? Did you think I would lower myself to fight him? I am *myself*. You can't expect me to cater for popularity as Wylde does."

"But if——" Peggy's tired mind fumbled with the thought and dropped it. "Mr. Wylde is so strong," she said. "He means to beat you, Surrey."

"Then let him beat me. I should consider myself degraded if I allowed anything he could say or do

affect me. I know where I stand in the Colonel's opinion, I think."

"But Mr. Wylde doesn't stand," whispered Peggy. "That is what frightens me. He is always going on."

Surrey moved impatiently.

"You have been reading too much history and romance and all that sort of thing," he said. "Do try to be a little more normal, my dear girl. You will make your poor little self quite ill. You must just be happy, and leave my affairs alone."

"Yours—are mine now," she said, and in the dusk Surrey saw the colour fly to her face.

"This one is not." And then he suddenly shut his lips together, and his eyes narrowed. For down the line of track to the mound he saw the little upright figure of the Colonel.

This matter was going to affect him very deeply with the Colonel. For he could not explain it. For Peggy's sake he could not explain it. And she would not. He took Peggy's cold hand between his own.

"Here comes the Colonel," he said. "You would like me to tell him at once, wouldn't you, dear?"

Peggy's cheeks went white. By the power of his great love for her she meant to bend the Colonel's will. For she had not forgotten what he had said to her in the New Inn at Gloucester.

"Yes, please," she said. "And . . . I want Mr. Wylde to know."

"I will see to that," said Surrey, wincing. Then he stood up. "It is getting dark, dear," he said. "We had better go and meet the Colonel."

Through the dusk on the dim white road the Colonel's voice rang cheerfully.

"I have been looking for a town-crier," he said. "What have you children been doing? Did you climb the Cairngorms, Peggy?"

"I am sorry I did not bring her in earlier," said Surrey, quietly. "And I am sorry that I did not ask your consent before I asked hers, sir. She tells me that she loves me."

He held Peggy's hand still, and he faced the Colonel with head up and eyes steady. The Colonel's face was indistinct in the dusk. But his voice was not.

"Thank you. It is very good of you to mention the matter at all under the circumstances."

Peggy had borne quite all that she could be expected to bear and rather more than she was able for. She collapsed into such an hysterical agony of grief that those two men who had known and loved her all her life were afraid, and became one in their clumsy troubled efforts to console her. They perjured themselves; they kissed her, and shook hands at her bidding. And it is possible that they would have kissed each other had she required it of them. And they left her at last at her room-door, a very exhausted, tremulous Peggy, with a white face that glowed crimson under Surrey's good-night kiss.

Then the Colonel stepped into his room down the corridor; called Surrey after him, and shut the door. The Colonel's thick grey hair was ruffled by Peggy's arms and his shirt-front was spotted by her tears. But he was the cold-steel soldier whom Surrey had faced once or twice before.

"I thought you would prefer to give me your explanation of this at once," said the Colonel.

Surrey looked on the ground. This false position galled his pride savagely.

"I am sorry that I have none to give, sir," he said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say."

It was a sudden flash of defiance. Then Surrey's eyes dropped again.

"I beg your pardon. But I can't regret what I have done, sir."

"You can't——" The Colonel stopped, and looked at him—looked at him until Surrey felt his flesh burn with shame, for he guessed at the Colonel's suspicion. He stood, stolid, unmoving. The Colonel turned to the door.

"You knew that, let her do what she would, I could

never allow her to want," he said. "You have been cleverer than I thought to find you. But she will not marry you yet, if I can help it."

He went out to the cool air and the night, walking crisply and erectly as ever. But his heart was very broken down within him. Across the lawns a tall shadow came to his side with a long silent step, and Wylde said—

"I take back what I said the other night. I reckon there are several things I want to tell you right now, Colonel."

The Colonel lit a cigar. He was much shaken, but he could not forbid this man twice.

"Very well," he said; "what is it?"

Lawns and gardens were deserted, but Wylde led the Colonel through the gate and up the road toward the lonely mountains before he spoke with the West Canadian burr thickened in his voice—

"I guess I'll have to begin at the wrong end, for I can't fool around this. I love her—Peggy; and I want leave to find out if she loves me. I have to tell you—"

The Colonel's oath was permissible, but unusual. It turned Wylde on the little man with sudden flame in his eyes.

"You should never have brought me near her if you had not expected me to love her," he said.

"You—you don't know what you are saying," began the Colonel, and then Wylde's laugh stopped him.

"I reckon I do," he said, softly. "Why . . . I reckon I do. She is just all there is to me—and a bit over."

"But you . . . but, my dear fellow . . . good heavens, what a complication. She—Wylde, she is engaged to Surrey Guest."

"What?"

It was one word only, but it made the Colonel recollect a shell bursting through a wall. It carried all Wylde's temper behind it. And then the bullets scattered.

"Damn you, what are you lying to me for? I don't believe you! Did you hear me say I don't believe you? Where is she? I am going to her. Where is she? How dared you force her into that——"

"Great heavens," said the distracted Colonel, "are there not other girls in the world besides Peggy!"

"No. She is—she is—ah, God, you don't know what she is to me. Don't tell me that fellow has—has——"

The fierce agony of that rough voice in the dark thrilled the Colonel. But his own pain made him merciless.

"I think you had better try to control yourself," he said. "Miss Bouchier became engaged to Surrey Guest this evening. I have just been with them."

"To-night? And you put us on our honour not to speak to her! By ——, you let the one man break his word and the other——"

The Colonel could not bear this handling. The places on his heart were too raw.

"We will not discuss that," he said. "She loves Guest, and you must accept the fact. I am sorry for you——"

"Damn your sorrow," said Wylde. "I don't want it, or your lies either. But I reckon you and Guest have the right to be sorry for your work in this. My poor little girl. My poor little girl. Heavens above, man; do you think I don't *know* her! Where is she? I won't take that lie from any soul on the living earth but herself. And she would never give it to me."

The Colonel was small; but he attempted to fill the road before Wylde.

"You cannot go to her now," he said; "I forbid it."

Wylde stood still a moment. Then he laughed shortly.

"Do you imagine any man could keep me from her if I was meaning to go?" he said. "But I am not going. I reckon I would likely frighten her if I went right now. It . . . has——"

His voice broke, trailed to silence, and the two men

stood still in the road. Every fibre of Wylde's will was clinging to his belief in Peggy. He dared not let her go. Because he knew that with the loss of her would go the loss of all that was sacred and pure and good. Then he spoke, slowly, and the Colonel knew that the man's body was tense as his tone.

"I guess I have been saying fool things. That doesn't matter. When we get to Inverness I am going to see her alone. Do you get that right? I am not going to frighten her. You and that tame cat of yours needn't be afraid that I will frighten her. But I will see her alone, because what has to be said between us is going to be said. And there will be no one by. I will hear the truth from herself only. That's all I've got to say to you."

He passed on into the night with his long straight tireless steps. And the Colonel went to bed to think of that cat-like tread going up the road, and round the house; always in the shadows of the hills, always drawing the bitter echo of that voice with it.

"What has Peggy been doing?" he said. "What has she been doing? But when a man knows as little of his own sex as I do he can't expect to understand a woman. I had thought Surrey was honest, though. I had thought the boy was honest."

And Peggy, turning in her bed, blinked with sleepy happy eyes at the wall.

"It will be all right now," she murmured. "It must be all right because I know he loves me."

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CHAPTER IX

THE OPEN ROAD

ON the crest of Tom-na-hurich Hill, with Inverness flung in soft reds and greens against the blue dazzle of Beaulieu Forth behind her, Peggy sat in the sun, looking across the glory of the world to the glory of the future. For her doubt of him, her struggles for him, her fears and stress had all gone before the touch of Surrey's lips, and she had put that which was and would be into his hands, and left it there. He had told her to do it, and she had done it, exulting in her obedience; and now, on top of that little strange hill, which looks exactly like an inverted boat and is really "the green mound of the fairies," she sat still, so still that the white butterflies poised and fluttered on her white frock and the roses in her hat, and knew in every fibre and pore of her that life was good.

She had not seen Wylde since that run, now four days old, under the white-breasted Cairngorms; past pretty Aviemore and old Carr Bridge with its wild gorges and legends behind it, past Moy Loch, home of The Mackintosh, where a tall monument and a turreted castle shone beyond islands and gleaming water, and over the bare moors where the brown peat was stacked in long thin bricks, and so, by the lip of the lovely Moray Firth, with the Black Isle lifting across the making tide, into the little Highland jewel of Inverness.

She had not seen Wylde, and she had partly forgotten, partly feared to ask why. But the Colonel knew, for he had so arranged it when he sent Wylde and Surrey to an hotel in the town and went with Peggy to the friends of his young manhood in a home

of history and legend and of a beauty that had sunk sheer into the core of Peggy's heart.

Through these four days Surrey had been held many hours by the business which had called him to Inverness. It was a matter of court-martial for some unproved evil done in India, and Surrey was principal witness. But on each day--Peggy hid her face in her hands, remembering those stolen snatches of sweetness at big lunches; in the conservatory of some great storied house after dinner; in those few moments behind scented bushes and trees with a whole worldly garden-party six yards off and a thousand miles away. The Colonel was kind, but not too kind. He showed Peggy to all his friends with a tender pride and a persistency that left her no time for thought or deed of her own, and he had not spoken of that which had happened at Kingussie except on the morning when he first saw Surrey's ring on her finger. It had cost nearly a year of Surrey's pay and had left him more cheerfully in debt than ever. But it was not that which had troubled the Colonel. Peggy saw his eyes and she straightway put her arms round his neck.

"Don't, don't," she whispered. "You said you wouldn't give me to Surrey, but it is something bigger than you or me that did it. Only I promise you--"

"No," said the Colonel. "No. I won't have your promise, my darling. Some day you might be tempted to break it, and I think I could not bear it if you broke your word to me."

Concerning Wylde, Surrey, obeying the Colonel's instructions, had said one thing to Peggy.

"Wylde wants an explanation from you," he said. "If you object I will tell him so, and I hope he will be man enough not to press it. But--"

"You--you think he should have it?" asked Peggy.

"I would rather he had. You have put yourself in the wrong with Wylde; and considering your position and his, and--and the fact that you are mine now, dear, I would distinctly prefer that you should right

yourself so far as you can. It will be unpleasant for both of us. But I think that it ought to be."

"I will do just what you tell me," said Peggy. And in Surrey's reward for her submission she had forgotten what her promise might mean.

She did not think of it now, on the top of Tom-nahurich, whence all the fairies had fled before the peaceful dead who lay among the trees and flowers and gleaming marbles along the smoothly ridged flanks of the hill. She was drugged with joy, and with the tragedies and glories and the mysteries of the Highlands, and with the wonderful beauty of the world about her feet.

Along the Caledonian Canal a red steamer moved, making down with its pennon of smoke past Giengarry and Lochaber into Oban. Beech and ash and oak trees sank and swelled in brown and green and purple lights into blue haze on the farthest hills. Below the bald reddened head of Craig Dunnane with its rough dark crown, sunlight-sheathed trees and houses with solid gold. The tussocky slopes of Craig Phadric were burnished yellow, and from the round-backed hills to rightward her eyes were drawn up by the purple shading of heather to the huge shapeless bulk of Ben Wyvis, far away in Ross-shire. In between lay the blue firth, melting already into softness of shining sand, and a light wind was blowing up harbour the sharp smell of the sea-weed left by the tide. The crests of the Gampians were thick to left of her, and behind, beyond the town, rose the round heads of other hills.

But that which Peggy could not see she remembered; from a sunset on the Castle Hill with the tall bronze of Flora Macdonald molten gold as it looked beneath its curved hand on a sky of wild purples and red of blood and of silver that melted and quivered again on the breast of the calm Ness river to a misty evening veiled in peaceful blues near Cawdor Castle, where the Thane of Cawdor once led an ass loaded with gold and built his castle round the hawthorn trees where the ass lay

down. The stump of the hawthorn tree in the tower proved the truth of this and many other legends to Peggy; but, and she remembered it now with laughter, Surrey would not let her believe that Macbeth had here murdered Duncan.

"He won't allow me to think for myself at all in a little while," she said, and found strange sweetness in the thought.

Some one was coming up the easy grade of the white road that led to the hill-top, and she flushed at the hearing. For she had told Surrey that she would be here. And then she flushed again, for that was not Surrey's step, but Wylde's. And when Wylde turned the last corner she was on her feet to meet him with the suddenly startled butterflies fluttering round her.

Instinct had led Wylde to Tom-na-hurich. He knew that he would not lay hold on the cords of his life again until he had heard what only Peggy could tell him, and he knew that some day, somewhere, he would hear it. He had fought the dread of what he would hear. He had held lips and soul dumb with all his strength; and now, at first sight of the wide dark eyes in the flushed face, of the soft lips and shining hair and the whiteness framing all he held them dumb still. She was his Honourable Peggy, and he would keep her so by sheer force of his will.

Peggy rushed into speech, nervously and inanely. "Oh, I am so pleased to see you," she said.

Wylde came close. He was not conscious that he was staring. He knew only that he was realizing the change which these four days had made in her. For that last beauty which young love can bring to a woman was over Peggy, and Wylde did not mistake it. He spoke, feeling for his words.

"I came to ask you to tell me . . . But I reckon I know. I know."

It was that seldom-struck note in his voice which upset Peggy, making her grasp desperately at self-defence.

"It was your fault . . . your own fault," she cried.

"If you had not been dishonourable—if you had not tried to take Surrey's rights from him unfairly, I—I would never have needed to do this."

"I guess I don't know what you mean," said Wylde.

He spoke slowly, stupidly, never taking his eyes from her. There was nothing in them but a strange wonder, and yet they brought a lump into Peggy's throat.

"Oh, what did you make me do it for?" she said.

"When you read the Colonel's letter at Teignmouth, and when you knew my purse was empty at Carnarvon, and you walked on. . . . And when you cared so little about Surrey giving you back that cross at Tintagel, how was I to know that I was anything to you? Oh, how was I to know?"

Wylde's face was hardening under her words. The instinct for self-defence, so strong in men of the outer world, roused in him sharply.

"I was under orders to the Colonel about that cross," he said. "I meant to carry it here until I put it on your wrist again. And I did not offer you money at Carnarvon because I was not going to have it sent back to me by Guest. And you spoke of that letter at Teignmouth." He pulled a flat moose-skin wallet from his pocket, taking a letter from it. "If you care to read a line or two of that you will be able to verify my words by the duplicate which the Colonel has."

"The—duplicate?"

"Smayne wrote me that he had mailed copies of that to the Colonel and me," said Wylde. "I opened the Colonel's and read it for mine, and I saw what I had done when I came to my own. It was no business of mine to tell the Colonel that I knew. It was his work to prove what the letter said."

"What did it say?" Peggy fluttered the double sheet half nervously, half to gain time. Then Wylde's dark hand came over the paper and he took it away.

"I wouldn't want you to know," he said. "It concerns only me and the Colonel, I reckon. I meant to tell him what was in it when I had proved the truth of

it. I guess it doesn't matter. You can tell him that I have the duplicate right now if you care to."

Peggy stood still. For the last time Wylde had knocked the bottom out of her beliefs and she was speechless. But she knew that she was going to cry. Wylde came one step nearer, and he took her hand in both his.

"I am not going to frighten you," he said. "But I must hear it from your own lips. I won't say that you owe it to me. I don't want you to feel that, I reckon. But I have got now so that I can't go on without knowing where I stand."

"W-what do you want me to say?" fenced Peggy, quivering.

"I guess you know," said Wylde, very quietly. "I see that you love Guest now. I wouldn't believe it—but a man is not blind." But in the beginning—when you let me hang that cross on your bracelet, and when you read Tennyson and Malory with me at Tintagel, and when you came with me in the mist that morning at Caerleon—ah, don't tell me that you loved Guest then!"

His grip was pressing the diamonds of Surrey's ring into her fingers. She wondered vaguely if it was hurting his own palm too. He loosed her suddenly, and she saw the white spot on the dark flesh as his hand dropped, unclenched.

"I am not going to frighten you," he said again, and his voice was altered. "But I am going to *know*. Do you guess what you did to me through those weeks? Do you guess that I never knew there was a heaven until I saw you? I never believed in the sacredness of love and of—womanhood. I never knew what chivalry and the worth of a clean heart meant until you talked to me. You made my whole world look different, and I would have staked my last deal on you, for you taught me to know there was a God because nothing less could have made you——"

His voice grew slower, more heavily-deep with earnestness. Peggy had dropped on the grass again,

looking out straight across the gleaming Canal. The desire to cry had left her. No tears were going to mend this.

"I have built everything up on you," said Wylde. "I guess it was a fool thing to do, but I have done it. Now you are going to tell me what you have been meaning." He came down on one knee beside her, but he did not touch her. "I reckon I'm sorry to have to make you look like that," he said. "But I have got to know the truth, and you have got to tell me."

Peggy had the courage of her race. She shut her hands together on her knee, and spoke straightly, looking out on nothing.

"I have been wicked. But I didn't mean to be wicked. I thought you were the kind of man who would not feel or care. And I did not think of what it might mean to you. I did not think of any one but Surrey. Always Surrey."

This was not quite true. Therefore she repeated it. Wylde did not move, and his silence drove Peggy into desperate words.

"I felt that you had no right to take Surrey's heritage. You tried to make me sorry for you at Sherborne, and you stole one thing after another from Surrey. And you could do everything better than he could. And the Colonel told me you were the stronger man of the two. And I would have done anything—anything—to beat you. When you found me in the Cathedral at Winchester I was praying that I might beat you."

Sharp as a pain across Wylde's brain-sight came recollection of her kneeling there in that great pure place which he had even then thought a fit setting for The Honourable Peggy. He spoke, slowly—

"What were you meaning when you came with me to Caerleon?"

He had the right to ask it. Peggy answered dully.

"I wanted to make the Colonel and Surrey angry with you."

"Oh—God!" said Wylde.

It sounded like a sob, and it drove Peggy to her feet in articulate terror.

"Oh, be quiet! Oh, what can I do! What can I do! I didn't think. I—I thought a man like you could look after yourself. I—oh, what can I do? I cannot even ask you to forgive me."

Wylde was standing opposite to her, black against the golden day.

"No," he said. "I don't reckon you should dare to ask that. But you likely don't quite know what you have done to me. I—I am not sure that I know myself yet."

He left her, not looking back, and taking the downgrade of the track with his long light steps. In after years he never remembered anything of that twisting trail through bosky trees and shining stones and sun and loosened scents, until, near the bottom, he met Surrey.

Surrey's straw hat was pulled down over his fair good-looking face. His hands were deep in his pockets, and he was whistling "Willie's gane to Melville Castle" with a gay cheerfulness such as fitted every line of his big easy body. He glanced sharply at Wylde; half halted, then went on with faster steps. And Wylde did not know that the man was feeling more than a twinge of that pity and shame which he did not like to show.

Wylde swung to the right: crossed the bridge, and followed the Canal along the road to Craig Phadric. He walked blindly, not knowing where his feet led him, and in time they led him over a fence and up the steep side of the hill.

There are several traditions concerning the vitrified fort on the top of Craig Phadric; and as, where there is no proved truth there can be no proved lies in such things, it is easy to believe that the real story runs thus:—

In the sixth century Brudi, King of the Picts—who were the very earliest sons sprung from Caledonia's soil—had a camp on the top of Craig Phadric, whence

he went out to kill Scots, Britons and Jutes with impartial justice. To him came St. Columba from Iona, bringing the cross and the courage of Christianity. Brudi shut his gates to the barefooted monk; but before the approach of the cross the stone gates fused and fell, and the way lay open for St. Columba. The cupped depression on the hill-top; the rude walls grown over these many centuries with earth, and the fused rocks which baffle archæologists are there until this day to prove it.

But when Wylde came to Craig Phadric he brought nothing such as would have opened Brudi's gates. He came with merely the instinct of the primitive man for the earth—for the earth, the mother of all, who gives us life and takes us again when we have done with it; who understands, and comforts; whose broad breast is always ready to cradle us.

Wylde lay face-down, stretched flat on the grass among the birch and ash and alder. There was nothing in all the universe for him but Nature and silence and that animal need of the earth. It helped him through the Gethsemane of his life. And this Gethsemane was not eased by the knowledge that it had come because of his reckless disbelief of years and his yet more reckless building at last on the sand.

He had no sensations left when the Colonel found him that night packing his suit-case in his room. The Colonel came in and shut the door.

"Where are you going, Wylde?" he asked.

Wylde stood up, rubbing his hand over his forehead.

"I—guess I don't know," he said.

His face was numb, even to the eyes, and the Colonel's heart surged with a great pity. This man was broken for the time, and it was his own Peggy who had done it.

"My poor boy," began the Colonel, and Wylde burst into sudden flame.

"Don't you call me that,—you," he said.

The Colonel flushed. His back stiffened. Then he said—

"I think we all feel that we owe you some reparation for this, Wylde, and you will find that we are anxious to give it. But you must not go away from us—not for altogether. I met a man just now who lives on the Ross coast not far from Skye. He would gladly give you fishing and boating and the rough life you like if you will go over there. I hope you will consent to go, Wylde."

"I reckon one place is as good as another," said Wylde, indifferently. "I'll go if he will have me."

He went next day. Peggy saw him walking down to the Canal boat with head low and long arms swinging. It seemed as if those straight swift steps of his were carrying him for ever out of her life, and for a moment she felt a stab of pain. For it was a page of life shut down, and there had been sweet as well as bitter in it. Then she looked up at Surrey, and in the smile of his eyes she forgot Wylde.

Two days later the Colonel made a suggestion to Peggy.

"Old Major Douglas used to be extremely good to me in India," he said. "And I am afraid that since the poor old chap retired he has had rather a hard time of it. What do you think about taking him for a run up to John o' Groat's, Peggy? Just the four of us. And perhaps once I might let you sit in front with Surrey."

Peggy happened to be sitting on the Colonel's knee at that moment. She kissed him indiscriminately. Then she let him take breath while she straightened his hair.

"What a comfort it must be to you to know that you are such a perfect darling!" she said.

"It is much more of a comfort to me to know that you know it," said the Colonel. He held the soft face between his hands, watching the colour come and go under his eyes.

"Are you very happy, my Peggy?" he asked.

"If I could forget Mr. Wylde," said Peggy, and her lips quivered.

"My little girl," said the Colonel, "I know more of Wylde than you do. He has not been exactly what could be called a good fellow all his life. He has had many chances, and he has thrown them away. Do you think I would be as hard on him as I am if I did not know this? He has the faults of his strength, as Surrey has the faults of his weakness. Which will be the better man in the end I don't know yet. But Surrey has you to look after him now."

"He will have to look after me," said Peggy, and the Colonel laughed.

"I believe he will. And that will be a responsibility that should rouse him if anything will. Do you remember speaking of the other than petrol explosions which I had arranged for this trip? I think you have supplied the most of them—Peggy, I will not be kissed on the nose when I am scolding you."

"Oh, I thought it was congratulations. I don't want to leave Inverness, but—can we start the day after to-morrow?"

"Surrey will have to map out the route first. And you are not to help him."

"Dearest duck," said Peggy; "when you set your chin like that you know that I always disobey you."

Three days later Surrey came to the Colonel.

"I am ready to start to-morrow, sir," he said.

"And what about Peggy?" asked the Colonel.

Surrey laughed. Already he looked more eager, more buoyant and alert in manner.

"Well—you see, we haven't seen much of each other yet," he said.

"Bless you, boy; you have all your lives before you," said the Colonel. Then he put a hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Peggy told me how that matter came about at Kingussie," he said. "I still regret it, and I am still determined that you shall not have her until you have something better to offer her. But I ask your pardon for what I said to you, Surrey."

"It was quite natural," said Surrey, but his blue eyes were not perfectly frank. There had been so

much in all that which it galled him to remember. "I am glad Peggy told you. But she will never suffer from over-reticence."

"Little baggage," said the Colonel, fondly. "She usually manages to make others do the suffering. And you are not jealous of all these boys from the Castle, Surrey? I am English, but I can appreciate the difference between a Piccadilly Highlander and a man of the soil."

"Oh, I am not afraid for Peggy," said Surrey, with careless confidence. But the Colonel's brows drew down as he looked after him.

"I could wish you were," he said. "You are so little afraid that I doubt if you'll trouble to play the lover very long. I wish I could see you less sure of yourself and of life—and of Peggy."

Peggy was absorbing the Highlands into her blood. The good unbreathed air; the stretches of springy heather; the scraps of grim, gallant and tragic history flung across the whole of the land, the very drone of the bagpipes were a joy to her. She had stood on the steps of the old Market Cross in High Street, where the blue slab of stone called Clach-na-cudain brought back memories of the days before the fifteenth century when all the gossip and news from the wild countryside gathered about the women who washed their clothes on it. She had been to Culloden Moor, where the rough stones and mounds marked the graveyard of a dynasty, and she had come away blinded with tears. She had gone once to a Gaelic concert and had lain awake all the night after, thrilling with those wild melodies which hold pathos and an inherent craving for freedom in the very fibre of them.

Druids had set their mark on Inverness. Picts and Britons and Danes had fought round it, leaving such things as Sweno's Runic Stone at Forres to tell of victory to later generations. Near Carr Bridge the Slochd Muick—"den of the wild boar"—was yet grim with stories of the outlaws who gathered there after forty-five. On the Blasted Heath near Forres Mac-

beth is said to have come through the storm that swept the hoary-lichened moor to his meeting with the three witches. In that little house in Bridge Street Queen Mary of Scots had held her Court until her men stormed the castle and hanged its governor from the battlements. In forty-five the Hanoverian soldiers lost both lives and castle against Prince Charlie's troops, and a hundred years earlier that crumbling fort down the river had been built by Cromwell.

Peggy knew it all and loved it all on that morning of sunshine and sea air when the blue car left the old red town dreaming either side its lovely river, and hummed past great banks of trees with crested gateposts and gleams of houses set far back along the road to Beaulieu. Across the dazzling water the Black Isle, birthplace of Sir Hector Macdonald, stretched its humped length to rightward. Ben Wyvis with its heather-clad army of hillocks beckoned straight ahead. Past Beaulieu, through hills of charm round Muir of Ord, and Conon, Surrey drove unhalting. Then Peggy roused herself from the spell of pure delight.

"We shall have to stop in each of these places coming back," she said. "They all have history. And here is Dingwall, and Sir Hector Macdonald's Monument on the hill."

Surrey glanced up at the huge block that looks down on the lovely valley where the little capital of Ross-shire lies to the lip of Cromarty Firth.

"Of course I will stop if you like," he said, reluctantly.

"No, it doesn't matter. And there's another column like a crooked finger turned to stone. We'll see them all coming back. I know you hate to stop."

"Well—with a glorious road like this, don't you know . . . and the air is giving you such a colour, Peggy. By Jove I don't look at me like that, you little witch."

Peggy laughed, low and happily; forgetting all the studies she had made of Hugh Miller and this Red Sandstone country of his, forgetting to wonder at the

history of old stone walls and grown-over gates and dead tracks on the tree-covered banks to the left, and forgetting the story of Foulis Castle, in its hidden park, from whence the heads of the Clan Munro had gone out to suffer for the Reformed Faith and for the last of the Stewarts.

The road opened wide to the bare rough hills, brown and dull with the budding heather. Far up on the left a strange line of pillars and arches stood against the sky like the entrance into the City of the Clouds. Peggy twisted in her seat and learned its meaning from the old Scotchman in the tonneau. Then she turned again to Surrey.

"When Sir Hector Munro was coming back from India after taking Seringapatam in 1771 he was nearly killed by the robbers of the Slochd Muick near Carr Bridge," she said. "But he got safely back to Foulis, and then he found that all his tenants were starving. So he made them build a facsimile of the gates of Seringapatam on the hill, and the work and the carrying up of the stone and mortar kept them busy the whole winter. And then they christened the thing the Fyrish Monument, but Major Douglas says that name is kept for postcards. I think it is a very nice story, don't you?"

"He might have done something more useful, I should think. See those squares of laced tree-branches stuck all along the ranges, Peggy? They are the shelters for men shooting. Not much else, is there? I shot over a bit of this land one year, and there wasn't a stick or a twig for miles—just hills and moors of heather."

"Oh, did you learn to do the heather-step?" cried Peggy. "But they say that only a Scotchman can do it." And then she broke into song.

"I hear the pibroch, sounding, sounding,
Deep o'er the mountain and glen ;
While light springing footsteps are trampling the heath,
'Tis the march of the Cameron men. . . ."

Surrey's voice joined hers, and beyond straggling

Allness and a line of low thatched cottages they sang together along the lonely ways of moors, of rising hills, and of peat-bogs, cut into heaped blocks of burnt sienna with liquid ink draining from them to blotch the pink and purple bell-heather.

An old woman, bent double, with grey hair that straggled and a heavy creel at her back, stepped off the road for them, looking up with a face searied and grey as the hills. By a sudden impulse Peggy waved her hand, and turned on Surrey with wet eyes.

"Why should I have everything and she nothing?" she cried. "Oh, I wish I had given her some money."

"She would probably have considered it an insult," said Surrey. "You will need to be careful among these Highlanders. By Jove! that's pretty, isn't it?"

Past the new plain Altnamain Hotel on the hill-crest the road had run down to sudden sight of Dornoch Firth. It was something beyond any words to Peggy; that gleaming water behind the serried tree-boles of black and silver; those blue misty hills beyond; the deep glens, bridged high, with rough water threading the ferns and hurled rocks in their bed; and then the calm broad sweep of the Firth, low down on the right, taking the reflection of each heathery hill, each ragged rock and knotted tree and passing cloud on its clear unrippled shield.

Beyond the clumped houses of Bonar Bridge railway station the bridge itself led them straight into Sutherlandshire and turned them west up the Kyle of Sutherland to Invershin. The wide river of the Shin swept down between its ripped-out walls to meet them; glens and ridges showed bosky trees, shining teeth of crystalline, chocolate-brown nakedness; blue hills melted to haze; on a bluff above the wild river with all the beauty of tree and hill about it something which looked like a castle flung its turrets upward.

"A new hotel," said Surrey. "They were talking of building it when I was here last. But there is a story about this place which might interest you. This is all the Ross country, and the Ross clan and the Munros

and some others sided with the English when Montrose made his last stand down there in 1650. They caught Montrose's force somewhere near that big crag, and the place is called the Rock of Weeping still—I can't give you the Gaelic. A Scotchman found Montrose with a single follower up Strath Oykel—behind those hills across the Shin—a few days later, and he sold him to the English for four hundred bolls of oatmeal. Montrose suffered at Edinburgh, and you'll see his grave in St. Giles's when you go down. I hope the fellow who sold him is getting the worth of his oatmeal now. There ought to be a very peculiar punishment for the sin of 'treachery.'

He had turned across the high hill-road to Lairg, past the golf-links, with stony purples and greys and calling birds, and Peggy spoke unevenly, rubbing her fingers along the warmth of his rough tweed coat.

"I—I didn't mean to be a traitor to Mr. Wylde."

"You kitten," said Surrey, and laughed down at her. "You absurd baby! Who was thinking of you?"

Peggy looked with grave eyes on the river, widening broad and placid below where it opened from Loch Shin. There were little wooded islets in it, and red boats and boats with white sails. But the whole ran before her eyes in a dazzling blurr.

"No one would ever have forgiven me if I had been a man," she said.

"Well, of course. But that is entirely different. Peggy, you are to forget Wylde, and to do and think just as I tell you. Is that bit of Loch Shin as blue as my eyes? You told me they were the bluest things you'd seen out of heaven."

"And you doubted if I had ever been there to know. What a dear little cuddly village Lairg is. And the Sutherland Arms looks like a cosy private house. Have you ever stayed here, Surrey?"

"Once or twice. All this country is a sportsman's paradise." Then he smiled, dropping his voice. "Hear those old fellows in the back talking big-game shooting," he said. "And do you see the tufts of

heather tied on the top of every post in the wire-fences? That is to keep the grouse from hitting them as they fly over."

Peggy sat still, letting the good air and the charm of the day close about her, striking little flecks of memory across her brain with the nearing scents from fields of clover. Somewhere there had been a black rabbit sitting up by the roadside with wide frightened eyes, somewhere a bonny child in scarlet cloak and hood had waved hands to them; somewhere else there had been two huge women driving a very tiny donkey in a cart. There had been drooping sycamores, gorgeous with red seeds; a drove of Highland calves with their young soft bodies rough in sunlight. There had been a dreadful trampled camp of gipsy-tents looking like broken-backed snails. She spoke suddenly.

"Gipsies are not supposed by law to stay more than forty-eight hours in one place," she said. "I think we must be g. psies. It seems as if we had been going on and on for ever, and—I like it."

"The hawk unto the open sky,
The red deer to the wold,"

hummed Surrey. "Peggy, is that a mound behind a stone fence, or is it a house?"

"Dearest, it is a shieling, a truly Highland shieling. And there are some more. But you could only tell by guessing. And those blue and purple dabs are—oh, *what* are they? Heaven never intended that there should *be* such colours, I know."

Spun wool in crude heavy blues and purples was stretched along the heather to dry before the low white thatched cottages. At Little Rogart laughing children waved hands to them, cornflowers stood up blue in the green corn, poppies and honeysuckle nodded shining heads in the warmth; the ragged hills of Skye had long since sunk below horizon in the far west, and the sea-line came at The Mound, where the broad green embankment crosses the end of Little Ferry.

All about were white sheep in green fields, white sheep on yellowing hills, haugh-land under crop, parks with great trees and more white sheep. A train crawled sluggishly along the valley at their right hand, and Peggy put up her face to Surrey's.

"There aren't any road-limits in Scotland, except in the villages," she said. "If there are you have broken them quite hopelessly already. And—do you think we might race that train? I am sure it is going to Golspie too."

"Well—if you'll answer for me to those old chaps in the back," said Surrey, and clicked down the control.

The air was salt and sharp from the sea. It took Peggy's breath and blinded her eyes. Then she gasped, looking up at the huge couched length of Ben Bhraggie, close on her left.

"What's that thing like a pulled-out ink-pencil?" she demanded.

Surrey did not move. The curves and the cam of the road forbid it.

"You irreverent monkey," he said. "That is a monument to the first Duke of Sutherland, with his statue by Chantry on top of it. You will know that monument before we have done with it. I suppose it can be seen for fifty miles or more. But I don't know what that grey mist ahead—good heavens, it's the sea! We must be running on the very edge of it."

The unseen boom and the moan of it followed with them up the long, long street of Golspie, where all the little fisher huts took hands and faced the water, leaving black humped backs to the passer-by. And then, round the corner, backed by forest fading into mist, the Sutherland Arms flung out its wild-cat sign to them, and Surrey stopped reluctantly.

"Eighty miles," he said. "And I could go another eighty. Peggy, it doesn't get dark in this part of the world until all hours. We will go out and see Golspie after dinner."

Peggy had found time to ask or otherwise assimilate some knowledge of Golspie before she came out into

the soft misty light which appeared to swim from nowhere that it might make everything beautiful, and found two red cigars and two lounging figures waiting for her beyond the geraniums and the seats on the verandah. The change on her face as she saw the two was hidden instantly, but the Colonel noted it, and for a moment he shut his lips like a man who has received a blow. Then he came forward.

"The Major has gone to sleep over his cigar, and I rather fancy the Colonel will do the same," he said. "You won't keep her out late, will you, Surrey? The air is very damp."

"I'll take care of her, sir," said Surrey, and he drew Peggy's hand inside his arm. "This place is so quiet that it feels like the very end of the earth," he told her. "I believe there are only two other people in the hotel besides ourselves. Doesn't it feel like a kind of honeymoon, pet?"

His voice was half audacious, half tender. He held her arm closer, feeling it quiver.

"Some people say that the honeymoon should come before marriage so that people could learn to know each other before it was too late." Peggy laughed. "I have known you—at intervals—all my life, and yet I don't believe I know you really," she said.

"Oh, I'm a very ordinary sort of fellow," said Surrey, and secretly knew that he did not believe it. "What is it, darling?"

In the crook of the bridge which sprang across the burn of Dunrobin Glen Peggy had pulled her arm from Surrey's and was feeling with eager fingers over the rough lettering on a stone obelisk that rose on the rail against a background where great trees, white water, the high span of a railway-line and the black-and-white ruins of an old mill made beauty.

"This must be it," she cried. "Yes, it truly is. I can just make it out . . . Chlann Chattich nam Buadh—"

"What are you talking about?" said Surrey half sharply, for Peggy had left him as easily as though he had been Wylde.

"It is the gathering-stone of the Clan Cattach—the men of Sutherlandshire," cried Peggy. "They have a cat for their crest, you know, and their Head is called the Chief of the Cats. There used to be hundreds and dozens of wild cats in the Highlands, and that is why the fiercest men would naturally take a wild-cat for their badge. And I think Caithness gets its name from them, too."

"Ah," said Surrey, and lit another cigar. "Are you coming on, dear?"

"I know this stone says something about calling 'to the head of the little bridge the Clan Cattach of the Victories,'" said Peggy, considering. "So I suppose . . . oh, yes; the little bridge must be down past the village near the sea, Surrey. I read somewhere that the stone stood there. 'To the head of the little bridge' was the Sutherland slogan, you know, just as 'Stand fast, Craigalaichie' was the slogan of the Grants near the Cairngorms, and 'To the Rock of the Raven' was the slogan of the Macgregors. Oh, Surrey! can't you just think of them making the Fiery Cross by binding two rough bits of wood, and charring the tips with fire and putting them out with blood, and then sending it out all across these enormous ragged heathery mountains calling, calling for more blood! And those wild fierce Highlanders coming in through the nights and the days to the head of the little bridge down there by the sea!"

"Peggy, Peggy! don't get so excited. My dear girl, you won't sleep to-night."

It was tone more than words which brought Peggy back to earth with a jar that hurt her. And, half formed, scarcely realized, a thought sprang through her brain crying out that Wylde would not have laughed; that Wylde would have caught the scene and carried it on until all those rough lurid ages of battle and endurance and rude unbroken courage thronged about her with life and breath under the shadow of the obelisk.

Surrey's warm hands came over hers, and she

shivered a little as he lifted them up and kissed them.

"What's the matter?" he said. "You are not cold, are you?"

"No. Oh, no. I—I——" She looked towards the great tree-boles pegging down the darkness up the glen beyond. "They say Dunrobin Glen is haunted," she said. "People used to be hanged there once, you know."

"I know that you are a silly baby," said Surrey. "What do you want to think about such things for?"

"I can't help it. There are all the old old beginnings of things up here. You know there used to be Brunnies—that's an evil spirit in Gaelic—in all the caves in all those hills. And once a kelpie came out of a loch up there, and pulled a man in and drowned him. And the Picts lived along the coast, creeping about in strange underground places. And there is a kind of *feel* in the air. . . . Oh, Surrey! don't just look at me and smoke like that——"

"You are coming straight in to have a glass of wine and a game of Bridge," said Surrey. "And then you shall go to bed. If the Highlands are going to affect you like this I'll be glad to get you out of them. What business have you to feel a kind of *feel* in the air? Come in, pet. And remember that your Kelpies are nothing more than the brown kelp washed in the surf just beyond reach. Are you coming?"

Peggy went with him meekly. But beyond the light flung from the hotel she put up quivering lips to his.

"Please don't call me a silly baby ever again, Surrey," she whispered.

"You are the sweetest baby a man ever loved," said Surrey. "But I won't let you talk nonsense—or think nonsense. Remember you have got to go to sleep to-night."

But it was Surrey himself who slept badly. And once across his uneasy dreams Peggy's voice rang sharply, with a note of terror—

"Surrey!" it cried. "Wake up! Oh, Surrey! wake up!"

Surrey started up, fumbling for matches. The voice seemed so real, so near. But the room was empty and still. There was no sound anywhere but the low boom of the sea, and the occasional sway of the branches outside the window.

Surrey put out the light and called himself a fool. But for a long time he lay staring on the dark.

"Why the deuce should I dream that she wanted me to wake up?" he said.

It was old Major Douglas who made a proposition to Peggy at breakfast.

"My dear young lady," he said; "those two are Goths. Goths." He indicated the Colonel and Surrey with emphatic relish. "They don't know Scotch history, and, what is almost worse, they don't want to know it. Now you do. I think it would be a good idea if you sat in the tonneau with me and let those two do—h'm, er——"

Politeness to Peggy stayed the scriptural quotation on the Major's tongue. Peggy looked away from the laughter that she knew was in Surrey's eyes.

"That is perfectly dear of you," she said. "But I could not let you be bothered with the contour-book, and Surrey invariably chooses the wrong road if he hasn't got it. You shall take me all round Golspie this morning, if you will, though, and we'll talk history and derivations all the time. I know that Ben Bhragie is really Ben a Vraghey, and means 'the mountain of the head and shoulders,' you know. And I know that Conan was one of the very early Scotch heroes and that he hit the Devil, and that is probably the origin of the slang expression 'struck sparks off him.' . . ."

"Peggy," said the Colonel; "if those are the kind of things you get out of books I shall have to forbid your reading anything more."

"But it is read now, dear," said Peggy, amiably. "And I never never forget those sort of stories. I know lots more. And I will tell them to Major

Douglas this morning, and he will tell me some worse ones. Won't you, Major Douglas?"

The Colonel laughed, getting up.

"When I rescue you at lunch-time, Douglas," he said, "you won't ask her to sit in the tonneau this afternoon. And don't be late for lunch, little girl, for we must be in Thurso to-night."

With the Major Peggy went to the little old church on its hill by the road, and scraped the moss from seventeenth-century tombstones, and tried to decipher the time-worn arms of the Gordons, once Dukes of Sutherland, on the big, grass-grown vault. She heard of the cave named Thorkill's, back in the hills, in days when the Danes left the names of their rough gods scattered all along the coast from Thurso, once Thor's land. She heard of the relics of those long-skulled Iberians of the Stone Age, found in the beach sand, and of the places scooped out for earlier sleeping-berths in the rock caves. She heard, too, of the pit near Gallow Hill in Dunrobin Woods to which tradition assigned the sink or swim test; and of the last witch burnt at Golspie in 1724, and of how the name of the little town came probably from Adam Goldspey, a bailiff on the coast in 1296.

And then Major Douglas, finding the day yet young, took her up the road to Dunrobin Castle, seat of the Sutherlands since Robert, second earl of the name, founded it in the beginning of the eleventh century. Towers and lawns and terraced gardens, tier on tier of rooms in stately suites were not so new to Peggy as to the Major; and the statues; the pictures; the corridors carpeted, like so many Scotch houses, with the purple and green of the tartan, the skin of a real wild cat, spread on a tartan cloth; the white Caen stone of grand entrance and staircases; the libraries, state chambers, and queen's bed with cupids and white doves all over it, roused him to such outspoken delight that Peggy was tempted to fall wickedly from grace.

"Well, yes," she said. "It is quite good. But I

like the elephants' feet made into flower-pots best of all."

"Major Douglas just gobbled," she told Surrey, later. "Gobbled. There is no other word for it. And the whole place is perfectly magnificent. There is no other word for that, either. But, oh, Surrey, if I could live in a huge turreted and castellated place with Norman Keeps and Queens' Apartments and *porte cocheres* I'd sell them all for one day's view from the windows. Fancy seeing all the German Ocean—well, as much as there is in any place at a given time—rolling up on a sandy beach with Tarbet Ness away behind it, and the loveliest French and Italian gardens terraced among the trees just below. I couldn't get away from the windows, but the Major was puzzling out the heraldic quarterings all over the mantelpieces. I believe he knows the last thing about heraldry. I wonder what it would feel like to know the last thing about anything."

"If it made you feel as Major Douglas talks I wouldn't advise your trying," said Surrey. "Do you like this, little girl?"

It was a falling delicate web of fleecy white, sliding from his awkward fingers as he tried to unfold it.

"They call it a cloud, or something," he explained. "Real Shetland work. I tried to get some blue and purple like that wool they were dyeing at Rogart——"

"If you had! Oh, Surrey, you darling. How perfectly sweet——"

"It will look sweeter with you inside it," he said, and looped it over her head and round her shoulders. "They say it is so fine that it will go through a wedding ring. You will have to prove the truth of that by and by."

Peggy went crimson among the white meshes of the shawl, and Surrey was attempting to drive away the blushes by an ineffectual process of his own when the Colonel came in. The Colonel had a small-wrapped package in his hand, but he dropped in on a chair by the door at sight of Peggy in her trailing bride-like

draperies. For the package held the identical mate to Surrey's gift. He offered praise and admiration gallantly. But later, as he climbed into the tonneau, he said, under his breath—

"The boy is in debt, badly in debt; and he gives her something new every day. Where does he expect the money to come from, I wonder?"

And at that moment Surrey turned his genial frank face to him.

"Peggy and I have made this route a work of art," he said. "From Golspie to Helmsdale is almost the only duplicated part, and it was a perfect brute to map out."

And then Peggy's close bonnet and laughing lips and eyes bobbed up, with her pink veil blowing across Surrey's face and shoulder.

"You are both to love every single minute, just as I am doing," she commanded. "For the whole world is smelling of peat-smoke and sunshine and sea and heather, and the scenery is going to be beyond description, because the guide-book says so."

Where the bosky heights of Dunrobin Woods gave place to the long sweep of the sea and the slow rise of heather-flushing hills, Peggy put her hand on Surrey's arm.

"Stop," she said, imperiously. "There is a lump of something over there, and I want to see it."

The road was well graded and surfaced, the engine had just enough air, and Surrey stopped with a half-said word of irritation, as Major Douglas leaned from the back seat.

"I thought you would desire to see the broch, Miss Bouchier," he said.

Peggy came to the ground in one jump.

"Oh!" she cried. "Is it truly? I know Surrey thought it was a sheep-fold."

Surrey thought so still. He whirred the throttle-control along its brass ladder sharply in order that the buzz of the car might explain his impatience. But Peggy laughed at him.

"It is not a bit of use your doing that," she said. "You are all coming to see the broch. And you are going to learn what it is, too, and I know you'll hate that. Please tell them, Major Douglas."

This was purely wicked, but Peggy looked serenely out to sea whilst Major Douglas explained with great wealth of detail that a broch was a Pict's tower or house, built probably between the fifth and tenth centuries, and found nowhere but in Scotland and the neighbouring islands. He furthermore asserted that a chain of them undoubtedly once linked up the coast from the upland dale of Dunrobin to Duncansby Head as protection against the onslaughts of the Danes. He dilated on the fact that they were always circular buildings of unhewn uncemented stone; narrowing as they rose to their usual height of about forty-five feet, and very often open in the centre.

"Many of them have rooms and staircases and galleries in the thick of the wall," he said. "They are a later blend of the earliest weems—round pits roofed with boughs and sods, and the earth-houses—underground galleries roofed with stone slabs or boulders. There are quite a number of all these along the coast where, undoubtedly, the Danes made a practice of landing; but the greater number of brochs are in Caithness. It has seventy-nine——"

Here Peggy had mercy.

"Thank you ever and ever so much," she cried. "Now we will all go and see it, for there isn't even a field-mouse to touch the car. Scotland can make the loneliest places out of a mile of hills and sea that you can think of."

Peggy crossed the field among the browsing sheep; stooped under the low stone slabs of the corridor and the portal of the small room beyond where she could stand upright in the dark; groped her way out to the grassy centre, and found Major Douglas on his knees, feeling down through the loose slabs of stone.

"There is probably another gallery or cellar below,"

he said. "Those people must have had cats' eyes. I wonder if they shone in the dark."

Peggy's thought sprang to Wylde's words to her in Carnarvon Castle.

"Your eyes shine everywhere to me." And she turned suddenly white. Where was he now? And what were the memory of her eyes meaning to him now? She crawled out down the corridor hurriedly and climbed the grassy mound to the top of that sturdy grey tower which breasted sea-wind and tempest as bluff and solid as when the hands of the Painted Men first had built it.

Here Surrey found her, and she smiled at him seriously.

"How many people have watched from here to see the high prows of the Danish galleys and the flash of their oars in the sun!" she said. "And why did men kill each other so much? It is so hopelessly wicked."

"Seeing that I am supposed to earn my living at that very game——" began Surrey, and Peggy caught his right hand up in both hers.

"Oh, don't! I can never bear to think of it. Surrey, I—I don't think I want to stay here any longer. This thing is—it isn't dead enough."

"I wish you wouldn't talk of every collection of rubbish put together by man as if it had individuality, Peggy."

"But they all have. They are the thoughts of men," asserted Peggy as he lifted her down.

The hours went by with the breath of the sea-wind, of peat-smoke and of a thickening mist. There were white horses off at sea, with yellow sands and jagged rocks. There were vague hills of rich cultivation and hanging woods dreaming in haze to leftward. There were elusive humps that were sometimes shielings where children waved hands and women waved dish-towels; sometimes grassy mounds suggestive of forgotten history; sometimes crumbling brochs. Little Brora showed its salmon-stream, its coal-beds and its old stone and thatched huts opening to the sea. Then

Port-Gowan brought Peggy out of her trance of delight with a laugh.

"This is the most ancient and dearest collection of thatched cottages a good fairy ever dropped down below a road to say 'Peep-bo' to people," she cried. "And is that pretty town in the bay ahead Helmsdale? And is that squat ugly ruin between the river and the sea a castle?"

"It is the castle where Isabel Sinclair tried to poison the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland and their heir so that the dukedom should go to her son," said Major Douglas. "But it was Isabel's own son who took the poison and died of it, and she killed herself before she could be hung in Edinburgh. That was near the end of the sixteenth century, but I couldn't say if the place has been lived in since. There should be some ghosts in it, Miss Peggy."

Peggy was glad to turn her eyes from that gaunt barren place, and to climb the long heather heights of Strath Kildonan with its shooting-lodges and its cairns on the hills of stones and heather and sheep. The folds were stone, and there was white lichen shining on the rocks; the thatched shielings were built without mortar, and the old low tower of Kildonan Church looked rugged as the hills themselves. It was a world given over to sheep, cattle and rabbits, to big and little lochs that lay naked along the tops, and to peat-bogs and utter loneliness on the water-shed of the Ord.

Beyond bare Forsinard rain met them, with a rough road under the wheel down Strath Halladale beside the twisting river. Here, because Peggy and the contour-book had been summarily put into the tonneau, Surrey missed the turn and climbed a steep pinch of road into Melvich. On the hill-top lay something which looked like a blotchy rash of stone and grass irrupted from the hill itself. But it was a rare instance of a typical crofting community, the sediment of a life whence all the quck-running blood is gone.

Peggy thrust her head out into the driving rain. In the mist of it the few shawled women moving about the

heaps of thatch and stone which they called "home" looked grey and unreal as everything else. Surrey asked questions of a man so old that it seemed Death had forgotten to look for him here. Then he backed the car.

"They are still at the cave-dweller stage up here," he said. "And I've got to take her down that greasy hill of one in five again."

He did it with grating brake, running along the wet stony road past Reay into Caithness. There were shooting-lodges in knots of trees along the heather hills; there were deep rough cliffs and thundering sea on the left. The humped backs of broken towers rose and faded; fences of brown stone looked like sacks hung over a line to dry. The rain gave place to mist—warm mist, turning everything huge and vague. To Peggy this murmuring run along the level half-seen road to Thor's Town was a passage back through a warm great dream which was being dreamed by all the gods and the dead Norsemen who once had lived here. Then, enormous out of the mist, showed a Norseman of now, yellow-bearded, blue-eyed, big in limb.

Then he passed, and the long grey street of Thurso met them; with its smell of peat smoke and the sea, its sight of fat fair boys, of lounging fishermen, and of laughing fisherwomen with Shetland shawls and petticoats drawn over their well-carried heads.

CHAPTER X

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

ON the strip of shelly beach where the rough waters of the Pentland Firth moved the seaweed across the shining rocks Peggy sat with her back to Scotland and that collection of thatched huts, inverted boats, pea-stacks and flaunting new hotel which make up John o' Groats.

There was a letter-pad and a dried fountain-pen on her knee. And for the rest there were the low hills of Stroma to watch, green and brown and russet in the sun; there were the black shoulders of Moy of the Orkneys behind, and through the rip between a little boat staggering out on its way to Shetland. And besides all this there was Surrey, strolling the beach beyond with Major Douglas.

A half-sheet of notes in Wylde's writing lay on the pad. He had given them to her in the days when he had thought that they would go north together, and the bold firm lines made her think too keenly of the man still. He had spoken quite truly when he said that Peggy did not know what she had done. It was not possible that she should. But she knew enough to dread meeting him again very much, and all the more because she was already realizing that she would want to take from him such understanding of this land of history as he could give and Surrey could not. She glanced down again at the notes, now come to life because she had seen some of the places.

"Shetland and Orkney Norse until 15th cent.—likely later," Wylde had written. "Stamp of heathen mythology on names all along Caithness Coast, i.e.

Holborn Head, Thurso, from Hollabiorn, child of the goddess of Hell. Scrabster, Ulbster, Lybster—Scan. 'saetr,' a farm. Wick, Scan. bay. Marks of Norse race yet in the fair hair and blue eyes of people of Caithness and in absence of Gaelic in the language."

Peggy put the notes down. In every point the man was so mercilessly thorough. She knew that he had sheafs such as this; and she knew how he would have talked to her of the time when "the Norsemen drove by with the storm-stricken banner" to land Harald the Wicked for that meeting with his namesake, the rightful Earl of Caithness, in the field near Thurso, 1190, when the Earl fell and the Tower which still stands there became his shrine. She knew how he would have talked to her in Thurso, that little quaint town so loved by Hugh Miller, with the tall chimneys of its Pavement Works, the narrow knotted streets, and the long low fishermen's biggins whence most of the population has been drawn down the coast to Wick; and she knew how he would have looked at those bold dizzy bluffs of the Deil's Brig and the Clet, ripped down into wild black gulfs and chasms where the sea toils with groans and seekings in hidden corridors. Wylde could have told her stories along the sandy sweep of Thurso Bay, with Murkle, where the original of Scott's "Pirate" was born, and Scrabster, where the lighthouse was built by Thomas Stevenson. But that was gone—done away with, and instead, Surrey looked into her eyes and said "I love you," and then pinched her cheeks and called her a sweet baby.

She had gone with Surrey to old St. Peter's Church in Thurso with its fourteenth-century tombstones and its new cemetery within the topless mossy walls. Beside him she had seen Thurso Castle of the Sinclairs, where mail-clad statues stand on the turrets, drenched with the spray of the Atlantic and deaf to the shrieking of the birds; but stories of ancient burying-grounds torn out and scattered by the sea, of castles and chapels thick with tragedy, of the days when bishops

went to torture and death, and tall-prowed Viking galleys nosed the sand all through the Bay, meant less than nothing to him—so much less that already the knowledge vaguely hurt her.

Surrey loved the white clear roads and the rush of the car as Wylde did. But in that run from Thurso to Dunnet's Head yesterday he had missed the charm of tall hay-cocks and peat-stacks which everywhere took the place of trees, of the unmortared yellow-thatched crofters' huts, glowing with all tints and strapped from the winds across the levels from the sea by old fishing-nets weighted with stones. He had missed that never-forgotten sweep of bent grass and dunes, of bluest sea and yellowest sand and brownest sea-weed round the end of the Bay and up the hill to Dunnet village with its little church, its clusters of peat-smoky houses, its scents of clover, of bell-heather and pink-and-white may, and its entrancing come-and-go sights of the blue sea, the ragged cliffs and the distant thousand-feet-high bluffs of the Old Man of Hoy on the Orkneys.

He had missed the beauty, as she had known him to do more than once, and he had entirely lost his temper over that track which contour-book and road-map declined to give up to the highest lighthouse in Britain on the very forehead of Dunnet's Head at the most northern point of all the island. Beyond the lochs on the tops and the dizzy sights of brown rock-stacks and bluffs had come a solid clump of white-washed buildings behind a high storm wall from which Peggy, with Surrey holding her, had looked down to the sea boiling in the rocks where long-necked gannets, puffins flashing by, red-beaked, and many birds more had wheeled in the tossed spray without sound. At that height the silence of all that eager life made it curiously unreal, and Hoy, glaring with the one yellow streak across its reddened walls that were black in shadow, looked as merciless as the rip of the dreaded Firth below.

Surrey had picked a flower for her from the very

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tip where the fog-horn bellows at Hoy, and he had kept her beside him down through Dunnet again, and over the long good road to John o' Groats. But there had been nothing sad to him in the desolate graveyards which grew stones and obelisks instead of grass and flowers; nothing glorious to him in that long seaboard from Hoy which seemed turning round to watch them as Dunnet's Head grew bolder in the distance and all the Orkneys rose on the horizon, struck to life by the flash of a white lighthouse or the glint of sun on a straight wet face of rock. Past the low heather downs and Canisbay with its straggling church, where the first John Grot is buried, he had brought them through the stinging sandy wind at what felt like forty miles an hour, and at the octagon hotel on the flat edge of the northern sea he had halted before the door and smiled at her.

"Baby," he said, "that colour of yours has made the run against this horrible wind worth while."

The name he called her had spoiled the smile and the words. Surrey never treated her as a woman. It would not have been possible for her to explain to him how the passion of her love had made her deliberately lower her pride that she might ensure for him the thing which he desired. And she knew that it would not have been possible for him to understand it. Once Wylde understood, when he had told her at Gloucester that a woman can do wrong honestly and prayerfully for the man she loves. Peggy had done just that. But did Wylde understand it now? She folded the notes with idle fingers, and then the breath of the sea brought Surrey's voice to her.

"But we English will always expect those things of our women, and we will enforce them where we can," he said.

Peggy knew something of Surrey's almost stern belief in the innate womanliness of women, and her part in that hour by Ruthven Barracks swept over her with a new terror and shame. She had gone to Surrey, never thinking of what the action might mean

to him. She had told him—the sudden throb of her heart turned her sick. But it was Surrey. *Surrey*. He must have understood. It was madness to think that he had not understood. She glanced out to the uneasy sea again. Surrey stood alone on its lip, smoking, looking out to Stroma, where, as the truth tells, the curious salt action of the air embalms dead bodies, so that at one time there were no burials. Major Douglas was climbing the upper beach among the boats, and Surrey, for the first time when he was freed, had not come straight to her. At another hour she would not have noted it. Now she set her lips together; dropped her eyes to her book, and read for what seemed three eternities with never a word of sense in them.

And then, over the sparkling crunching shells, she heard Surrey coming. She did not look up, and presently he laughed, standing over her.

"What an industrious baby it is," he said.

She reached up her hand, pulling him down beside her. One of the great moments of her life was near, very near, and she knew that there was no fibre in Surrey which felt it.

"You never called me Baby until we were engaged," she said. "You never thought of me so. Why will you do it, Surrey?"

He smiled, plaiting the little soft fingers one over the other in his palm.

"Why," he said; "even to me you always had that little bit of a 'keep your distance' air, don't you know. One can't take liberties with The Honourable Peggy. I used to wonder—often—what you would be like when you capitulated."

"And—when I did?"

Peggy's voice was uneven. She had not capitulated. Surrey had not asked for it, and he knew this even as she did. He laughed, still playing with her fingers.

"Then I found out how all your armour of pride and dignity was just a bit of brown paper that hid the

most adorable irresponsible infant a man ever wanted to talk nonsense to," he said.

"Was that all you found?" Peggy's voice was suddenly sharp, but his ear did not notice it.

"I don't know that I have looked for anything else. I am very well content with this. Don't take your hand away. . . ."

Peggy shut them close together on her lap. Her face was white.

"I am a woman," she said. "I am twenty-two. I am a woman, though I think I am just beginning to know it."

The cry in her voice, the look in her eyes did not wake him, did not touch him, and he would have accounted it weakness if they had. For he had built his beliefs on the traditions of his race, and his opinions moved slowly.

"Don't know it," he said. "I don't want you to know it, and I am the only one who matters just now. You are a baby. Only a baby would have——" He checked himself sharply. "Would have such cheeks and lips," he ended.

"That is not what you were going to say." Peggy's tone was intense. "You were going to say that only an irresponsible baby would have dared to ask a man to marry her after she had insulted him by telling him that she had thought him so little of a man that she had taken advantage of another man——"

"Peggy! For Heaven's sake—my dearest girl, you will get so wound up directly that even your own tongue won't be able to undo you."

The good-humoured laughter cut Peggy like a whip-lash.

"I will not be called a baby," she cried. "I am a woman, and I can feel as a woman feels."

Surrey went red. He believed that he had been entirely generous. Not by word or look had he let Peggy guess how bitterly he was galled by the recollection of what had gone by, and especially by

Wylde's share in it. His anger was on the edge of his tongue. Then his native chivalry and courtesy struck it back. And then he looked at her, and the incongruity between her child face and body and the tragedy of her attitude tickled his humour. He came very close, putting his arm about her under the shadow of the cliff.

"You shall call yourself and me any single thing you please so long as you will forgive me for making you look like that," he said. "And now I am going to tell you something that is an absolute secret. Dearest, I love you. I love you. . . ."

Peggy's great moment was slipping through her fingers like the sand, leaving the future equally unsure. But she let it go, and presently, over her head, she heard Surrey speaking, suavely, politely.

"Don't be jealous, my dear child. Your own turn will come in time."

"Oh!" cried Peggy, and pulled herself free. "Oh, Surrey!"

And then they both laughed at the atom of yellow-curved bare-legged babyhood that stood before them, with serious eyes, and with dimpled hands clutching her pinafore.

"She is very like what you were two or three years ago," said Surrey. "Come here, kiddie. What have you got there, eh?" He stooped his head to her whispers. Then he looked at Peggy. "What under the sun are groatie-buckies?" he asked.

Peggy was down on her knees, sliding her white fingers among the delicate white shells.

"Oh, they are the cowries," she cried. "I must have some, Surrey. John o' Groat's is famous for its cowries. No; don't give the darling money. She shall have kisses . . . and hand over all the chocolate you have in your pockets. I know you always carry some for me."

She had her arms round the child, and the two yellow heads and the pink-and-white faces were close together. But, to Surrey's judgment, the younger

child's face was the most serious of the two. He brought out the chocolate.

"I don't know if that will do," he said. "I expect these people make their living in the tourist-season."

"Then I'll take her home and pay the mother. And I will learn some real Scotch, for I don't know much yet."

"Let us praise Heaven for small mercies," said Surrey. "We start in about an hour."

Peggy was all radiance and laughter when he saw her again. But she sprang into the tonneau beside the Colonel.

"Hoots, mon," she cried, "I been haein' a crack wi' a braw auld birkie wha has ganged yearly tae the Shelties, whatever. And, dear,"—here she laid hold of the Colonel as the blue car took up its song on the white road—"he called me a betterish sort of body, and said I was too free to be a lady."

"What have you been doing now?" demanded the Colonel.

"Oh, lots of things. I ate a periwinkle. And do you know that we passed St. John's Loch yesterday where invalids used to walk three times round it and throw money in the water as late as fifty years ago? I gave the braw auld birkie some to throw in because he has rheumatism. But I don't believe that it will go in water. And there are gyoës all along the coast. I think they are really chasms in the cliffs. And did you know that Orkney and Shetland belonged to Norway and Denmark until the fifteenth century?" She turned, looking back on the long jagged broken lines of the Orkneys, black and dull red against the sun, and on the tossing heavy greens of the fierce Firth between.

"By Odln, yea; I saw the white horses," she quoted. "Dear, how many times have the Vikings drained their drinking-horns and shouted, 'Waes Hael' on that beach?"

"I couldn't tell you," said the Colonel. "Which story do you favour as to the origin of John o' Groats,

Peggy, for I put a different one on each postcard?"

"Oh, the one of the eight brethren, and the eight-sided table and the eight doors to come in at so that each should call himself head of the house. Though, considering that the grant of land was given to John Grot himself in the fifteenth century, I don't see why he should have been so kind. But to say that it was a square house with the corners cut off to stop the wind blowing it away is simply—dull. Any one could have more imagination than that. Why, you could."

"Thank you," said the Colonel, humbly. "I sent Wylde a postcard, little girl. I thought he might like it."

"I dare say," said Peggy, briefly. Then she sat still while the heather moors, the little bare shielings, the little lochs and the green slopes of grass and grain spun behind, and across the cut-off corner of Duncansby Head the German Ocean gleamed again with the long dark tongue of Noss Head to ring it in.

Gradually the majestic groups of the Orkneys dropped behind; the Pentland Skerries were gone; fishing-smacks glinted white sails and red sails far ahead. Freswick was passed, and the huge columns and detached stacks and ridged cliffs of the Caithness coast fell into line again beside the road; Keiss, Reiss, Ackergill, with the naked roofless walls of ancient castles stabbed up through the sky-line again and again from the naked storm-beat cliffs where the sea-birds wheeled and nested; Girnigo, where the eldest son of an Earl of Caithness died in the dungeons by his father's will; and then the rough ripped-out coast of Sinclair Bay, holding curious cairns that might have been Picts' Towers, curious mounds that might hide the dead.

Mystery and the elusive fluttering of an unknown past left them near the big fishing-village of Wick, where the smell of the herrings gave greeting before they wound down the long street among the slow-

moving fair-headed fishermen to the very lip of the harbour itself.

All her days Peggy said that there was not anything in the world like the sight of Wick, and most certainly there was not anything like the smell. It seemed as though, to horizon, there was no sea in Wick harbour; nothing but that black forest of masts, linked and strung together by the huge floats that looked exactly like all-coloured plum-puddings on Christmas-trees. Sails and nets were sunk in chocolate and russet and black orderly confusion across the holds which had yielded up their last shining tail to the tables and troughs where bare-armed, short-skirted girls worked in a smother of silvery scales and smudges of blood. On every side were barrels headed-up for export; on every side they passed in carts, they stood on trucks, they stretched along the street until the potency of the smell was forgotten in wonder that there could be any fish left in the sea.

Surrey leaned over the seat to Peggy.

"There's an amazingly pretty girl among those cleaners," he said. "Can't you get a snap?"

Peggy raised her camera. And then the busy silence split into a scatter of shrieks, fluttering shawls, dropped knives and darting hiding figures. Peggy put down her camera again. The big space was empty of all but the fish-scales and the knives and the plastered troughs and tables shining in the sun.

"If they had only known how utterly picturesque they were!" she said.

The rocks that shelved deep to the sea beyond Wick were ridged and level as the heater of a motor-car; and again they were slabs, huge as Stonehenge and many-coloured as a tartan, built up into separate columns and stacks and caves by the hands of some restless giant. Splendour of light and colour fell over land and sea, and the salt keen air was full of gladness. At Lybster showed the first trees seen since Thurso. On horizon lay a faint blurr which Peggy

called Norway and Surrey Aberdeen. Dunbeath had an ancient inhabited castle that clung as never swallow's nest did to the cliff-edge. And then the road wound by bushy dell and burn up the rough surface of a one-in-fourteen hill where the car began suddenly to gasp and slide backwards.

Surrey had the brakes down in the first instant, and in the second he was out examining the car. Then Peggy saw his lips set as he went round to the emergency petrol-tin. It was the same tin which had come from London, for it had been a point of honour not to touch it, and the Colonel sat up with an exclamation.

"Is that all you have to take us back to civilization?" he demanded.

"Berriedale is only about seven miles," said Surrey. "I expect we'll get some there."

"And if we don't?"

"Then I'm afraid we'll have to wait till some comes. It is not the distance into Helmsdale, but there is the very devil of a pull over the Ord before we can get there."

The Colonel flung himself back, blting his grey moustache.

"Wylde would have done better than this," he said, and then the squeeze of Peggy's hand silenced him. But the blowing sea-wind, the sun and the swift motion had lost their invigoration for Peggy. However dearly she loved him, however much she thought for him, there would be occasions when she could neither shield nor help Surrey.

The Berriedale hill tried all Surrey's nerve. It was a long winding descent of one-in-nine; with a hamlet, ragged rocks, and a clear cairngorm river far below, and a emergency road running up to the right in case the brakes gave. But the moment when he went into the little hotel and asked for petrol tried him more severely still. He could not get Shell, which was the only spirit to which the car was accustomed, and he climbed out of the deep lovely ravine at a grade

of one-in-twelve, feeling her going unkindly under his hands.

Peggy looked back on one of the loveliest sights that Scotland has to give, where the amber Berriedale Water meets the blue sea deep among the ragged rock-clefts where a red road winds through green trees and little houses fleck the peaceful glen. Then she looked forward on the wonderful opening panorama of cliffs, sheer and naked among the hills of forest; of glens cutting through bare distant mountains; of range on range lifting and stretching in soft-rounded shapes, brushed with the faint pink-purple of heather.

"By Jove!" said the Colonel. "The little car did that well, didn't she? How pleased Wylde would have been with her." Then he bit his lip, and looked away. He did not desire to think of Wylde, and he did not desire that Peggy should think of him. But there was something about the eager personality of the man which had not departed with Wylde.

Far ahead Tarbet Ness slid out into the sea, with Dornoch Firth shining, clear and low and purple, against the land-grey. As the road led up through heather and loneliness pricked out with tiny shielings Major Douglas told to Peggy the superstition of the Ord of Caithness, when the young earl of that name, wearing the green which was supposed to be fatal to all men of the Sinclair clan, crossed the Ord with his followers to fall on Flodden Field across their dead bodies.

"And until lately for a Sinclair to cross the Ord or to wear green meant a violent death," said Major Douglas. "But since Caithness is half peopled with Sinclairs, and a good many of them own motor-cars, I suppose they have dispensed with the superstition. Though I would have felt anything but happy on those Berriedale hills if my name had been Sinclair."

"I felt anything but happy as it was," said Peggy. "And there is the Sutherland Monument again, and Helmsdale with that dreadful castle which looks as if it knew how wicked it was."

She found, with a sudden stab of alarm, that it was not quite easy to be natural and bright. There was a cloud somewhere. The responsibility and anxiety which she had shifted on to Surrey's shoulders were sliding back to her own, and in the next few days she had full time to realize this. For the salmon water at Brora was in perfect fishing-condition, and Surrey and Major Douglas and even the Colonel were fishermen born and bred. Therefore the little village with its low fisher-huts and its fine Station Hotel held them for a space of time that seemed counted by weeks to Peggy and by hours to the men. She wrote letters, she read history, she played golf occasionally, and she thought a great deal more than was good for her. And more than once she grew angry with herself at the sudden realization that she was thinking of Wylde. This realization drove her out to the little quiet street one evening to meet Surrey coming home, wet and muddy and radiantly happy, and it jarred in her voice when she spoke to him.

"You have been away all day," she said. "I never even saw you this morning, Surrey."

"My dearest girl, I was out long before you were up. By George I haven't had better sport in my life. Come in and see my catch. No, don't touch me. I'm desperately dirty. You should see Douglas, Peggy. He's mad. Mad. Never got a bite to-day . . . and look at this."

He lifted the huge shining fish by the gills and Peggy shuddered from it.

"I hate the smell of fish," she said. "You are never happy unless you are killing something, Surrey. Oh, send it away . . . and just look at your hands."

Surrey laughed. His hair was wet and his forehead smudged with the same red clay that glowed on his waders and his coat.

"Not much better than Wylde, am I? But I don't think that I'd get in such a state for anything else. By Jove! it was sport. Good-night, dear. No; I won't be down again. I had some sort of a dinner

at a place up the stream, and I'm just dog-tired. One doesn't catch a fish like that without a certain amount of work, eh?"

He was holding it, looking on it with pride. Peggy came near in sudden jealousy.

"Look at me when you say Good-night to me," she said. "Oh, Surrey! you do love me—truly, truly?"

"My dear girl, do stand off. I'm not fit to touch. What? Of course I love you. But you don't expect a fellow to go round saying it all the time, do you? "Oh, Peggy! you will sit in front to-morrow, won't you? I am not quite sure of the road."

"Yes. I will sit in front. Good-night, Surrey."

"Good-night, sweetheart. I think I must send this fish down to the Markhams'. Ted will be wild with envy."

She left him giving careful instructions to a waiter and went to her own room in a totally unreasonable state of mind. But then there was the knowledge before her always that this engagement was not Surrey's doing, but her own.

The cloud was not gone through all the beauty of the next day which took them past Golspie again; over the Firth at the Mound, and up the long climb beyond, with the zigzags of earth and sea that are Little Ferry lying in the valley behind exactly like a bright picture-puzzle put wrongly together. Forest trees and flashes of parks suggested Skelbo, that "gaunt and grim ruin" of the thirteenth century built by Sir Richard de Moravia, whose statue lies in the Dornoch Cathedral. The Sutherlands of Skelbo fought the Murrays beneath its walls, and then what were left went down and sacked Dornoch. Peggy remembered this as the blue car hummed down to Dornoch also: to the broad golf-links, than which "there canna be better found for gowf": to the low quaint thirteenth-century Cathedral, and to the tall ivy-covered tower of the old castle that looks out from the clean pleasant streets to the broad breast of the sea.

Along the upper road that led back to Bonar Bridge the sea played a cup-and-ball game with the sight, showing once the tall grey towers of Skibo Castle, Scotch home of Andrew Carnegie, against sand and sea, and bolstered with a veritable village of outbuildings among its wealth of trees. The ruggedness was gone from all the land. Mountains wore a continuous garment of purple heather and mist; lower green hills spread with trees and sheep were softened by veils of light. There were fields under plough; there were red smooth-haired cattle; there were sweetest of all sweet scents blown out of the woods and the hedge-rows, and there was the familiar sight of many motors past sweet Spinningdale and over the blue bridge at Bonar, where curious yellow jetties and stone walls greened by weed made patterns in the grey water.

Here the blue car took the coast-road to Tain, along the shining Firth, where, from the far side, bush hills, pale clearings, and the motley colour of little hamlets were flung vivid on the clear grey water. Wonderful King's purple and tender blues rolled over all the distant hills of Sutherland where huge Ben Clibrick made the last dent on the skyline. In St. Duthus' Chapel at Tain James the Fourth did yearly penance for a full twenty years before he fell at Flodden, and over the rough moorland track, known still as the King's Causeway, came James the Fifth, barefoot to the shrine. But only Wylde could have told Peggy of this, and of the Ogam stones near Dornoch scored by an alphabet unknown outside the British Isles, and of the cairns and Celtic duns and ancient churchyards of the Ness, and of the Castle at Loch Slin near Fearn, a stronghold once of the "bluidy Mackenzie."

The road ran through long fields of white and pink clover to the very nose of Tarbet Ness, and across the water lay the hills they had passed, dark and glorious beyond the flashing waves and golden sands. Dornoch was a glowing gem at the lower end; the

Sutherland Monument and the great white pile of Dunrobin showed crystal-clear, and beyond curves of dark and light and the sharp pitch of the mountain grades carried the eye up to that last blue faint hump which might have been Noss Head, north of Wick.

Portmahomack was a jewel of fishing-villages set in blue sea and brown jetties and cottages smothered in flowers. And then came the stone walls round the lighthouse at the tip, when Surrey put his arm about Peggy, running with her down the steep jetty past the sheer red rocks topped with green grass to the sea-lip. South, across the water, Burghead, Lossiemouth and all the shore of Elgin lay in blue haze. In between, fishing-smacks pirouetted with bright sails, and overhead the sea-birds circled, calling to each other.

Peggy picked up two cork floats discarded from the fishing-nets and flung them together into the sea.

"Those are you and me," she said. "Come and watch them, Surrey." But as she spoke a wave laid one back on the sand and its out-pull carried the other into the breakers.

"They were soon parted," said Surrey, and laughed. Then Peggy caught the lapels of his coat.

"Which went away and left the other?" she cried.

"Surrey, it wasn't you? Oh, don't say it was ever you went away and left me!"

"I am going to India, of course," he said, glancing down on her. "Don't look like that. You are getting too imaginative, Peggy. I shall not let you have anything to do with the natives when you come to India. And you will have to come if the Colonel persists in this absurd idea of his."

"Perhaps he—he thinks it best for you to have to work——"

"Work! I thought we had talked enough about this for you to understand——"

"Dearest, I do understand. But——"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing. It—it doesn't matter."

"But *what?*" The note of command was in his voice again, and she shrank from it.

"I think that while there is still doubt if Mr. Wylde——"

"By George! Peggy, you are—haven't I told you there is no doubt? Haven't I? Well?" He looked at her downcast face. Then he put his hands on her shoulders. "Perhaps you yourself think Wylde the better man of the two?" he said.

"Surrey——"

"Are you still of the opinion that the Colonel thinks so?"

"I know he thinks him very thorough . . . and so do I," said Peggy, desperately.

Surrey turned on his heel.

"Perhaps you are sorry already that you didn't wait until the Colonel had chosen," he said.

He would have taken it back even as he said it. But he did not. And he did not look round even when he heard her step up the pebbles and along the jetty to the road beyond. This was not the first time Peggy had twisted him out of focus with his universe, and it left all things distorted before his eyes. It was a want of love, a want of faith in Peggy to question his opinions. It was an insult to him that she should still be afraid of Wylde. He disliked the idea that the man would be with them again, but he asked nothing more than to be allowed to ignore him as much as possible. He was still irritated as he climbed the steep face to the car, but he had the grace to stoop to her as he passed the tonneau where she sat with Major Douglas.

"I beg your pardon very earnestly, Peggy," he said.

She did not answer, and the way of lovely hills and leafy bowers near Fearn was bitter to them both. With the sea-wind blowing on her face she stood up to catch the last glimpse of Dornoch Firth and all that glorious Northland which was to have put the seal on her joy. Then her eyes brimmed, and she listened to Major Douglas heedlessly.

"Balnagown Castle in that avenue is the policy of Sir Charles Ross, who has factories in Quebec. This is Cromarty, and Ross begins at Dingwall. Hugh Miller was born in the town of Cromarty. You will notice it across the Firth directly. And this is very fine country, is it not? Did you ever see such beeches and fences? Or such crops? It is called the granary of the north, don't you know. And that rise circling the Firth is Tarbet Hoe. And this long fishing-hamlet is Saltburn. Fish and agriculture, sheep and cattle make this part of Scotland extremely prosperous."

Peggy heard his voice stop, and she answered vaguely and politely as they ran through straighter, longer Invergordon, from whence a ferry crossed to the Black Isle. And then, past cattle deep in pasture, pale corn blowing in the breeze, they came again to Alness, and followed the old road back to Dingwall, along the Cromarty Firth, where the blue bay was once the Portus Salutis of the Romans.

The afternoon was yet golden-yellow with light, and the Colonel, remembering, with a host's concern, that Major Douglas's creel had been very empty of fish at Brora, suggested a run on to Strathpeffer.

"I know a fellow who has water just beyond," he said. "Or, I tell you what. We'll leave you there, Douglas, and go down the Skye road to Auchnasheen. Wylde will probably be there, or at Loch Maree—unless he has gone over to Skye."

This was during afternoon tea on the hotel balcony sweet with flowers. Peggy looked into her cup.

"I think I had best go back by train, dear," she said. "Then you can stay and fish as long as you like. And they expected us back in Inverness yesterday, you know."

"I'll send them a wire. We will run on to Strathpeffer to-night—"

"Dear, I haven't a single dress that would do for a fashionable Spa like Strathpeffer. Remember we have been in the wilds."

"Then we will stay here. And you can climb the cemetery hill across there and inspect Macdonald's Monument. Have you finished your tea? Then take her out, Surrey. The lazy monkey hasn't done any walking this week."

The Colonel's quick eye had seen the cloud between the two, but it did not burst until they had climbed the steep zigzag track to the cemetery and stood below the eighty-foot castellated tower of Sir Hector Macdonald's Monument, where the crest of a mailed hand grasping a cross is stamped in the yellow stone below the Gaelic motto.

Peggy talked history, this being the most merciless weapon at her command.

"Dingwall was a royal borough in 1226," she said. "The castle here belonged to the Earls of Ross, and that stooping obelisk we saw as we came through before was erected to the first Earl of Cromarty in seventeen-something. An earthquake bent it. There is a vitrified fort on top of Knockfarral Hill, about a mile off. I don't know if that is St. Columba's doing too. What is the stamp on these guns all along the front of the parapet? One, eight, ought, five. Why, that was Trafalgar, wasn't it?"

Surrey stood beside her, looking out on the glorious Firth shrouded in its soft dark hills that were ridged with the warm lights of sunset.

"I was a brute, Peggy," he said. "But I did apologize."

There was that hint of the master in his tone again. Peggy whitened, glancing up the valley to the long hills where night was forming in the glens.

"It is not the saying that matters if you thought it," she said.

"I did not think it, of course. But I am not looking forward to the rest of this trip. It will be unpleasant for you to have Wylde hanging about. And if he——"

"Well?" said Peggy, quietly. She sat down on

the gun-carriage, and her eyes met his without blenching.

"It *should* be unpleasant for you. I don't know what the Colonel is thinking of. The fellow isn't even a gentleman. Of course, if he presumes, you——"

"Surrey, do you think me so little of a woman that you imagine I would not know how to treat Mr. Wylde if he presumes?"

"He has presumed. How dared a fellow like that think of you? My dear girl, because the Colonel chooses to ignore class-distinctions I do not mean that you should do it. You must not have more to do with Wylde than you can help, Peggy."

"I shall treat him just exactly as I would any other gentleman with whom I was thrown much in contact," said Peggy.

For a little Surrey was silent while the amber and mole-greys and turquoise of the evening slid over the hills and among the clouds. But he did not desire to quarrel twice. He came over and sat on the gun-trail beside her.

"Darling," he said, "you don't quite understand me. An Englishman will go anywhere and talk with any one, unless he is a snob. But he is very jealous for the woman whom he loves. She must not talk to any one who is not worthy of her. I don't care for Wylde personally. He is not in my class, and we have nothing in common, but that would not keep me from talking to him if I liked him. It should keep you from it, though. You must show him that you belong to me and only to me now, Peggy."

"Don't say 'must' to me," said Peggy, half-choked.

"I never let even the Colonel say that."

"Even the Colonel! Surely I am more to you than the Colonel?"

"You are not. How could you be! He has done everything for me. Everything! Oh, Surrey! don't look like that. I mean . . . I love you . . . I would die for you, I think. But you have got to under-

stand that I am a woman and I must think for myself."

Surrey's face was dark. He stared out where the shadows from the glens crawled higher until they swamped the last trail of the sun and left the hills black against a far clear sky of lemon touched with green. Peggy looked past the Monument to the quiet dead on the hill-top. She knew just a little of Surrey's temper. Once it was roused he would lead a forlorn hope straight to the mouth of the Pit, though he had no one to lead there but himself. And she knew that when their two wills met it must be she would bend each time. But she had not known it before.

"I—I don't suppose Mr. Wylde will ever want to talk to me again, anyway," she hazarded at last.

Surrey whipped round and looked at her. Then, as ever, her childish face and figure called out the protection of his manhood.

"Poor baby," he said. "It is taking us some time to understand each other, isn't it? But I don't want to force you, pet. You will do what I ask for love, won't you?"

His face was very near. His blue eyes were brimming with tenderness. He took her hands.

"You are mine. Mine," he said. "Tell me that you love me enough to be glad of it."

She told him. Told him more than she had meant to, perhaps more than she felt; and they went down the winding track through the gloaming hand in hand, with Peggy bubbling into laughter and impudence again, and Surrey well content with her and with himself.

Where the big hotels and pump-rooms of Strathpeffer were set among purple hills, shining beeches and great lawns of grass and flowers they left Major Douglas next morning and climbed on, to the little picturesque glen of bracken and hanging trees and lichened rocks where, far below the slight green bridge ruled with a red line, Peggy watched the

Rogie Falls swirling like champagne in fizz with salmon leaping darkly in the foam. Then the Colonel put her into the front seat with Surrey, and his old stern eyes were tender. For he believed that the cloud between these two whom he loved was gone.

"I won't have you in the tonneau," he said. "You would talk information, and I know it all. Strathpeffer has both mineral and sulphur springs. There are many delightful excursions all about it, and at the head of the Strath the Macdonalds of the Isles were pulverized by those Mackenzie deils in fourteen hundred. Ben Wyvis can best be ascended from this point. Now, off you go, and don't bother me any more. I know the last thing about Strathpeffer."

"You are like the lady of whom it was said that 'she had so much taste, and all of it bad,'" said Peggy, ungratefully. "Dear, you would take the poetry out of Shakespeare himself."

"The tourists have taken it out of Strathpeffer. Go on, Surrey."

The true wild heart of Scotland met them again beyond Loch Garve, lying at ease among its pretty hills. A wild heart, purple-red with the life-blood of the heather, and throbbing with history and legend across its tumbled crags and peaks, its lonely lochs and little fierce streams, its round hills bald with age, its naked rocks and treeless mountains that make up the deer forests of Scotland. Lights shifted across the rugged brown and grey distances, but it gave them no warmth in this land from which all life seemed gone, except for a half-score rabbits and far-flying curlew. It was a silent land, an empty land. But it was full of the centuries-old skirl of the bagpipes; it was full of history and of tragedy along every step of this ragged edge of the Western Highlands that led out to Skye and to Lewis and to the wild seas once ruled by the Lords of the Isles.

Wylde was not at the small knot of houses that made Auchnasheen among the lonely hills, and it was in the narrow road beside Loch Rosque that a game-

keeper told how Wylde had stayed there two days only and then had disappeared.

"There will be word from him at Inverness," said the Colonel. "We'll go back. There will be word from him there."

But his stern face had grown sterner, and he had no conversation to meet the Major's talk of the fish he had caught and nearly caught as they flashed down the white smooth roads, dark with branching leafage and sweet with the scent from pine-trees, limes and white clover in the rolling fields. Between Muir of Ord and Beaully Major Douglas insisted on a stop at Cille-Christ Church, and Peggy consented warmly, because, with a sudden shock, she knew that she too wanted to get back to Inverness. And the knowledge made her cruel to the Colonel. But, for a little, in that small roofed-over place, now used for a burying-ground, she forgot Wylde in horror at that terrible clan tragedy of 1603, when the Macdonalds of Glengarry burnt every woman, man and child of the Mackenzies who worshipped within its walls that Sunday morning.

"You will see the end of that story down the Canal," said Major Douglas. "The Mackenzies retaliated, of course. But the music which the Macdonald pipers played through the burning has been their clan pibroch ever since. A number of the Mackenzies are buried at the thirteenth-century priory in Beaully—the chief of their clan lives only a few miles off. And there is a baronial castle of theirs too, with stone circles and cairns. This country is full of ancient history. And I will show you the red roofs of Beaufort Castle, Lord Lovat's seat, when we pass Beaully."

It was Surrey who told Peggy that evening that the Colonel had found no letter from Wylde waiting him in Inverness.

"He is quite upset about it," he said. "I suggested that he had better wait a few days before he began to worry. I shouldn't consider Wylde the

kind of man to trouble much about civility, but neither should I consider him likely to throw up the whole thing in this way." Surrey laughed. "He hates me too much for that, I fancy," he said. "Or if he didn't before, he will now."

"Oh, Surrey! you don't think——"

"I think it very probable that he will try to be nasty to me, pet. And I don't blame him. I think I should blame him more if he wasn't." He took her glowing face between his hands. "He is not the kind of man who would take a beating well," he said. "And he has been beaten all round. I shall be sorry for him if he will let me, Peggy. But I won't have you sorry, too."

"Then you think he will come back?"

"I know he will come back. Why not?"

Through the next five days the Colonel asked himself that question many times. He told himself that Wylde was not made of the stuff which admits despair. He would come back and fight for what was left. He was neither a coward nor a fool. He was—each time the Colonel's thoughts marched this line he discovered more surely that Wylde was something of value to him. Even among his old friends he was lonely through these days; for a whirl of dances and calls and afternoons swept Surrey and Peggy away from him, and he remembered daily all the little countless things which Wylde had looked after for him. They were not done for love. But there must be love in the man somewhere still, and if, when Peggy and Surrey were gone, that love could be given to the Colonel . . . he did not fill the sentence in; but his heart was full of it on that last evening when Surrey took him into Inverness, leaving Peggy, as she desired, on Culloden Moor with a Scotch girl who, as Peggy asserted, was clever enough to do as she was told.

Peggy put the Scotch girl down behind the rough cairn erected in memory of what no Highlander will ever forget, and shook a finger at her.

"Stay there," she said. "I am going to take photographs, and I can't have anything of this century in them. Stay there, and be ashamed because your clan isn't here. And remember that I know the whole history, from the Frasers driving the English out of Moy Hall and putting the Prince there, to Lord George Murray sweeping the red-coats south to Blair Athol while Cumberland sneaked in through Nairn. And I know how the poor Highlanders were told to attack him at night, and then were told not to, and then stood here under arms, hungry and without sleep, and trusting still in their Prince, until that one hour made the sixteenth of April, 1746, the very worst hour Scotland ever had. I know it all, Flora—better than you do. And so I am not going to be talked to."

Once Culloden Moor was a far desolation of heather and lichened stones. Now it is cut by a white road and sheltered by firs. But the long shapeless mounds where each clan holds together even in death are as they have been since a short while after the battle, and the bubbling Chief's Well where men crawled to drink as they died is the same. Peggy trod reverently among the low irregular hills where each stone spoke with that fierce baldness of tragedy which belongs to no place more than to Scotland. Clan Macintosh, Clan Fraser, Clan Stewart, Clan Macgillivray—two mounds of these last. The headstones said no more, and no more was needed. The Macdonalds had been slain without a blow struck in defence, because, for the first time since Bannockburn, they had not received the place of honour on the field. Down that road half the broken army had fled to Inverness, to be butchered all the way. Over those hills the remainder had retreated to Nairn with bagpipes shirling defiance. Beside that wire fence edging a field was one stone bearing the curt words, "Graves of the English."

Peggy looked over that wire fence to the thatched shieling where the Colonel had taken her to see the

hole made by a shell in the roof and the pile of blackened stones which had been the Jacobite hospital before Cumberland's men burnt it and slew those of the wounded who tried to escape. Beyond lay the broad flat stone from which Cumberland watched the battle. And then, past her, down the road to Inverness, a piper trod by, with his dark kilt swinging to his stride and dark-green ribbons fluttering from the chanter-top. She knew a few words of the plaintive air he played through the blue wistful evening.

"Will ye no come back again? Will ye no come back again?
Siller canna buy the heart that beats for thee and thine. . . ."

Peggy remembered that there were thirty thousand pounds on Charles Stewart's head, and that many hundred starved people knew where he was hiding and not one of them ever told. She drew a long breath.

"Oh, what a big thing honour is," she said. And then the Colonel spoke behind her, and the drone of the pipes gave place to the murmur of the car.

"I have heard from Wylde," he said. "He has been in Skye, but he will meet us at Fort Augustus in the morning. I have wired him to wait there."

"You—you are glad, dear," said Peggy in sudden surprise.

"Well," said the Colonel, "I don't want to feel that his death lay at your door, Peggy. But I fancy he has come to his senses again."

CHAPTER XI

WHEN WYLDE CAME BACK

"WHY, certainly," said Wylde. "I got your message when I came in from Glen Morriston yesterday evening. That is the trail Boswell and Johnson walked when they went to Skye." He laid his brown hand on the wheel, swinging himself into the front seat beside Peggy. "I had better take her," he said. "There is a short side-run through the Lochaber country that might be worth while. But it is tricky. I had to get directions from several men."

Surrey and the Colonel had got out to welcome Wylde at Fort Augustus; but Peggy was still tucked into the front seat against the occasional spatters of rain, and she had no option but to stay there as Wylde's fingers shut on the brass knob and he stooped to the levers.

"It's near as good as getting hold of an oar," he said; glanced round to the two men in the back, and sent the car humming down the white street and up over the bridge.

Peggy had not realized how afraid she had been of meeting him until sight of that big loose figure in the rough Harris tweeds had turned her giddy with the sudden beating of her heart. But the gentleness of his short greeting had brought a relief as sudden, and then she looked at the deeper lines round mouth and eyes with a rush of that pity which Surrey had commanded her not to feel. This man had suffered for what she had done, but there was nothing in face or manner to suggest that he did not mean to suffer alone. She knew it with a long breath of thankfulness. That terror was dead, and there was room for hope again:

hope that Surrey's promise to be sorry for Wylde would knit up a friendship between the two which might in some way straighten out this tangle which hate had so knotted up. And then, if Wylde had forgiven and Surrey were kind . . . Peggy wove her fancies into colour, and Wylde, glancing down on her, saw her smiling, with dreaming eyes, and looked out on the road again.

That morning run had been torture to Peggy from Inverness past blue hazy hills and agriculture and the brown slim canal-streak to the wide-bosomed beauty of Loch Ness, studded with islands, dark-patched with faithful shadows from every hill and holding, every dipping row-boat. She had been nervous along that red road greasy with rain, sharp-cornered and narrow, where the wheels skidded endlessly, and where, beyond the lovely cleft of Glen Urquhart and the ruins of the old royal fortress down on the loch, a perfectly correct and alarming notice had promised ten miles of dangerous track. But that nervousness was nothing to the dread which grew and grew as the car flung each mile behind; and, past the silver-blue loch gleaming close behind delicate birches, past Mealfourvounie, standing up bare and round as a haystack, past little rivers that tumbled down the hills and deep glens that swept back to shooting-lodges and sweet lonely hamlets, the great towers of Fort Augustus Monastery stood up against the hills, and she knew that Wylde was waiting.

Wylde had not expected to feel anything at all when he next saw Peggy. In these days which had been less than twenty and which had been fuller of strife than an ordinary year he had attempted to fight his battle out among the wild seas and the lonely hills of Skye. And it had been a dark battle, for Wylde had never walked a middle course in his life. Love had shown him for a flash what god-head in a man might mean when reverence and purity hold the torches. Denial had flung him lower into the sloughs than many men will fall, and for a time his spirit had lain

there while he wore body and heart out rowing a little blunt boat all day in the crested seas. And then, because the man's immortal nature would not permit otherwise, he had begun to construct his universe again, with all possible beauty left out of it.

According to facts as he saw them he judged two of those three whom Life had sent his way. Surrey's breaking of the promise required by the Colonel had been shameless. The Colonel's condoning of it had been shameless. Therefore all these things had been meant from the beginning, and the Colonel's farce of bringing Wylde over would not have been explainable but for the letter received at Teignmouth. With that letter he could hurt the Colonel very considerably when the time came. With any other forces which chance offered he would hurt Surrey. Peggy he could not judge. He had tried by day and night until his heart sickened and failed him. Some memory of her young face, some trick of her voice, of that nameless faintest scent which clung to everything about her, kept him weak there. In more than one hour of fury he knew that he could have killed her. And he knew, too, that he would not have loved her the less if he had. And then he set up his original intention again, nailing it to the wall with one sentence which was a lash to his back each time he flagged. The sentence ran—

"Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will."

And Wylde took his stand by that, with such honour as he had under his feet.

It had never been particularly fine, that honour. Too much contact with a rough world had blunted it before he learnt the meaning of the word. But he had sinned none of the blackest sins, or in those moments when love had cleared his eyes he would not have asked the Colonel for permission to go to Peggy. Now . . . it did not matter. He would find a wedge to split Surrey from Peggy and all that Peggy meant. Any

kind of wedge, used any way. It did not matter so that it did the work. And if he hurt Peggy too that did not matter either. She had hurt him in a way which he would not forget.

The half-frightened pleading which she did not know she showed had given him his cue when they met, and he shaped it into a plan as they ran along the quiet strath which joined Loch Ness by the hidden canal to Loch Oich. He knew now that it was going to hurt him in a very severe way to hurt Peggy, and he knew that he was not going to forgo his purpose one half-inch because of that. And then he dropped into talk with her of the things which they had both seen at Inverness. Of Clava, with its prehistoric circles and cup-markings; of Culloden House, whence all things which connected it with the last of the Stewarts have passed out under the hammer; of the Wool Sale in the town, where for fifteen years no buyer has seen what he buys at the time and for fifteen years no complaint has been either given or received among those honest canny Scotch farmers.

" . . . And once we went to the Falls of Foyers and saw where Lord Lovat received Prince Charlie on the night of Culloden," said Peggy. "I think that Lord Lovat was the last man beheaded in England. And when the Prince went on to Invergarry would he have taken this road?"

"I guess so—after Fort Augustus. Did you notice the Aultsigh river running off Mealfourvounie near Glen Morrison? The Mackenzies got one back there on Glengarry's men after Cille-Christ. Found them asleep in the glen."

"Oh, how terrible!—terrible," said Peggy.

Wylde stared straight out as they ran down beside little lovely Oich, where the tall mountains came close and grey with lichened rocks and sparse heather.

"Why . . . I don't know," he said. "They were bred to be fighters. And there is some kind of bad blood that won't be cured without the knife. Men would hate less if they could use it now, likely."



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His tone was idly casual, but the words drove Peggy into hurried speech.

"What is the land like in the west?" she demanded. "Up north it is exactly like oat-cake—brown earth and grey pale stones. I have nearly lived on oat-cake, and I have learned to call porridge 'them' and to walk about while I eat them. And did you notice the haycocks round Inverness? They are scattered over the face of the country just like a bad attack of measles. I used to be so anxious on a wet night lest the cold should drive them in. And that could not have failed to be dangerous, you know."

Wylde laughed, looking round on her.

"I haven't come across any one who talks like you——" he began. Then he slowed up and turned.

"Glengarry hotel is right ahead," he said. "Would you want to stop for lunch? I brought a packet with me, and I guess I'll have mine down by the loch. I've been so much outdoors lately that I think I likely won't be able to sit to a table again."

He swung the car round to the garage, and then he went down to the loch, fast and eagerly. For the past hour had tried him in more ways than one.

All the world was a shifting dream of grey rocks and silver water; of blue sky stretching far and low; of green glancing light on trees and grass; of strong purple of heather reflected almost as strongly; of mighty watching mountains and of silence except where the Garry rushed down the wild glen to drown itself in the Oich. Where a small peninsula jutted into the loch thick tall trees hid old Invergarry Castle, once a Macdonell stronghold in the days when Glengarry's men were feared up and down the land; and opposite the castle rose dark Craig-an-phitich, the Raven Rock which was at once their war-cry and their motto. But the Macdonells' day passed, with that of so many others, when Cumberland sent the fire through the homes of the chieftains, and the clans scattered, looking for a reunion that was never to come.

Wylde lay down on the little stones where the water

ipped and the thick line of trees hid him from the road; ate his sandwiches and oat-cake quickly, and got out his pipe. He could always see more clearly through a tobacco-cloud, and the first thing that he saw was Peggy's face.

"She's not quite happy, then," he said. "She has lost the look that settled me up at Inverness. What has that fellow been doing to her? What has he been doing?"

He lay smoking without more speech, and presently the Colonel came down through the trees to him. The Colonel had attempted to dredge in the waters of Wylde's mind several times before, but he had never brought up anything but dislike. Now he tried again, sitting on a boulder, and jerking little pebbles into the loch with his stick.

"Did you find anything to specially interest you in Skye?" he asked.

"Why . . . I found the green people"—Wylde's smile was inscrutable—"the fairies. The Western Highlands are full of them, and I reckon they have their finger in quite a good deal of business yet. I spent most of my evenings in shielings black with peat-smoke, watching the women spinning or knitting while the men played the pipes or sang Gaelic songs or talked about the 'green people.' I couldn't get them to do that at first. They are shy out there . . . and proud."

"But, my dear fellow . . . you couldn't live in those places."

"I couldn't *sleep* in them. They slept in wall-cupboards with sliding doors, just as they do in all the shielings. And I slept out if it was fine enough. I like to lie under the stars."

His voice was without feeling. His face was burnt and roughened by sun on salt spray, but the winds of Skye had whipped colour into it. He looked stronger, fuller of virile life. And he was more defiantly unloving and unloveable than ever. He got up, and as he did so the Colonel noticed the palms of his hands

where raw flesh was only partly healed over. His words brought Wylde to glance at them, shamefacedly.

"Salt water and rough oars," he said. "I reckon they do look bad. That is why I wouldn't come in. They are near right now. I did it when I first went over."

"But they must have hurt you severely," said the Colonel, and then, under the half-amusement in Wylde's eyes, he stopped. He knew that there had been a time when physical pain was a relief to Wylde.

Peggy and Surrey plunged down, laughing, through the trees, and Wylde went straight to them.

"I guess you might like to see the Well of the Seven Heads," he said. "It is right here, and it is one of the points of interest in Glenmohr. You know this is all the Great Glen, don't you? And when we crossed that big bridge at Aberchalder just below Fort Augustus I forgot to mention that right there Prince Charlie had his final muster before he went south. But maybe you know that——"

He was walking beside Peggy as though it were his rightful place, unheeding Surrey on the other side. Along the road, before the curious pyramid on its square base they stopped to read the inscription below the seven heads that formed the apex. While the Colonel was dodging the sun on his glasses Wylde interpreted in his rough curt language.

"Those are the murderers of the two sons of Kepoch—branch of the Macdonell clan. Glengarry asked for their heads, and he got them after they had been washed at the well here. I guess they must have needed it if they looked as bad as that afterwards. Scott is said to have taken his Fergus MacIvor from that Glengarry. When Fergus knew that his own head was going up on the Scotch Gate at Carlisle I guess he would have thought of this if it hadn't all happened a couple of hundred years before he was born. Scott was not always accurate in his dates." Then he turned to Peggy. "I want to take you part

of the trail up Loch Arkaig," he said. "That is Lochiel's country, you know. The Cameron clan lived there for centuries until they had to go out after forty-five, and all the glen was left desolate for a good hundred years when Cumberland burnt Achnacarry Castle, seat of the Chief. About sixty years ago the Lochiel of that time came back and built a new place beside the old. But I reckon there are not many of the clan left there. They went to Canada or Australia, and if you have ever heard 'Lochaber no more' played on the bagpipes or sung by a Scotchman I guess you'll understand that they didn't care about going. The Macdonells made a new Glengarry out West in Canada. I've been there, but it wasn't much like this."

When he brought the car out he looked at Peggy. And Peggy knew that she wanted to go in the front seat with him. For every inch of Scotland teemed with interest for her as it did for him. Then she sprang into the tonneau, and Surrey followed her in and shut the door.

Past Laggan, burying-place of the Macdonells, and Kinloch-Lochy, surnamed "The Battle of the Shirts," came the grim grey beauty of Loch Lochy, with the Inverness steamer a tiny smoking toy boat in the midst of it. The road lay level along the almost naked shores where mountains folded endlessly one behind the other, pale as paper shapes on a pale sky. Up part of this road marched Prince Charles Edward, seeking victory; down part of it, from Culloden, he fled, seeking refuge. On the opposite shore deep glens began to show scored into the mountain flanks. In the silent grey light that flattened everything they looked no more than dark shadows fading into mist.

The Colonel leaned over the back.

"We are in Lochaber now," he said. "And Wylde says that one of those glens is Loch Arkaig. All these little heaps of stones are burial-cairns, Peggy. They look quite picturesque with those shaggy Highland cattle standing about them."

"I think it is too sad; oh, far too sad," said Peggy. "I want some trees again . . . and some people."

On the bare heathery moor just before Spean Bridge Wylde took a narrow unmarked road to the right, leaving the savage memories of Keppoch House and clan-feuds in the valley beyond. And then, past little Gairlochy Station and over the canal, the road ran through heavy trees up the far side of the loch until it swung to the left along the densely wooded glen to Loch Arkaig. Wylde stopped.

"The Black Mile is somewhere here," he said. "The Prince hid in it more than once. And this is Arkaig, but I'm afraid we can't see the old castle; the trees are so thick. It used to be Lochiel's deer-forest. One of those little islands must be Muirlaggan, the Cameron burying-ground. The Highland chiefs met on it after Culloden, and Lochiel came, so badly wounded that he could hardly keep his horse. It is said that all the gold the Prince brought from France—some thirty-eight thousand pounds—was buried half at each end of Loch Arkaig, and that it's there still. But I reckon that is a tale."

He ran up the steep narrow road beside the loch, passing the little pier and the small steamer that lay beside it. Then he halted where the beech-mast was thick and the soft brushing of the leaves made the only sound. And Peggy knew that he was thinking of these lonely hills rising round the lake, once crowded with shielings and garden-plots and bright with the glinting of the spade and the Lochaber axes; and of the lean years that came after, when the toad hopped through the ruined halls of Auchnacarry and the shielings rotted and went back to earth, and the skirl of pipes and the laughter of children had gone out from the glen for evermore.

Wylde turned and drove back, seeing a white cross gleam in the forest across the loch.

"It was a big thing to be loyal in those days," he said. "For Lochiel knew that it meant this, and yet he called out every damned man he'd got."

Down the plain high road to Banavie, with the canal deep on the left, Surrey was whistling 'Lochaber no more' until Peggy stopped him.

"I can't bear it," she said. "And I am beginning to hate Prince Charlie."

Across the opening end of Loch Linnhe mountains thickened, heavily purple, with Ben Nevis rearing his huge round shoulders and blunt head into the mist behind. To the lower flanks, between loch and rock, clung Fort William, eldest of that chain which had once held the Great Glen from end to end against the western Highlanders. Over the swing-bridge at Banavie the road passed the dark glen where Inverlochy Castle was hid in the gathering night, even as its history is hid in tradition. Men say there was a city there before the time of Christ. From days unknown its traders carried fish and skins to Spain, bringing back silks and jewels for their gorgeous half-naked barbarism. Once they brought back the Plague, and concerning that hideous legends and tragedies date back to the third century.

Men say, too, that Charlemagne and a Scotch king treated at Inverlochy in the eighth century, and in the ninth Pictish kings held their courts there. From Inverlochy Banquo, mystical Thane of Lochaber, founded the Stewart dynasty. The Black Lords of Badenoch held it, and there Montrose, marching over Ben Nevis through the snow of a bleak winter's night, so defeated his great enemy, Argyll, that the Campbell Chief fled, leaving fifteen hundred men dead behind him.

The dark crowding mountains under a stormy sky; the grey loch sweeping to the sea; the history thick over all struck the lawless note in Wylde sharply, and he would have gone out through the night to take some part of it for his own but for a complaint of Surrey's made at dinner.

"I sent Crieff the exact description of a polo saddle I wanted made," said Surrey; "and the idiot writes that he would sooner I came back to London and

oversaw it myself. There won't be time then, and I can't stand the Indian make. Too high in the pommel. I wish I hadn't sold mine when I came Home."

"Are you going to play polo this time?" It was something in the Colonel's voice which caught Wylde's interest.

"There is precious little else to do," said Surrey, twirling his wine-glass. "I have written Darcy about ponies."

"A young man has often the chance to get on a surveying-staff. Or he can study tactics. And there are always the languages," said the Colonel.

"Thanks," said Surrey, and his laugh was round and care-free. "I hate figures. And English is good enough for me. Here's that address you wanted, Peggy. I got Crieff to send it."

The Colonel finished his wine in silence. Then he stood up.

"Macleod sent me some of his special cigars," he remarked. "Would you like to try them, Surrey? They should taste well in this air."

The two men went out together, and Wylde followed Peggy into the deserted drawing-room; reading in just one instant the trouble that he expected to see on her face, and then looking away and sliding into conversation naturally.

Peggy turned with swift relief from her thoughts, and swung the talk down the trail of time, far from the personal note, while the blue-black clouds dropped lower into the glens, and the fog swept white up the loch, and in the deep hills the thunder stirred and snarled.

"The Highlanders are called the 'Children of the mist,'" she said. "Mystical . . . mysterious . . . all their history is wrapped up in that sort of words. Courage and water-bulls and love and fairies and murder and ghosts and fighting and witches are so mixed that no one could have known what was truth even while the things were happening. I expect you have heard plenty of stories, haven't you?"

"I have heard plenty that I am not going to tell to you." Wylde looked out at the flying clouds. "But once those friends of yours, the Clan Chattan from Sutherlandshire, came down and killed every Cameron in Glen Nevis with the exception of the baby Somerled, who was hid in a cave and afterwards taken to France. He became Lord of the Isles, I believe, and a lot of Fiennes—some species of giant—were put to sleep in his cave. It is near here, and the giants have been in it since the fourteenth century. But no one appears to have been curious enough to go and find them."

"Could grown men ever have seriously believed in such things?" said Peggy.

"There are several have believed more than they can see—more than is true, even in this day," said Wylde, dryly. He leaned from the window. "See the mist crawling down Loch Eil," he said. "That is where the witch Gormashiel warned Lochiel to 'Beware of the day when the Southron should meet him in battle array,' according to Campbell. But I guess the Camerons could generally keep their end up. There is a yarn about a hundred and fifty of Cromwell's men landing on Archdalew, up that loch, to cut down some of Lochiel's oak-trees. One got back, but he was an Irishman. Lochiel had about forty gentlemen of his clan with him, and they had some conversation with the others. Lochiel bit the throat out of one. . . . I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to speak of that."

"There is so much that is terrible in history," said Peggy, shivering.

"Because there is so much that is terrible in man. And there is so much that is glorious. You know what a fine thing the Highland gentlemen did after forty-five? They were broken; their lands were despoiled; those of their men who did not emigrate were ravaging the country and being shot out of hand. The Camerons raised a regiment a thousand strong from their own private pockets; swore them in at the Craigs burying-ground that we passed coming in, and took them to Flanders to fight for England. And then

England wanted to draft them into other regiments. Do you know what their colonel said?" Wylde straightened suddenly. "He said: 'King George may send my men to hell, and I'll go at the head of them, but he daurna draft us.' And—he never dared it."

Peggy had forgotten Surrey. The ring in this man's voice thrilled her. He had the faculty of making dead bones live. Then he moved with a shamefaced laugh.

"I beg your pardon again," he said. "But I like these fellows who never gave a—cent for law. You noticed the Craigs, I guess? They were General Monk's original Fort gateway stuck up there when the railway took over the Fo., and they found some few old iron and bones when they were excavating for the line. There are mostly soldiers' graves on the Craigs, but there is one to a Campbell who was said to be the best deerstalker of his day. That is a real Highland epitaph."

The door opened, and Peggy's face told Wylde who came in. He stepped out through the low window, glancing up at the flying scud.

"No rain yet," he said. "I guess I'll go for a walk. Good-night."

Surrey crossed the room swiftly, but he did not touch her.

"The Colonel tells me that I am not worthy of you," he said. "If you wish to be released you have only to say so."

Peggy sprang up. The rage that Surrey so seldom showed had whitened his face and edged his voice.

"Did the Colonel tell you to say this?" she cried.

"Do you think I had to be told it? Though you have already called me less than a man. You needn't think I will ever forget that. Well? What do you want?"

"I want you," said Peggy, simply, and she put out both her hands to him. He caught them, crushing them in a grip that hurt her.

"And what am I?" he cried. "Tell me. What am

I? By Heaven I if you heard what the Colonel says I am——”

“Don't tell me, dear. He was angry. He thinks you ought to work——”

“That is rot, Peggy. He knows that I could and would work if there was need for it. But he is just an old despot. He is as bad as a halfpenny paper for raising a scare. He knows that he means me to marry you and to inherit the Manor, and yet he will play the fool this way. By George I I—I nearly forgot all I owed him just now. Why should I slave my youth out preparing for a future that is never coming? Don't look like that, you poor baby;” his mood changed suddenly. “I am an idiot to lose my temper. The Colonel is getting old, and I'll have to make allowances. I will give up polo if he makes a point of it, but I'll probably find some worse way of spending my time.”

“Dearest, perhaps if you would take up languages——”

“Do you think that I mean to spend my life in India? I would not have you live there for anything on earth. Peggy, there is no reason why we should not marry and live at the Manor at once. The Colonel is seldom there. He can't be spending a half of his income, and why should he spoil our youth by keeping us apart all the best years of our life?”

“But if Mr. Wylde——” Peggy approached this tremulously.

“Wylde is out of it. The Colonel hates him. Any one can see that. Besides, Wylde is the sort of man who'd pitch a tent on the tennis-lawn and cook his own meals in it, and who'd shoot old Sir Thomas off-hand if he kicked up any more fuss about that right-of-way. Wylde's just a—a war-scare. I tell you he doesn't count.” Then Surrey laughed; took her face between his hands and kissed it. “You are inoculated, too,” he said. “And I won't have it, Baby. Do you hear? Look me in the eyes and say ‘I trust you.’ Say it.”

"Surrey——"

"Say it. And then leave your future and mine to me. I'll settle the Colonel somehow. Say it, Peggy."

"I—trust you," said Peggy.

But her voice shook, and through the wakeful hours of that night she knew why. And while the storm rocked the house and the hills roared until it seemed as though those giants from Somerled's Cave had burst free and were treading the heights, Peggy turned her face to the pillow and wept.

Morning was sharply bright across the loch and the great bare hills when Surrey took the car back past the bronze living statue of a lately dead Lochiel; past the remnants of the ancient Fort where Englishman had defied Scotchman since the middle of the seventeenth century and ended by respecting them; over Banavie Bridge, and up to the left through Corpach, the "place of the Dead" who lie out on the flat red and green islands in Loch Eil as protection from the wolves of an earlier day.

Broadswords and claymores were made at Corpach in the times when these lochs and straths were all Lochaber—marsh-land; and traditions are thick about it as the deer, the polecat and the golden eagle in its forests. And beauty was thick about it that warm morning; with mists drawing off the rough stone crags that piled themselves into mountains grey with lichen and purple with heather; with the wild forests reaching up the glens, and the shaggy amber cattle among the close-scattered cairns.

The mountains grew rougher and more bare. Red deer raised startled heads among the bracken; Fassiefern House, once home of the first Cameron who rose for the Prince, passed among its trees, and the rugged heights were cleft through the centre to hold Loch Shiel and that one little white distant boat which might have been Prince Charlie's own to Peggy's eyes.

And then came that tall granite column, crowned by the Highland figure with cocked bonnet; the sedgy ground; the clear water lapping the great grey stones;

the little bushy inlets and soft hills, and the huge silent mountains and glens, glowing with the heather. Peggy pulled some thistles inside the rock enclosure, and read the inscriptions on the gates, and then she looked at Wylde, seeing the understanding on his face.

"How did he bear it?" she said. "He waited here all day, and no one came but a few gillies. And Lochiel had told him it was madness and begged him not to do it. And he would come . . . and he waited. And then, just at evening, along that road round the hills, he heard the pibroch sounding, sounding——"

"I guess he was glad to see the dark-green tartan with the red stripe," said Wylde. "Lochiel brought over seven hundred men, and Macdonald about three hundred. And they gathered as the Prince went south, like a snowball. And they melted under fire like a snowball. Did you see Culloden?"

"Yes." Peggy folded the pale soft thistles together. "I got some heather at Culloden and these are going with them. The beginning and the end of the story, you know."

She did not speak with Wylde again during all the run back through Fort William and down by the widening roughening waves of Linnhe past curious strung-out Onich to the Ballachulish Ferry, and she never knew if it was design on his part which had put Surrey at the wheel that day.

But when Surrey brought news from the pretty hotel on the edge of Loch Leven that the car had to cross that eighth-mile of water on a whale-boat, Wylde leaned out of the back seat.

"I arranged this trail," he said. "And I am willing to take the responsibility if you don't care about it. But they say that thirty cars cross in a day sometimes."

"Thank you," said Surrey, serenely. "When I want your help I'll certainly ask for it." He looked at the Colonel. "The man says they'll be ready after lunch. We had better lunch here, I expect. And the job is going to cost a pound."

"There is no other way," said Wylde. "And at the lower ferries there isn't even this way. But if you are afraid——"

Surrey did not heed the goad, and Wylde followed slowly into the hotel.

"I guess that fellow is going to notice me before I've done with him," he said, underbreath.

But he forgot Surrey for a little when he came out to smoke his pipe among those everlasting hills and far-stretched lochs. That little strath of Glenfinnan on the lip of white Loch Shiel, with the strong blue and purple mountains, the golden bracken, and all the glory and tragedy of its memories had stirred the fighter in him. Loch Leven and Loch Linnhe, joining at his feet, laid it low. All his life he never forgot those silvery waters shoaling into colour and deepening into black; those grey peaceful hills that rose behind the little red-funnelled steamers making down to Obar., and those lights that shifted on the mountain-tops, turning the Glencoe crags to gold, and catching the gleam of the sea-weed left by the sinking tide.

Then the Colonel came out to walk beside him, and the talk drifted from salmon-fishing in the Lochy at Fort William to the herring-catch at the mouth of Linnhe; from the days when sheep and cattle were sent as far as the Falkirk Trysts and Fort William first became the educational centre of the West to R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, whose James Stewart was hung near Ballachulish, until, years after, gibbet and skeleton were cut down and flung into the Loch. And then Peggy linked her arm to the Colonel's, and they spoke of the first evolution of the Scotch plaid when the Picts began to strap a kind of shawl about their waists and to fasten it on the shoulder with a brooch.

"And they pricked all the parts left bare into patterns and stained them," said Wylde. "You'd likely think that was the beginning of the tartan. But I believe that came from England. It was a fancy of

the wife of Malcolm Canmore in the eleventh century. And I reckon that car coming down from Glencoe is going to have the start of us. The boat is on that side."

It was the skidding of the big Daimler from the other side on the landing-ferry that frightened Peggy, and made her hold her eyes shut as Surrey ran the little blue car on to the narrow swaying platform across the whale-boat.

It took all Surrey's skill to do it, and he would possibly have failed but for the knowledge that Wylde was watching. And this angered him a little, because he had believed that he felt nothing but indifference for Wylde.

Peggy trailed her hands in the clear water as the dark-faced laughing men slipped and hauled among the weed-green rocks, and she sang song-snatches in sheer delight when they leapt into the boat, sending it across the ferry with the strong long oar-swing.

"When I remember that some people wear purple hats and magenta dresses I do feel so thankful that the Deity has an eye for colour," she said. "But there was never any other place so beautiful as this. See the shadows of the clouds on those wonderful hills, and all that water dazzling into the distance, and the sea-birds dipping and calling. I don't wonder they do it in this air. I wish I could. And the Blue Bird looks as if she was just ready to go, perched on those few little planks."

But Surrey did not breathe easily until he had her off those giddy planks, and up the road by lovely Loch Leven, green with bush-islets and purple with sugar-loaf hills. Past the ugly slate village and a small bold hill, the way swung round the Glencoe Monument and into the Pass where huge mountains stood close-crowded in the mist; some blank and featureless, some thrust forward until every line of their grey granite streaks showed like tear-marks where the sun struck the wet furrowed faces. In the tonneau Peggy drew close to the Colonel.

"There is never any place so empty as one that has been full," she said. "Can't you think of that poor old Macdonald going past here through the snow to take his oath at Inverary to William the Third, and then coming home quite content with his sacrifice and never thinking that the certificate would have been kept back; never thinking what it meant when the Campbells came to stay with them . . . to stay as friends? And then . . . one night——"

"History could tell of several thousand other treacherous deeds," said the Colonel. "But I do not know that there was anything much worse than Hill sending the Campbells out of Fort William with those instructions, and than Campbell lodging himself in his own niece's house for a fortnight, and accepting the real Highland hospitality for all his troop until the very hour when he gave the command for a general slaughter. The Campbells have always been England's men, but that does not make it much better."

"And yet it is all so beautiful now," said Peggy, softly. "That yellow sedgy grass, and the pinky-purple heather climbing all up among the greys, and that little loch, all lonely——"

"Lake Treachtan. Ossian is supposed to have been born on the shores of that stream running out of it, and the black hole high up in the crags is called his cave." Wylde was leaning back into the tonneau with his face glowing. "By George I this is scenery," he said. "All Ossian's songs about Deirdre and Glen Etive and the Gaelic hunters belong to these parts. But Dr. Johnson says there never was an Ossian."

"'Twas there I made my earliest home when the sun shone on Glen Etive," murmured Peggy. "I wonder if Dr. Johnson first said that Bacon wrote Shakespeare? And those must be eagles up there. They look like toys hung on a thread."

The road was awkward entirely; steep, twisting and narrow. At each sharp corner a motor or a coach made complications, and Surrey was near the top before he could pause to look back. And then what

he saw brought enthusiasm to his mouth. Sheer down the left side of the glen rose the Three Sisters, one stooping as though with age, one shrouded in dull grey, and the foremost sharp in smooth greens and browns against the full gold of the sun thrust down behind. The huge size and bold glory dazzled the eyes, and the lake shot silver gleams far down on the level, and the double line of mountains, shouldering together like grey Highland bulls, seemed instinct with a vigour and a life that cut clear on the memory. Sunlight swept across the massive crests, swamping them in gold that carried back to faint and fainter purple in farthest distance. It was a land majestic, terrible, and utterly beautiful.

And then the car ran over the edge of the glen among moss-hags and what Peggy called a big plate full of stones. The world seemed stones only; stones, and peat-bogs and little swamps; a shooting-lodge in savage solitude; a sudden forest of branching horns against the sky as a herd of deer winded them and passed, and then infinite desolation of hills and hills and hills, featureless, and following down the long rough road past Ba Bridge and the desert-ringed oasis of Inveroran to the strange humpy Bridge of Orchy.

Surrey said exactly what he thought of the bridge, and Wylde laughed.

"One of General Wade's," he said. "He is responsible for most of the engineering in the Highlands, but he didn't allow for the chance of a car's breaking her back on that kind of grading."

At the small building which appeared to be its own village Wylde got out and made inquiries.

"They tell me that Glen Orchy is generally impassable, but it is the best way this season," he said. "Tyndrum is longer—and worse. But you have your choice."

Peggy was taking photographs of the huge-horned shaggy cattle standing in clumps about the cairns and the bracken-in the rocks. She came back with her veil blowing in billows about her, and Wylde remembered

his first night in Skye when he had taken the veil Peggy gave him in Monmouth; tied little rocks in it, and drowned it in the sea.

"But we must go down Glen Orchy," she cried. "It belonged to the Clan Macgregor who had to 'go nameless by day' after King James's edict. Don't you remember Scott's Gathering-Song? Surrey, you know it."

She sang it with him over the rough road through the bare glen with the bare hills where the Orchy grew from a rough mountain stream to a smooth broad river, and the desolate cairns of the dead and the gates shutting off droves of the mild-eyed rough-bodied cattle gave place to agriculture and forest and calm beauty, and the rough sorrow of the song stayed in Wylde's memory.

"Glenorchy's proud mountains, Coalchuirn and her towers,
Glenstrae and Glenlyon no longer are ours.
We're landless, landless, Grigalach!"

And then Peggy's voice lilted into "The Stuarts of Appin," remembering "siller Appin" lying on Linnhe banks below Ballachulish.

". . . The Stuarts of Appin,
The gallant devoted old Stuarts of Appin,
Their glory is o'er, for the clan is no more,
And the Sassenach sings on the hills of green Appin."

The glen opened suddenly. Mountains rose straight ahead, with Ben Cruachan sending his dark flank sheer down into Loch Awe for many miles, and all his blood-relations crowding near him. Glenorchy Vale swept round through trees and scattered houses until it gave to the narrow road again past the Loch Awe Hotel with the proud broken towers of Kilchurn Castle on its island sheer below. A Campbell stronghold, this, even as Loch Awe, stretching its beautiful limbs far out of sight to southward, was Campbell land in the days when their slogan was "It's a far cry to Lochow." Past it park-like roads and trees led into the narrow

Pass of Brander, along the hip of Ben Cruachan, and Peggy smiled at the Colonel.

"Do you know that Loch Awe was once a valley?" she said. "And up on Ben Cruachan lived a little nymph who had to look after a spring there and tie it up or something every night? Once she forgot—and Loch Awe was there in the morning. I should think she'd be sorry she didn't forget before. But wouldn't she be the most surprised little nymph there ever was?"

In the rough bare pass the Macdougalls of Lorn were once almost annihilated by Robert the Bruce; and after the wild river dashing into foam, and after Taynuilt Deidre's Loch Etive opened, smooth and blue. Then a salt tang came to the lips; the air blew strong and fresh from the sea; a giant railway-bridge cut its steel length through the air at Connel Ferry, and in the wide spaces among tall trees Loch Etive met Loch Linnhe, and the two made a turbulent sea of their own. The road followed the water still, where small islands looked as though the sea had pulled off bits of land with lazy fingers, pinched them into queer shapes, and dropped them again. On one island showed a grey ruined clump with what appeared to be a gridiron before it, and Wylde knew it for Dunstaffnage Castle on its long tongue of land.

Dunolly Castle and the Pillar where grey Fingal is said to have tied his dog Bran rose and passed; and through scents from the meadows and a reckless spilling of sunset across sea and sky and hills the road led into the small sweeping bay of Oban, full of dipping sails and the bright hulls of pleasure-boats and the long graceful lines of yachts.

But the sun was not yet set when the four climbed the hill behind Oban which is crowned with that huge circular amphitheatre called McCraig's Tower, and for the building of which no man has ever given any reason. Surrey was stiff, for the day had been a hard one, and the car was not going well. He had spent a half-hour in examination, and then he had left the

matter for Wylde to-morrow in a petty spite which was rare with him. But the first touch of their hands had told that Wylde chose for war still where Surrey had offered friendliness, and what he considered Wylde's quietly-famililar manner to Peggy had deepened the resentment in him. Therefore he arranged for all the space that was possible between Wylde and Peggy when they sat on the grassy rim without the Tower, watching the light on all the wilderness of little islands leading over the bay to long Kerrara, once camp of King Haco of Normandy, and to the dark hump of Mull behind it. Beyond Kerrara the Shepherd's Hat floated with its broad brim and flat crown in the golden water, and down all the winding ways, over each separate speck of earth and trees that spotted the sea to the hazy distance sunset flushed rosily and grew sulkily dark and laughed into running shimmers of light again.

"Round that mountain of Mull Columba must have come bringing the Lla Fail Stone to Dunstaffnage," said Peggy. "Do you think it was really Jacob's Pillow first of all? I could believe anything up here to-night."

"Why, certainly," said Wylde, rolling over on the grass, and looking through the harbour mouth where the lighthouse stood white and dead. "First Jacob's Pillow. Then coronation-stone in Ireland. Then brought to Iona, to Dunstaffnage, to Scone, and now under the King's Chair in Westminster Abbey. And I can tell you the true story of its coming to Iona. When St. Columba brought it from Ireland in the sixth century he tried to build a chapel to put it in. But the walls would fall down, and so he ordered Oram to be buried under them. In three days Oram came out and remarked that there was no Hell. This sounds rather beside the question, but anyway it was so. Either that, or the fact that the walls still fell, evidently upset Columba, and he had Oram buried again. I guess he stayed buried that time, for we don't hear any more about him. If he didn't that would account

for Columba bringing the stone across to Dunstaffnage for the Pict Kings to sit on. I reckon he thought it wasn't much good as a shrine."

"Oh, how dare you!" cried Peggy. "I was thinking of Macbeth and the sixty kings before him buried on Iona, and of how all the Highland chiefs wanted to be laid there because it was so sacred. But now . . . you have made me remember that Oban is celebrated for its whiskey and tobacco."

The Colonel laughed, lighting another cigar with his eyes on the lovely distance where hills and sea and islands were one delicate pink flush with a great rose-red glory that was the sun behind all.

"You will be able to forget that on Iona," he said. "Can you arrange for us to go to-morrow, Wylde?"

"I guess so. Both Iona and Staffa if the weather is fit."

"But I know just nearly nothing about them both," cried Peggy.

Wylde lifted on his elbow, looking round Surrey to meet her eyes.

"I have some notes you can look at to-night if you care to," he said. "And I guess I can get a book that might be useful in the town. Staffa is not much but the Caves, you know; but we will see Mull and the Skerryvore Lighthouse."

"Oh, I want to see them all," cried Peggy. "Everything is so lovely." She threw out her hands to the tender west where the islands were growing grey. "It is quite impossible to describe Scotland," she said. "Its beauty and tragedy are the bloom on the peach or the plum. It comes off as soon as it is handled."

"I know," said Wylde, watching her still. "All the true romance degenerates when it is handled. Half the inn signs in the country were once the cognizances of chiefs. There is the Red Lion of the royal arms, the Eagle and Child of the Stanleys' crest, and a dozen others."

Surrey moved carelessly—so carelessly that not even Wylde was sure that he had put the screen of his body

between them on purpose. And then the talk fell to other things that were outside Wylde's orbit, while the mellow greys and lemons were flooding all the world with drowsy night and the dim fragrance from Peggy's clothes blew to him on the light wind.

Once Wylde looked from the rough half-healed hands lying across his knees to Surrey's well-kept healthily-brown ones. But he did not speak again. Not even when Peggy, dawdling behind for a moment as they went down the hill in the dusk, looked up at him with quivering lips.

"Thank you for forgiving me," she said. "Indeed I never meant to hurt you so."

CHAPTER XII

MAKING THE 'NOTHING SOMETHING'

In the Killin hotel Peggy was playing "Mackrim-moi's Lament" with the aid of as much bagpipe drone as Surrey's chest could manage. For this is the strain by which the men of the Western Highlands and the Isles take leave of their land, and Peggy had just taken leave of the Western Highlands; of Iona and Mull; of the grey road down past Loch Feochan, where yellow sea-weed swung in the tide; of small Kilninner among the crowded hills that wore no clothing but a comforter of firs about their necks; of the stern deep Pass of Melfort with its thin white stream far below the straightly stabbed down pines, and of the wonderful glory of Loch Melfort where it lay out to the sea beyond the purpling ferny hills. Peggy dropped her hands from the piano.

"Loch Melfort is quite the loveliest place I've seen in my life," she said.

"I have heard you say that of at least a hundred other places," remarked Surrey. "By Jove! Peggy, you haven't left me much breath."

"I would scorn to be afraid to change my mind when I wanted to. There was never anything more perfect than that clear pearl-grey water with those myriads of ducks making long lines of silver all across it, and the dim grey hills beyond, and the blue-grey where the loch met the sea, and the solid dark greys of Luing and Scarba, and the most delicate dream of a grey that was Jura. It was all done in greys. But there never were so many coloured greys before."

"Any fellow is allowed to shoot those duck five fathoms from the sea, or off any road," said Surrey.

"I'd have liked a gun there. They would have been quite good shooting too, for the water was so clear that each bird looked like two."

"Oh, Surrey, don't! You killed a brown adder by the loch, and you nearly ran into a cow. Won't that content you? And what did you do with those sweet-peas the little girl gave me at Melfort? I know I put them in the car this morning when we left Dalmally."

Wylde had planned the run from Oban to Killin in the day, but an afternoon of shooting had kept them over-night at Dalmally with Ben Cruachan towering above it and the Orchy river murmuring through it past stately Kilchurn to Loch Awe. Surrey gave no answer. Peggy touched detached notes with one finger.

"Where did you put them?" she said idly. "And those water-lilies Mr. Wylde got me out of the Loch of the Yellow Fairy up among those dear wise hills with their heads close together round us. They were not dead, you know."

"I threw them away," said Surrey, and his voice brought Peggy to face him.

"Are you doing Mr. Wylde the honour of being jealous of him?" she said, very slowly.

"I have been doing you the honour of believing you to be as fastidious in your friendships as I am myself," said Surrey, and there was a light which she did not like in his eyes.

"I have not made a friend of Mr. Wylde. He is an acquaintance. And he is an extremely interesting and painstaking acquaintance. I would have known nothing of Staffa and Iona and all the other islands if it had not been for him. I am very nearly as ignorant of history as you are."

She sat quite still with her head high under its smooth fair weight of hair, and her voice was not raised. But it held a chill that roused Surrey.

"I have told you before why I will not let you talk to Wylde," he said. "I expect obedience, Peggy."

"Obedience," said Peggy with an intake of the breath. This rough handling was new to her. Surrey shut his hand over hers.

"And I will have it," he said.

For a moment Peggy felt her heart stop, and his stern face went dim before her eyes. Then she spoke breathlessly.

"Don't," she said. "Don't. You make me hate you."

Surrey dropped her hand. He stood up.

"Do you mean that?" he said, tensely.

"No. No. I don't mean it. But you are so unreasonable. Surrey, dear Surrey I don't be so angry. It hurts me so."

"And do you think it doesn't hurt me to find you care so little about my wishes? Wylde is a—a——"

"A war-scare," said Peggy, suddenly dimpling into mischief. "You called him that yourself. Come here and be a good boy. And don't look so cross."

"Are you going to do as I tell you, Peggy?"

"Surrey, it isn't necessary." Peggy grew white again. "Can't I keep history and geography for him, as you don't like it . . . and my love for you, dear?"

Surrey came close. His voice had softened.

"Dearest," he said, "you don't understand, and I didn't want to say it. Wylde has—he has reason to—to not think you quite all I know you to be, and because of that I can't bear to see you with him. I know better than you what interpretation he might put on it."

"Darling, I was very cruel to him and he has forgiven me. Isn't that——"

"He has what?"

"I never asked him. But I know it. He is always so ready to do little things for me. And he remembers what I like. And he knows so much. . . ."

"He knows too much. And you know too little. I will be obeyed here, Peggy. You are not to go with Wylde by yourself, and you are not to talk to him when the Colonel or I are not by."

"Do you realize what you are saying?"

"I realize it very well." He took her hands, looking down at her. "It is to be either Wylde or myself, but it will not be both," he said. "You can choose."

"Surrey! . . ." Her voice sounded smothered. "Surrey! . . ."

Surrey's face was set. He waited.

"If—if you make me do it," she said, faintly. "I think that I shall never quite forgive you."

"What do you mean by that? Do you care for him?"

"No. Oh, no. But you are cruel. . . ."

Surrey dropped her hands and put his arms round her.

"My poor poor baby," he said. "Won't you learn to understand that I know more of life and men than you do without all this? Kiss me, pet. And forgive me."

"Surrey!"—she clung to him—"I can't. He has been so good to me. I don't want to hurt him. I have hurt him enough. He is . . . always near when there is anything to see. I can't tell him to go away. And I can't be rude to him."

Surrey knew well that Wylde was always near her. His careful hourly thoughtfulness was as plain to see as his careless insolence to Surrey himself. And, for all Surrey's pride, it was the latter which galled him, least. He lifted her face and kissed it gravely. Then he said—

"I shall speak to Wylde, Peggy. And if it means a row with the Colonel I can't help it. The whole business was bound to be unpleasant. He might have known that from the beginning."

"And yet you brought the Blue Bird of Happiness with us," said Peggy.

"Perhaps it showed us how to find each other, sweetheart."

"Yes," said Peggy, with a sigh and a shiver. More than twice something in her had asked plainly where that happiness she had grasped at so desperately might

be. There was sternness yet behind the tenderness in Surrey's eyes.

"I find it hard to believe that Wylde doesn't matter to you when you look like that," he said.

"Surrey, . . . if you would just leave it a little while. It is only for a week or so. . . ."

Surrey loosed her and stood back.

"By Heaven!" he said, and his voice was thick. "I do not know what you women are made of. Can't you be content with one man at a time to love you?"

"Ah, . . . don't! . . ."

"May I go to Wylde? I will not go without your permission. And you know what it means if you do not give it. Well? I am waiting."

Peggy found her courage and her anger at the same moment. She swung round on the piano-stool, holding her hands like a pouncing hawk above the keys.

"Go, then," she said, and crashed out a following under of chords that drowned the shutting of the door.

She played stormily for some minutes. Then she rang up and went out into the twilight.

"For if I can't have something bigger than a house round me I'm afraid I'll burst it," she said.

Along the crooked road that led through little Killin Wylde walked, smoking and thinking over these latter days. Instinct told him that he had got the wedge in between these two whom he meant to part, and his heart told him that the driving of it would hurt him even as it would hurt them. For life was full of Peggy, through all the beauty that lay on his senses yet, bringing memories of the columned caves of Staffa; the sacred small Iona; Oban; that wonderful coast-line that led down to Loch Melfort and up to pale Loch Craignish shimmering below bare green hills, and so through little Fort to the end of Loch Awe.

In this close intimate life an hour almost equalled a day; and Wylde could not think of the curved arms of Loch Awe, holding rugged mountains and thick-

leaved headlands to its silver breast, without remembering just how Peggy had leaned to the front seat to hear him name the islands one by one as they seemed to advance and retire in shy loveliness when the road wound and swung.

Wylde had learned those names with care. Kilnemaïr with its rotting fourteenth-century chapel; the exquisite castle wreck on Inis Chonnel; Inis Fraoch, once the Highland Hesperides with a dragon to guard the golden fruit; Inishail, where the square slate-stoned grave-yard was burial-place of the once stout MacArtair clan. The Druid's Island of Inistrynich, and Kilmarn itself. . . . Wylde had spoken of those gems in the sad Loch Awe waters which had each once been stronghold of a clan departed with an earnestness that had held Peggy's attention until the delight of it was almost as keen as the pain.

Wylde laughed low, knocking out his pipe on the palm of his hand. For he was thinking of Surrey's repressed anger when Peggy had frankly turned him out of the front seat that she might see the great panorama from those steep hills past the Monument above Dalnally before they wound down to the little town. Peggy had talked history with him that night, and she had talked it again next evening, leaning between the two in the front seat as the lonely road to Tyndrum twisted upwards through the heather-bloom like a bandage strapped at intervals on a huge leg. Higher up all the mountains had their heads cut off by mist where sheep were coughing, and Wylde had quoted for Peggy some half-forgotten lines—

"Owners and occupants of earlier dates,
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates."

Again and again Peggy's mind leapt to meet his, leaving Surrey's behind. And both men knew it, and yet again Wylde laughed softly . . . remembering.

Past Crianlarich, the Trossach entrance-gate, Ben Lui, Ben More, Stobinian and others had been

huddled dully, wrapped to the throat in grey bath-towels of mist. And, where the way grew outcrops of stone that stood on end like tables or crouched like ugly dwarfs or lay like the dismembered limbs of giants St. Fillan once had passed, bringing Christianity to Scotland, and Robert the Bruce, bringing the sword for that great fight at Dalriach where he lost the Brooch of Lorn to the Macdougalls.

To Wylde Peggy was mingled with it all: the silent way of grey lichen, grey mist, grey shapeless masses of stone; the charm of trees and linked lochs and smooth river that came after, and the torrent that struggled and beat in foam about the tangle of little islands and jagged rocks where the Dochart passes the old picturesque Highland village of Killin. She was mingled with it all because he loved her and because the relentless purpose in him would not let him hurt her the less on that account.

He lit another pipe and went up the hill, across the long bare flank of Ben Lawers—listlessly, with the heart for more battle gone out of him for the time. History and all these places where men had submitted themselves to death and suffering and renunciation had scored their knowledge on him. He could not do wrong savagely and blindly any more. He knew good and evil, he knew honour and dishonour through the delicate gradations in which the gentlemen of history had known it and which his own rough careless life had never taught him. And, knowing this and knowing what it was going to cost, the desire for revenge weakened in him as he lay there on the hill with the scent of clover and grass brought to him by the damp gentle air.

God's own light was in the western skies, and God's own stars were breaking bravely overhead. Wylde lay still, with all hatred in him closed-down for the time. And then a dark figure showed on the winding track below; showed nearer, tall and straight, and Wylde moved, with a sudden coming-together of his teeth on the pipe-stem. For it was Surrey come to

seek him, and Wylde knew well what he had come for.

Surrey was breathing quickly, and he spoke without hesitation.

"I came to look for you," he said. "You predicted that we were going to hate each other over this business, Wylde."

"That's so," assented Wylde, unmoving.

"I think I have never shown you injustice," said Surrey. "I recognized that your position was a—difficult one, and at the beginning I would have done what I could to help you if you had let me. You know that."

"I never wanted your damned condescension," flashed out Wylde.

Surrey went a little white round the nostrils.

"You force me to speak brutally," he said. "When the Colonel made his choice of you long ago he—possibly hoped that you would turn out more—more according to the usual canons of civilization."

"More like you, do you mean?"

"I have not tried to make a distinction between you and myself," said Surrey. "But I have had to try to make you recognize the distinction between you and Miss Bouchier."

"I've been watching out for this for some time," remarked Wylde, jerking up the heather in little spurts of earth. "Now I guess we're going to have it—all of it. What are the distinctions between me and Miss Bouchier?"

"I—I think you know them."

Wylde mistook the half-generous reserve for cowardice. He stood up.

"Likely," he said. "But I'm going to make sure that you do. Out with them."

"You have no money," said Surrey, slowly; "you have no profession, no character, no name."

"Go on."

"Out West you earned their slang term for the worst sort. They called you a 'bad man.' You

couldn't get even the commonest work. You had to go to the Colonel's lawyer for the actual bread you ate."

"Where did you learn this?"

"From the Colonel."

"Ah! From the Colonel! He warned you against me, did he?"

"Considering the positions in which we were to be placed he thought it necessary to do so. But he has been just to you. Over here you have had equal advantages with me, an equal allowance with me. He has been grateful for what you have done for him. He has never taken any duty on your part as a matter of course. He allowed you freely—too freely—friendship with Peg—with Miss Bouchier, on condition that you recognized the distance——"

"Hold on. He worded that alike for us both, didn't he? And you——" Wylde came close with his hands shut up. "Don't you dare take that tone with me, you cad," he said. "The Colonel trusted us both. And you are engaged to her. Well, what have you got to say about that?"

Surrey fell back a step. Because he had been indifferent it had not struck him that Wylde would naturally judge as he had done. But he had given this man a handle which he would not fail to use.

"I am engaged to her with the Colonel's consent," he said.

"Asked before or after?"

Surrey was silent. Wylde laughed shortly.

"Well. Go on. You're not done yet, are you?"

"No," said Surrey, goaded into black wrath. "Knowing what you are, and seeing what you are, I do not care that you should have anything to do with my future wife. The Colonel does not realize that he has insulted her by bringing you near her. I do. She is not much more than a child, and she knows nothing of you except that you are the Colonel's guest. In order that she may not know more I must desire you to discontinue the—the impertinent advances you are always making to her. Why . . . when I think . . .

for all the harm I know of you I may not know the worst. . . ."

"You likely don't." Rage had roused in Wylde a devil for which he would very presently pay with private shame and repentance. "You don't know that I have kissed her, perhaps."

"You——" Surrey's voice choked in his throat.

"More than once. And that is no lie, though she may tell you so."

Surrey read truth in eyes and tone. Then he hit, straight and promptly, and Wylde went down. But he was up before Surrey had recovered his balance.

"I guess we'd better find a quieter place to say the rest of what we have got to say in," he remarked. "There are some people coming along this trail. But there looks like spare room on that hill over there."

The mist was thick and wet as the two crossed the heathery hill-flank, unspeaking. But already bitter remorse was burning up Wylde. His first reverence, his first vague idea of the love that ennobles had gone into those kisses on Peggy's unconscious forehead and hands. And yet he had done this with their memory. Then he heard Surrey breathing short beside him, and his hands twitched with an unholy eagerness.

"It won't take much to mark him," said his brain.

Down at the hotel the Colonel was saying much the same thing. For he had found Peggy in a vortex of tears and explanations, and he had seen Surrey go past up the hill where Wylde had already gone.

"I know he will tell Mr. Wylde," wept Peggy. "And I know Mr. Wylde won't like it."

"Possibly not." The Colonel considered. "Surrey is quite neat with his hands," he said. "But I think he is too soft for Wylde. He is too soft for him all round. What's the matter, Peggy?"

"They won't hit—hit each other? Oh! . . ."

"I shouldn't be surprised. And I don't know that I should be sorry. They quite evidently won't come to an understanding any other way." The Colonel sighed. "I had hoped that the complications we

started with would have rolled out by now. But they ball up higher the farther we go, like snow in a horse's hoofs. I wish I had sent you back to school instead of bringing you with us, Peggy."

"I—I've always done all I could," sobbed Peggy.

"You blessed little nuisance!" The Colonel laughed outright. "I am afraid you have probably broken up the combination altogether now. And I am no nearer a decision than I was when I started. Well, I hope I have a few years of life left me yet."

Peggy raised her head with that sudden sweet seriousness which marked her womanhood when she chose to use it.

"Dear," she said, "I think somehow that it will not be for you to decide. Life will do it. Or Death. Or they will do it themselves. They are both men, you know. They are both full of good—and of evil."

"Do you say that of Surrey?" asked the Colonel, suddenly grave.

Peggy got up. She stooped behind him, kissing his forehead.

"Love doesn't make a man perfect," she said. "Or a woman either. But we have got to try for ourselves before we will believe it."

The Colonel was dressing in the morning when he heard familiar steps past his door. He opened it and called Surrey in; and a little later he gave the result of the visit to Peggy over the breakfast-table.

"Surrey looks the most exhausted," he said. "But that is natural. He says that he held Wylde up for about an hour. That probably means two. And Wylde is a heavy man. If people will climb unknown hills and get lost in a mist they deserve what they get, of course. But I don't think it pleases Wylde at all to owe his whole bones to Surrey, and I quite believe Surrey when he tells me that he only held on to Wylde out of politeness."

"You haven't told me why they're not there yet," said Peggy. "I wish you wouldn't always begin a story at the beginning."

"A man came by and got help for them. Wylde was hanging to a bit of a bush and Surrey's hand. I fancy the drop would have been only about thirty feet, but it was a rough rock-bottom. They were both too numb to do much. I had to loosen Surrey's tongue with whiskey before I could get anything out of him at all. I think he has gone to bed now."

But Surrey had three minutes in Wylde's room first. He stood just within the door and spoke.

"I hope you fully understand that I don't want gratitude for what I did," he said. "It was merely one of those things which can't be avoided."

Wylde's lips twitched.

"Don't apologize," he said. "I quite understand. It makes no difference in our affection for each other. Only I guess we'll have to put off our meeting till we get back to town. You couldn't go around near ladies with the kind of face I mean to give you."

Surrey hardly heeded. His blue eyes were tired and strangely wistful.

"But perhaps you owe me just a little," he said. "Tell me—for God's sake—was it truth you said to me?"

Wylde looked at him. And suddenly he saw that he could drive the wedge in—all the way. For however much this man might love himself and his fetishes, pride and birth, it was quite certain that he loved The Honourable Peggy more.

"Yes," said Wylde, and found the word unreal on his tongue, because it is not the true Canadian affirmative.

Surrey turned and went out with no more words, and Wylde beat down shame in himself and followed.

Outside the hotel Peggy was standing with the Colonel. She had on a little short frock and a big hat, and she looked just the innocent baby Surrey so often called her. She turned to Wylde bravely, determined to ignore side-issues.

"We are just going down to see Inch-Buie Island where the Colonel used to have his ancestors buried."

she said. "At least, part of them are his ancestors——"

"Peggy, Peggy," said the Colonel, "when will you learn accuracy? My forebears belonged to the Clan Macnab; and like the Macdougalls and the MacArthurs and so many more, they have nothing left but a collection of graves. They were at the height of their glory in the days of Bruce, but they were too lawless to last. Too lawless."

"The last laird used to do impolite things," said Peggy. "He sometimes hung his creditors if they bothered him. And when the MacNeish people from Loch Earn stole his Christmas dinner and other drinks he sent his sons for MacNeish's head and used it as a door-knocker. There is a brass MacNeish on Kinnell House still, and we are going to see it directly. Kinnell has the biggest vine in Britain, though it is not so old as the Hampton Court one."

Wylde walked in silence over the Dochart bridge to the little yellow island, and through the uncouth pride of the loop-holed wall that arched it from side to side. It was a long lonely island; noiseless above the rushing river, beautiful with its great trees and grassy ways down which the chieftains of a vanished clan had been borne through the second gates and into the rough enclosure headed with barbaric busts and knobs and falling to decay even as the leaves fell that dropped over it year by year through the centuries.

Peggy spoke, softly reverent, of the clansmen treading; of the swing of the red and yellow and purple tartans; of the pibroch sounding when those fierce-blooded men of the Colonel's race were laid quiet at last. And then she took her camera.

"I am going to photograph you among your ancestors, dear," she said, and turned to the upright grey man among the grey walls and the full-leaved drooping trees and the rudely-shaped tombstones.

Wylde was standing beside the Colonel. A moment he hesitated. Then he trod out of the enclosure with

bent head, and Peggy, finding him waiting them on the bridge a little later, remembered that Wylde had once told her that he had not any people of his own.

It was mid-day when they left Killin, and Peggy, in the front seat with Surrey, chattered of Fingal, whose grave in Killin is marked with a rough stone in a field, and of Finlarig Castle, home of the Macgregors until the Campbells annexed it in the fifteenth century.

"We had a real old Scotchwoman to show us over it," she said. "She explained that the Chief had a very large dining-hall because he always asked people in to a meal when he was going to kill them. He had 'power of pit and gallows' and I suppose it would have been great waste of what was evidently a special honour if he had not made good use of them. Oh, Surrey! I am jok' g' about it, but it was awful. Awful. They had the Beheading Stone for those of gentle blood on the edge of the pit, and there were rusty old chains hanging to it yet. She said those were for the men. 'Ye wouldn't need to chain a gentleman.' And there were dungeons, and huge holly-trees, and a rosary-tree that won't grow anywhere but where a chapel has been. And she took us into the Campbell Mausoleum. It was so musty and horrid, and there are eleven chiefs and twenty-two wives buried there. The Colonel began to think about Bluebeard. . . . You did, dear,"—she turned her bright face to the men in the back—"I saw you looking out for Sister Anne."

"I was looking out for escape," said the Colonel. "I could not stand those rows of coffins and brass plates."

"I couldn't stand the introductions," said Peggy. "She gave us the names of each in turn, and I didn't know whether to bow or to shriek and run away, or to laugh. I don't think I did anything. But it was the most gruesome ceremony I've ever taken part in."

Surrey spoke little. But that might have been because the good white road was full of motors and

dust as it wound through hills of heather and tree-avenues to Loch Earn. Beyond the pretty hotel and houses scattered by the water among the trees stood what the Colonel called a real gean-tree with a few red sour cherries on it and Wylde described as two chewed rags twisted together. And beyond that lay the quaint thatched and whitewashed cottages along Loch Earn, looking out at the little islands, each made by man, where the clans put their women and children in time of danger. At the near end of Loch Earn lies the one that knew the last stand of the Macgregors. At the far end lies MacNeish's island, raided by the Macnabs.

Peggy looked back as they left it lying in the sunlight.

"St. Fillan's sacred fountain is at the other end," she said. "Don't you remember how the Abbot of Inchaffray carried his arm-bone in a case at the battle of Bannockburn, only he was afraid to open the case because he knew the bone wasn't there? But it fell open, and the bone was. Could you call that sleight-of-hand when it was only an arm-bone?"

She was talking nervously and half-defiantly, for the shade on Surrey's face was too dark to pass unnoticed, and Wylde was quieter than was usual. But when they turned from Balquidder West and took the winding road by haugh and hill to lonely Loch Voil and the little grey churchyard under the mighty trees by the road, she laid her hand for a moment on Surrey's.

"We read *Rob Roy* together once," she said. "I want you to show me his grave."

It was low and plain, this grave of "Robert Macgregor," landless and baffled no longer. And the fierce Helen lay beside him under a like ancient clumsily-carved stone, many centuries older than the one which knew their lives. Rob Roy died peacefully in a hut beside Loch Voil, and he sleeps peacefully between silver loch and heather hills, with a brattling stream running in hot blood to the larger

water and the whispering shade of great trees flung over him.

Memory of that bloody scene, when the Macgregors set the head of the King's gamekeeper on the altar there and gathered round to swear support to his murderer, shot through Wylde's brain as they joined the wide road again at King's House and followed strath and glen until Loch Lubnaig, the crooked lake, showed a calm broad face, strong and still among strong hills flushed with heather. To Peggy Strathyre was a curious mixture of fine hotel and luxurious boarding-houses, poor cottages and shops all strung on a string with the population sitting outside it, and she began to quote Scott as Ben Ledi raised his crest nearer and more near.

"For the little old chapel of St. Bride is somewhere in the loch here," she said. "Do you remember how the bridegroom had to take the Fiery Cross even at the church door, and go up the Pass of Leny when it was one of the most difficult roads in the Highlands, and

" ' Ben Ledi saw the cross of fire ;
It flashed like lightning up Strathyre ? ' "

"Ah," said the Colonel, "that reminds me. What have you arranged about the Trossachs, Wylde?"

In the front seat Surrey heard the words and his lips set tighter. It was purely his own fault that this and so much else lay in Wylde's hands, but it angered him all the same. Wylde's slow Canadian drawl came in answer—

"Why . . . I reckoned we'd have to leave them. Unless you care to drop the car in Callander and cross by coach. We can't take her along the Trossachs route."

"I should prefer to leave them," said the Colonel. "What's that, Peggy? Yes, you have been all through the Trossachs. Your mother and I spent our honeymoon there, and we took you with us. You were just three, and you made the most effectual and

satisfactory chaperon I have ever seen. No one would come near us."

"Dear, I don't take the credit. That distinction clings to you still occasionally. Do look at Ben Ledi's old bald head where people used to worship Baal. I suppose they burned all his hair off. Baal-worship is—is kind of hot, isn't it?"

"To this day," said the Colonel. "Then we'll go straight on to Stirling, Surrey. Wylde, did you order the letters to be sent there?"

Wylde nodded; and out of the copses of silver birch, hazel, oak and heather, by the tumbling Leny that joined the Teith near Callander, and through long-drawn-out Callander where coaches rattled by to the Trossachs road, the blue car swept down the pretty winding ways to Stirling. The heavy bulks of Ben-an, Ben Venue, Ben Lomond, made a grandeur of blue and purple skyline until long aisles of trees tied them to the ribbon of road again, and the air was rich with the scents of lime-trees and clover and grass warm in the sun. But the rugged wild freedom of Scotland had departed. This land was roped and hide-bound into a common mercantile prosperity.

"There is nothing left but the queer porches to the houses," said Peggy. "They make a cottage look like an old stooping man leaning on two knubbly walking-sticks. And there are so many stupid fences again. Some one told me that they had to have fences in England and Scotland because there were so few herdsmen left after the Black Death. There are none in France scarcely. Oh I just see that dear little village hiding behind the trees. It looks as if it *knew* it oughtn't to be there."

Surrey gave no answer, and Peggy's voice shook a little. She had obeyed him, and Wylde's quiet reserve suggested that he too was obeying—for the time. And yet, for all Surrey had denied her, he had neither tenderness nor sympathy to give her in reward.

"You are such a pleasant companion to-day," she said, "that I am going to let Mr. Wylde have you

when we leave Castle Doune. He so appreciates vivacity."

But the little prick did not appear to touch Surrey, and she did not know that he was keeping his lips dumb because he dared not speak. He dared not say what was in his heart or he would lose her. And he dared not lose her. Wylde had been to blame; only Wylde. She was so young. He could teach her . . . and then all the dam of excuses that he built burst away again before the torrent of his anger against her, turning him heart-sick, soul-sick, and bodily weak. Wylde had got the wedge in, and it would not shake loose again.

For a few minutes Peggy found herself alone in the large rough dining-hall at old Castle Doune, where the worn stone window-seats commanded grassy lawns sloping to the river and tall trees that once had held a gallows. A simple verse belonging to the old song which tells of the slaying of the "Bonnie Earl" was singing itself in her brain, sadly, softly—

"O, lang will his lady look from the Castle Doune
Ere she see the Earl of Moray come sounding through the town."

Steps rang down the uneven stone floor, and Surrey spoke behind her.

"Will you please come at once, Peggy," he said. "The guide is waiting."

There were tears on Peggy's eyelashes, and she looked up with the flower of love opening and showing in her heart. Surrey shut his lips together, looking down on her. Then he turned away, and Wylde, seeing them come through the door, said under-breath—

"I guess I have taught him to think three ways at once now."

It was the Colonel only who enjoyed that half-hour in the fine old thick-walled ruin, so carefully preserved, so full of vivid history. In the days when it had been the Regent Moray's his half-sister, Queen Mary, had slept here in the wall-pocket of a room

opening from the great guard-chamber. In the kitchens huge spits had turned and men had fed from the fourteenth century until that day in the eighteenth when the Macgregors bivouacked here with their prisoners after the Jacobite victory at Falkirk. In the Baron's Hall were two trap-doors, by one of which the accused prisoner came up a rope-ladder from his dungeon to be tried; while by the other he slid down a rope into the condemned cell, unless he went straightway to the gallows-tree before the ladies' drawing-room. From the Heading Hill at Stirling Duke Murdoch of Albany and his sons held their faces to the white towers of their Castle of Doune as they knelt to die; and from its crow-step gables and walls, across the lovely Teith with its ancient bridge, men-at-arms once watched night and day for the glimmer of spears on the rough Ochil Ranges, or the flash of fire along the distant Trossachs.

They saw the sun set from the Bannockburn slope that evening in an angry sky of green flushed to crimson and struck to piled clouds of purple behind the hundred-foot pole where the red Lion of Scotland flung itself to the breeze as it had done on that Sunday afternoon in 1314 when the shiftless Edward the Second came to win back from the Bruce some of those Scotch castles which had once been England's. Where the Bannock brook had run through swamp and bog set with stakes and traps fair fields of corn and sheep showed now. But Cox's Hill, where the Scotch cavalry had lain, and the bush-hill before it, where the eager gillies, rushing out with their waving plaids, had won the day for Bruce, were rugged with grass and heather yet. Men say that as many fell at Bloody Well to southward as on Bannock, and the savage fight continued to the very castle foot, so that the dead lay along the streets into the very key-hole of this great Key of Scotland.

Wylde would not go again to the Ladies' Rock. He would not look at it from the height of the castle plateau where pipes were playing and kilts swinging

as the soldiers drilled in the morning sun with the bearded crowned statue of Bruce to watch them, even as Wallace watches from the Craig across the river. Instead, he looked at Peggy and Surrey as they walked against the wall with all the glory of hills and strath and winding Forth behind the big grey figure and the little white one, and his forming determination to tell the truth to Surrey shrivelled and blew away.

And then Peggy called the Colonel, and the three went together through the ancient gates, past the old Palace walls where every carving and gargoyle has a history, and on to the parapet-wall, worn smooth by many elbows since it was Queen Mary's Look-out in the days when her mother held her here, a small innocent-eyed child, while the first of that long, long tragedy of blood and battle that is woven round her began with the attempt of Henry of England to marry her to his son.

The story of Stirling Castle has been the story of Scotland since long before the first Edward had to call up all his knights and all his weapons from London to batter it into submission. From a postern-gate low in its flank James the Fifth went out many times, alone and disguised, to his reckless adventures: in the Douglas room above, where Peggy found such things as John Knox's pulpit and postcards, he stabbed that haughty Chief in the midst of his defiance, and had his body flung from the window. Kings have been crowned, born and married in it, and all the valour and the chivalry of Scotland is tangled in the web of Stirling Castle.

But when Stirling was gone down beyond the eye's horizon; when Mar's Work, and Cambuskenneth Abbey, and the noble sweep of crested Grampians and purple Trossachs, of haugh and river and strath laid wide and glorious across the carse as seen from the top of the Wallace Monument were mixed with other memories, Peggy had not forgotten a run out on a rainy morning past Castle Campbell, sullen in its black forest hung on the hill-side and well called the

"Castle Gloom," to desolate Loch Leven, where the square rotting block of castle, said to have been built on the little island by Congal, King of the Picts, had held Mary of Scotland for a full year of captivity among bleak hills, bleak waters, bleak mercilessness of jailers. The wind was cutting the faces of the men in front; the rain swirling round the glass was blinding them, and across the naked loneliness mist was folding a winding-sheet of sadness. Then Surrey turned Peggy as they sat close under rugs in the tonneau.

"I was looking through a pile of your snapshots last night," he said. "You haven't got one of Wylde. How is that?"

A woman's reasons are seldom single. Peggy gave one which covered the whole.

"I didn't want any of him. I have never taken a photograph of Mr. Wylde."

She had forgotten the film from Gretna Green which she had not torn when it came back with the rest. Surrey moved, looking at her.

There was so much that she had not told him. So much that he dared not ask her to tell, that belonged to those days before she belonged to him. He knew it, and he accepted it as he had accepted many other things concerning Peggy which he would not allow himself to think of. His knowledge of her had never focussed straight since that night by Ruthven Barracks, and it was now distorted cruelly.

"Are you absolutely sure of that?" he asked.

"Absolutely. Oh, Surrey! I wish you were not always trying to 'make the nothing something.' Would you object if I had?"

"Not if you sh——" He reddened, turning the meaning aside. "Not if you had some of me too," he said, and laughed a little.

"I have got about two hundred of you," said Peggy, rather wearily. "You occur more often than anything except the sky. You are not jealous of that too, are you?"

Here Surrey had stiffened back into his corner and Peggy had curled into hers, and the rest of the way had been silence, broken by the whirr of mud from the wheels, the mutter of talk from the front seat, and the occasional jar when Wylde skidded on the wet angles of the road.

Peggy was more angry than sad in these days. Since her baby feet and brain had first tried to choose out her own road the Colonel had allowed it to her when he could, and very often when he asserted that he could not. Suspicion, jealousy, command, had never touched her until lately; and, because they had come from the hand of the man she loved, they had at first brought a most bitter grief and now a righteous anger. She had obeyed Surrey. She never spoke with Wylde alone, and he did not seek her. She was losing the charm of history and delight in all this wonderful land for Surrey's sake, and he was cold to her—cold. Each day the tide of love was going farther and farther out, leaving all their sweet store of memories and kisses and pledges dead and parched on the sand. Both knew it, and neither could prevent it. Peggy could not, because the reason was hid to her. Surrey could not, because only the weapon of love made tempered steel by the giver could have turned Wylde's spear aside, and Surrey did not know anything about that sort of love. His love for Peggy was not the understanding love of a man for the woman whom he chooses for his helpmate. It was a love which he tried to control, tried to check toward an irresponsible baby who tortured and teased and troubled him and never would be taught any better. In all his life Surrey had never seen the real Peggy. He never would see her now, for there was no light in him with which to seek out the hidden places in her heart, and hour by hour she was hiding them closer, even from herself.

Sheets of rain held them for three days in Stirling; and each day the tension between the two slackened and tightened, and Wylde stood aloof, and the Colonel

played billiards with one of that great group of friends to which he was always adding. And then came wet sunshine under a pale sky and wet roads under the wheel through plain agricultural Bucklyvie and small whitewashed Drymen with a curious circle of stones set round a well on the green. Their time-worn ancient shape so interested Wylde that he got out and made inquiries at a shop. Then he came back with the laughter that showed too seldom on his face.

"There is only one person who seems to know anything about them," he said. "She is a woman of forty, and she says that they are older than she is. I guess likely she's right."

Beyond Drymen he swung the car up and round and about, seeing strange clearings that looked like the handwriting of giants on the bushy hills. Past wet bloom on heathery slopes came the first glimpse of Loch Lomond; and faint in mist behind it grew hills that strengthened and took shape and colour as the blue car followed the road up beside the loch. Little islands swam in the bright steamers made glancing light-trails on the placid surface; across the wide silent spread of grey Ben Lomond laid his noble length like a guarding lion. The bonnie banks and braes of the hills were filled with sheep and cattle. On the road-side trees, houses in their grounds, piers and bathing-places blocked out the view. Wylde turned back.

"I guess that if we take the low road we won't see much of Loch Lomond," he said. "And we can't take the high road unless we fly."

"Come away," said Peggy. "It is too educated. Oh, it is so vulgar of people to educate scenery. Come away. This is the first bit of Scotland that has disappointed me."

Past populous cheerful Helensburgh came the Clyde, rolling by in grey and gold; bearing the little steamers out to Rothesay Bay and Bute, and cleft by the leviathans of the seas, drawing deep, as they swept

down under black smoke from Glasgow. The smell of the sea blew in strongly; and then tram-lines and telegraph-wires laid hold of them again, pulling them down the road of history beside the shining Firth. Wylde was looking across the water, counting the steps of the years. Cardross Castle, where Robert the Bruce had died; Renfrew, where battle and death met that Somerled saved at Ben Nevis Glen; Kilpatrick Hills, said to be birthplace of Ireland's Saint Patrick; the ruined Castle of Crookstane, where Mary of Scotland was plighted to Darnley, and where she saw the final defeat of her troops by her fierce half-brother, Moray, and fled from him and from Morton to the mercy of Elizabeth at Carlisle.

All that was faint with age and mist. But close at hand the strange Dumbarton Rock was shooting its near six hundred feet of isolation abruptly up from the bed of the Clyde; rugged, perpendicular; once a fortress in the time when it stood sentinel over Scotland's western gate as Stirling over her gate of the sunrise. Deep fissures streaked its nakedness: the sun struck its impregnable sides harshly; but daring men had scaled it more than once in the distant days when Wallace was held prisoner there and the heads of himself and his betrayer, Menteith, were carved over the portcullis-gate.

Below Bowling, by the Kelvin, Wylde knew that the ancient Wall of Antoninus ended in the ruins of Dunglas Castle. But the to-day offered houses and tram-lines only; the broad Clyde, alive with building-docks, with huge cranes that cut the air blackly, with a myriad tramps of the sea, and the strange sense of a huge brain somewhere behind all these tentacles of strength that seemed to be vital to their lightest tips. They went to find that brain through such endless miles of streets that Peggy began to hum "Yankee Doodle."

"He couldn't find the town at all, there were so many houses," she said. "Did Glasgow ever have a beginning? I am certain it hasn't an end."

Wylde was driving at the ten mile limit. He raised his voice in answer.

"I guess it began in the sixth century when St. Kentigern came down to christianize Strathclyde," he said. "St. Mungo, it's generally written. He must have been a fighter, for the name means 'dog-chief.'"

"Then that is where the word mongrel comes from," asserted Peggy. "Oh, here's another illusion gone. I thought Glasgow was short for smoke and ashes and dirt . . . and just look at those."

Among knots of trees and sloping terraces the left skyline was fretted into grey Universities, red Museums, and long-limbed Art Galleries. It was proving itself a city of wealth, of power, of learning and industry, this great Glasgow which began in a little wooden church on the site of the present Cathedral and has grown to be the stronghold of Presbyterianism, the king of shipbuilding, the lord of the coal and iron trades and of chemical works, the cradle of the motive power of steam.

"Scott makes Rob Roy do several things here," said Wylde. "But that's understood. Scotland is riddled through with his characters. No one would think of going to Scotland without reading all he could get from Scott."

"Have you?" asked the Colonel, whose own conscience was not clear.

"I got them all from Mudie's when I was mapping out the trail. But one doesn't talk Scott in Scotland, I guess. He is too—too ob'ous."

The Colonel said no more. But he thought a good deal, looking at the dark resolute face beside him. The size and thoroughness of this undertaking in order to spend a few weeks in Scotland was quite characteristic of Wylde. But, if Smayne spoke anything like truth, Wylde had expended too much of his powers on things other than literature.

It was Peggy who attempted to rightly name those colossal figures of Scotchmen which stand in George

Square, and who objected to the draping of Scott's plaid over the right shoulder. Wylde glanced up at the fine bluff statue on top of the eighty-foot column.

"Did you notice that?" he said. "Why . . . there is a yarn that when the sculptor realized what he had done he killed himself. But I reckon that's a tale. There are so many ways of wearing the plaid. Shall we just run around by the Cathedral? I planned a bit of country for to-night after three days in Stirling."

"Ah!" said Peggy, "I don't think I can ever live in a town again. I want an island of my own in the middle of a Scotch loch."

Wylde drove round to the grey Cathedral, noble against its Necropolis where the tombs of Glasgow's dead bristle among rich gardens and shrubberies with a sweep of hills beyond. But he was thinking only of the stray verse of some Scotch song—

"She wadna hae a Lowland laird, nor be an English lady,
But she wad gang wi' Donald Graham, and row her in his
plaidie."

It had no meaning, of course; but it held his brain while Peggy chattered of the strange tombs near the gate which were exactly like a row of mantel-pieces, and the Colonel pointed out the simple inscription to Dr. Low, the first man to organize the Medical Faculty in 1649; and he had not forgotten it when he went out after dinner at the old-fashioned Clyde Hotel near Bothwell Station to tumble a number of superfluous guide-books out of the well of the front seat.

The Colonel came into the garage presently, and Wylde looked up.

"I guess I should have done this in Stirling," he said. "We don't want to carry a lot of lumber—"

The Colonel held out a torn envelope, and his words were sharp.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said.

Wylde read the bill; folded it, and gave it back.

"It's a mistake," he said. "I have paid that and I can show you the receipt."

"What business have you to pay out of your own pocket for repairs done to the car?"

The dull red went up Wylde's face.

"I guess I can if I choose," he answered.

"I pay the garage and petrol bills," said the Colonel.

"I would have paid this gladly if you had had courage enough to tell me that you had harmed the car."

His voice was harsh with feeling. But it lashed Wylde into speech.

"The car was harmed before I got it at Fort Augustus," he said. "Guest had let some of the gearing run dry, and a few cogs were partially stripped off a couple of wheels. I filled up the grease-bath while you were lunching at Invergarry. But she went rottenly till I got her fixed at Oban. You must have noticed the difference afterwards."

"I can't say I did. But that is not the point. Why didn't you leave Surrey to rectify his own mistakes? He knew of it, I suppose?"

"He knew she was going unkindly, of course. Any one at the wheel could tell that. And he must have known that she went all right afterwards. But he didn't speak to me of it. And I didn't speak to him."

"Why not?"

Wylde was silent.

"If you want me to believe you," said the Colonel, "you had better tell me why not. For you didn't hold your tongue out of friendliness . . . or out of forgetfulness. I don't accuse you of either of those weaknesses."

Wylde's continued silence explained the exact truth to the Colonel.

"Knowing that I would be very vexed at his carelessness you meant to hold this over him as a threat, I suppose. Or did you wish to put him in your debt both for money and for clemency? Confound you!

will you answer me?" Then his voice changed. "My boy," he said, "if I am being unjust to you——"

Wylde found his tongue just at the wrong time.

"Guest could go to the devil before I'd shoulder his mistakes for love," he said.

"You'll find a cheque for this amount in your room," said the Colonel, and turned on his heel. "And you will kindly give me your Oban receipt. I will write to them."

In the dimming light Wylde stooped to pick up the scattered guide-books. Some of Peggy's snapshots fell out of one, and he struck a match idly, to look at them.

"That eternal Guest, of course," he said. And then his face softened, and he struck another match as the first went out.

For the prints were not of Surrey, but of himself. Three of them, taken from the negative of Gretna Green where he stood laughing behind the old shoemaker-clergyman. He had not known that in all his life he had looked so happy and so free from care as that, and he stared at it until the match burnt his fingers. Then he slid the photographs into his breast-pocket and carried the guide-books up to his room.

"I guess she has forgotten those," he said. "And I—I wonder how many more she has taken of me without my knowledge?"

He saw the Colonel's cheque on his table, and he took it up, tore it into three pieces and tossed it on the floor.

"For when a man does to me what the Colonel has done he owes me more than that," he said.

Then he went out, strolling through the little village past the ancient church where the curious biscuit-coloured monument to Joanna Baillie, born at the manse, stands up, scored with her verses and closed round the feet by gay flowers, and came at last to the Clyde, brown and beautiful between its green banks, to find Peggy on the bridge, alone. On the rise beyond, by the tram-line that led to Hamilton, he saw

Surrey and the Colonel talking with a third older figure, and he went forward quickly. He had not spoken to Peggy alone since Killin, and he wanted to prove Surrey's words.

Peggy saw him coming, and she studied the tall plain obelisk with eyes that did not see it. That story, which began with the stand of Argyll, Morton and others against the Church of Rome a full hundred years before Monmouth and Claverhouse crushed these Men of the Covenant at Bothwell Bridge in 1679, did not stir her just now. She was wild with anger against Surrey because of the restriction he had put on her, and yet she would not break it.

"Are you waiting for the others?" asked Wylde, behind her. "I guessed perhaps you'd rather like to come up and have a look around the old church. I had hoped to have seen Bothwell Castle, but neither to-day nor to-morrow is open day. The guide-book calls it a 'noble Norman relic,' so it should have been on our list."

"Thanks," said Peggy, "I think I would rather stay here."

She did not look at him, and this determined Wylde.

"May I stay with you?" he asked.

"Please don't trouble. If you were going for a walk——"

Wylde came close, laying his hand beside hers on the bridge-top. He did not realize how cruel he was.

"Would you rather I did not wait?" he said, and his rough slow voice was not quite even.

Peggy looked very hard at nothing. She desired to kill Surrey; then Wylde; then both these men who were so desperately stupid and who hurt her so.

"If you don't mind," she said, at last. "I—I have a bad headache."

"I'm sorry," said Wylde, conventionally. "I hope this cool air will do it good."

He lifted his hat, and strolled back the way he had come. But those few minutes had told him all he wanted to know and rather more than he expected to

find out. Guest was bringing force to bear, and The Honourable Peggy was not made of the stuff which will submit to force. Very soon that bond would break, sharp and suddenly, and if either heart believed that it broke with it there was no cause anywhere for pity. None had been shown to him. He walked past the great brick gates of Bothwell Castle; and out of the silent centuries the savage sinful spirit of that James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, Lord Warden of the Marches, murderer of Darnley and husband of the Queen he made a widow, coward, and pirate who died at last in a Danish prison, seemed to hang about the hoary gates and walls with the persistence of a valued friend.

Wylde remembered how Bothwell had gone to answer for the murder of Darnley with a retinue of full five thousand, and how two hundred armed men guarded him in the very dock. Wylde could not have brought one man . . . and then he laughed at the ancient trail his feet were treading. That lawless Border spirit should be dead centuries ago, since now men had to fight with lies instead of swords. From somewhere came recollection of verses beginning—

“The tufted grass lines Bothwell’s ancient hall,”

and then he went on, with the bats slanting across the dusky sky about him, and the scent of wallflower and meadowsweet and clover rising from the rich meadows.

Wylde had not done a thoroughly dishonourable thing in his life until he had told Surrey that half-truth which was so much worse than a lie, and the memory of it would not let him rest. He had done much that Smayne, desperate and revengeful, had exaggerated to the Colonel; he had done much that it gave him no pleasure to think on. But he had not before done a thing which was despicable in its meanness. He recognized that uncontrollable temper of his which had upset his life more than once, and he recognized quite as fully what it would cost him to

make the matter clear to Surrey. For a little while he had not minded this. Now, through the dusk that grew darker until the heavens swelled large and living with a myriad stars, he walked himself out of that belief and into the sure knowledge of something else.

Peggy had taught him to love her; she had broken him and flung him aside; she had given herself to Surrey in a glory of giving such as Wylde would not forget. Now she was rebelling against Surrey, and Wylde knew why. She was turning back to him, because in the very beginning of all things, when souls were made pure and truthful, and before disbelief came to blind the eyes, she had been meant for him. Not long since he had been sure that he could never forgive The Honourable Peggy. Now he put the harm which she, in her girlish romantic first love, had done him in the scales against the deliberate wrong which he, in his manhood, had done her. And the swing of that balance cleared his vision for him more than anything else had done in his life.

In his youth man's impatience for the whole of life at once leads him to tangle the web of his days about his feet in his haste. Then he cuts free, or kicks free, or bursts free, and complains that there is no straight path for his feet ever any more. Wylde had burst free, and for the pain that came after he had to suffer—and would suffer, because conscience told him that until he had made free and ample confession to Surrey he should not take one step toward Peggy. And in his bitter pride and his hate he knew that he could not confess to Surrey.

He walked through the night until dew was wet on his neck and his shoulders, and each strath and glen poured out its sweetness to him. But the evil spirit in him would not let him go. He had set out to beat Guest, to beat him through and through, and he would do it. For there are many ways when a man is not over-blinded by scruples. And so Wylde cut free of some more webs, and set his feet on a rougher and stonier path than before.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT THE COLONEL TOLD

"DEAR," said Peggy, "do you remember that story of the Englishman who watched the first little steamer that was ever up there going out of harbour to Skye? He turned to the old Scotchman beside him, and said, 'Will that boat ever get over to Skye to-night?' 'Aye,' said the Scotchman. 'Unless anything happens to Skye.'"

"Well?" said the Colonel.

"Well," said Peggy, "I am going up to Arthur's Seat to see the sun rise to-morrow morning. Unless anything happens to the sunrise."

"Something probably will," said the Colonel. "Auld Reekie didn't get its name purely out of love. I have been a week in Edinburgh, and never saw the sun. Do you purpose taking me with you?"

"Oh, no; Jean Challoner is coming. And her brother. And Surrey. Jean has never seen a sunrise, and I'm quite sure she doesn't know if it drops straight out of the sky or climbs up the sides. And that is one of the questions one has a delicacy about asking."

"Is Wylde going?" demanded the Colonel, well aware that here was another.

"I don't know."

The Colonel looked across at Peggy where she wrote notes under the light at the desk. Some of the thick creamy envelopes and paper had slid down on the folds of her blue gown, and the Colonel went over to pick them up.

"What an untidy Peggy it is," he said. "Surrey will keep you in better order than I ever did. Why

isn't Wylde going? And why do you so seldom speak to him now?"

Peggy's pen ran into a great blot. She pulled the blotting-paper over it; smudged everything, including her fingers; tore the sheet and threw it in the basket. The Colonel laid his withered cheek to her hair.

"Isn't it about time you and I had some conversation, my bird with the shining head?" he asked.

"Surrey doesn't like him, dear," explained Peggy, stroking his face. "And it is much better for me to do what Surrey wants."

"It is much better for you to do nothing of the kind. Haven't I always brought you up to think and act for yourself? Haven't I told you that you have got to make your own conscience and walk the way it tells you to? Have you given up that right to Surrey?"

"Dear, he doesn't like Mr. Wylde. That ought to be enough for me."

"Peggy," said the Colonel, "you had sense once. It was rudimentary, but it was there. I am your guardian still, and if I think it will hurt neither you nor Wylde to go your natural way and talk of the things that interest you both, I don't see what business it is of Surrey's. I suppose he considers me an old fool—"

Peggy's soft hand came over his mouth.

"No," she said. "It is just . . . you never taught me to be obedient."

"Is Surrey trying to teach you that?"

Peggy sprang up, catching both his hands in hers.

"Dearest," she said, "Surrey and I have got to fight out our battles our own way. You love us both, but you can't help us. You can't help."

"You just wait till I speak to Surrey. . . ."

"No. You must not. It is just between us. He— loves me, dear."

"I know. I know. Foolish lad! What does he want to hurt you for?"

"He doesn't mean to. He doesn't know that he

does. He would do anything in all the world for me except learn that I am a woman with an individuality of my own. He is trying to teach me what he considers I should know. And he often finds it painful——”

“I should hope he did. Good heavens! Peggy; of all the outrageous impertinence——”

Peggy pushed back her hair. Her little soft face was white.

“It is quite my own fault,” she said. “Do you think I don’t understand that? If I had never . . . asked him. If I had waited for him to come . . . to me. . . . Don’t, please, dear. Nothing makes any difference. He can’t forget that I have lowered myself in his eyes, and in . . . Mr. Wylde’s.”

“Wylde has more sense. Good Lord! I—I——”

“You see, dear, Surrey inherited a great many conventions from his forebears. They are much older than me, and they are not at all the same shape. So I must be chopped up to fit them, because it would be quite ridiculous to think of anything so important as a convention being altered to fit a silly little thing like your Peggy. Why, they would have to have all their mossy old hems taken off, and pleats put in their cast-iron sides, and even then I doubt if they would set well. There are so many of them, and there is only one of me.”

“You have never had anything to do with conventions,” said the Colonel, testily.

“But I have now.” She bent forward, putting her warm lips to his forehead. “I had to tell you, because you were seeing too much. And . . . it will be all satisfactory in a little time. Surrey is quite sure that he is right, and I am often quite sure that I am wrong. But that doesn’t make me want to be any gooder. You have never been under the impression that your Peggy was an angel, have you?”

“I knew she was something I liked much better,” said the Colonel.

But when she was gone he walked the long dusky

room for almost an hour, with his hands behind his back and his grey head thrust forward.

"Is he going to ruin his life on this head too?" he said. "She could have waked him to the knowledge of what he owes himself if any one on this earth could have done it. And he is trying to teach her! She gave herself to him, soul and heart and body, and he wants to squeeze her into the limits of some wretched belief that was dead before she was born. My sweet wild warm-hearted Peggy. What is the boy thinking of? What is he thinking of?" He halted at last, looking into the dim corners of the room. "I think I shall have to tell Surrey one or two things," he said. "And Wylde, too. I should have told Wylde before. But . . . I will do it now. And I wonder where the fellow is. I haven't seen him to-day."

Since the blue car had come to Edinburgh four days ago Wylde had taken his life for himself and found considerable comfort and relief in so doing. But he had come near open anger when Surrey objected to going on to Ayr, and Peggy agreed with him.

". . . For there are quite a number of our friends in Edinburgh just now," she said. "And it would be so nice to see them. I think it would be better to get there just as soon as ever we can."

And so Wylde, not knowing the struggle that had been in Peggy's heart and on her lips, turned the car eastward; out of the tragic "Covenanters' Country" where, after Bothwell Bridge, the Duchess of Hamilton hid the fugitives in her own great grounds and forests of Hamilton, desiring Monmouth's troopers not to disturb her game; out of the remnants of the ancient Caledonian forest where Mary of Scots had been wont to hunt in "my woode of Caledon"; and so across to Edinburgh, by the way Mary had come when she fled from the custody of Moray at Loch Leven to Dumbarton, not realizing that his troops lay at Glasgow, between her and safety.

There had been red roads that day; the glory of

golden cornfields, rich trees, deep glens, rolling hills, amber-clear waters stained with the peat, and a keen air that blew the smell of peat from the clean comfortable little villages. All that time of desolate horror when the fierce Wardens of the Marches suppressed this Borderland was long passed away; all that time when Strathclyde between the two walls became the dumping-ground and the slaughter-ground for the races at either side was deep-sunk in the dust of years. And yet the memory of it lay near at Falkirk, where, by Callander House, the great Wall of Antoninus still runs in broken mounds to the salt lips of the Forth; where Edward the First met Wallace with that great army of bowmen whose

" Bows were made in England,
Of yew-wood, of true wood,"

and scattered the Scotchmen to flight; and where, also, the Jacobites, retreating northward, won the day through the wit and courage of the Countess of Kilmarnock, who held Hawley, leader of the English, prisoner of her bright eyes at Callander House while the Prince's troops prepared for battle.

Every foot of all this land was instinct with history for Wylde. Long since he had told Peggy that each great life gone left a memory from which the men of the future could take all that they had strength and courage for. He had gathered very much from Scotch history; that gallant, terrible, romantic, tragic cloud which lies like the bloom of fruit all over Scotland, and it kept awake in him much that he tried to kill, driving him out restlessly to long walks or long rides by tram and coach.

He had come to Linlithgow this day, quaint and uneven of street and wall in its ancient grey stone among the green hills. From a house akin to those crooked sixteenth-century houses which slanted down the ways, the desperate and cruelly-wronged Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh had shot and killed on the day when "the base-born Moray rode through old Linlithgow's

crowded streets"; and in the dark low guard-chamber, just within the Castle gate, Moray had struggled with death the night through, fierce, brave, relentless to the last, closed down in that black airless dungeon where, beyond flaming torches and clustering men and the ringing of steel and the chanting of monks, his strong soul could have scarcely found that small loop-hole of light which would lead him out to the upper air—and to his God.

To Wylde Linlithgow Castle's noble stately frontage was like the forehead of some great man who hides Heaven alone knows what tortuous mysteries, what dark thoughts and secret places behind the unchanging face; and he passed the gates each time with the same feeling of uneasy knowledge of kirtles rustling in the corridors, of echoing laughter from the banquet-halls, of the smell of leather and beer and of new-cleaned steel in the little rough guard-chambers on the wall.

There were underground stables at Linlithgow, where the horses of kings had champed and fed; there were dungeons, giving through narrow slits in the ten-foot wall gleams of green hills, of a silver lake where white swans sailed, of slender trees that bent their tinted leaves to the water. Moss battened thick and yellow on the floorless walls of the banqueting-hall; dust dropped from rotting corridors once struck by the passing sword of a gallant and touched by the floating scarf of his lady. In the narrow vault where James the Third had once hid among his own wine-barrels from his subjects was emptiness only; the room where Mary of Scots was born whilst her father, the fifth James, lay dying at Falkland, stands open to rain and to the blazing sun and the pitiful stars.

Since the first Edward built the first tower of Linlithgow, and since Bruce battered it down, the will of many kings has gone to the making of that huge pile of apartments, corridors, staircases and battlements and the lives of many kings are connected with it, from the tower where Queen Margaret heard of the death of

James the Fourth on Flodden Field to the kitchens where Hawley's Dragoons, encamped here after their defeat at Falkirk, by accident set fire to all and gutted it into one of the saddest and most complete of kingly ruins.

Wylde stayed there long; and through the golden gloaming he came back to Edinburgh, past the Forth, where, up harbour and over by Dunfermline with its ancient abbey that holds royal dust, yellow, red and sharply-blue lights sprang out through the spreading haze. From the hill-top the huge steel might of the Forth Bridge cut the sky, a spider-web spun by a nation and glittering as a web glitters in the dew. As Wylde watched a train crept on to it, a thing like a glow-worm, ridged in light, noiseless, far-off, and very small. Below in the centre of the level shield of colour that was the Forth under sunset Inchkeith lay like a clay smudge with the great eye of its lighthouse shining.

Up through the old slanting fishermen's homes of Queensferry Wylde came from the smell of the sea to the smell of deep woods where dew already was drawing the heat of the day, to glens and fine houses at Dalmeny, to an opening space of hills and a tall tower; and straight ahead, huge and calm and dark against the sky, the brooding Lion of Edinburgh, witching the ancient town. He walked slowly over the rough pavestones that prove in so many Scottish villages and cities how hardly old customs die, and in the grey gentle warmth of the mist that is the breath of Edinburgh the few far-reaching lights turned everything beautiful and vague, everything mysterious and terrible and old. Among these half-seen figures in the new-come night was surely Scott, strolling home to 39, Castle Street in that high-collared blue coat and the old tall hat, and with that plump cleft chin of his low in the folds of his neck-cloth. Among them, thrusting by, lithely, nervously, with the short breath of illness, the long loose hair, and the white shirt of hot climates came R. L. Stevenson, seeking again that Close in the Old Town whence he said his heart would return when

the warm Southern earth took his body. Here passed Sir James Young-Simpson, discoverer of chloroform, with the broad noble head and the strong clear eyes. Here that "canny comfortable body," Allan Ramsay, author of *The Gentle Shepherd*; here Burns with gay plumage and young flushed cheeks; here many and many a man more, unseen, undying Scotchman who loved Scotland, going down to the Old Town where all that was history began.

Wylde went with them to the Old Town, dim and full of odours in the night. And there he parted from them, leaving each to go to the haunt he loved best, and found a little old disreputable tavern where he dined contentedly among drink-stains and tobacco-smells and that accent which belongs especially to Edinburgh. And then he sought the streets again, prowling like the wild coyote men called him down those low clefts of Clooses between tall dark houses that gave to Courts of rigid walls and broken windows, of torn papers and refuse and cats along the railings. Once he heard a man reading those stern accusing chapters of the Old Testament for which his Covenanting ancestors had suffered in Edinburgh prisons and spilt their blood on the Edinburgh earth. Once, against a lighted window, he saw a woman cower from a blow, and saw, too, the clenched fist that gave it. Once a girl leaned out, tossing a walnut-shell at him with derisive laughter. And once, as he came from those dim dens of poverty, small arms clipped him round the legs, and that broad burr which he knew well for the voice of the child-guide buzzed up to him—
"Th' ancient Hoose o' the Markis o' Queensberry——"

Wylde stooped, detaching the clinging arms.

"All right, sonny," he said. "I guess you or one of your mates have shown me that about six times already."

In the dusk of the wynd the boy appeared to be grinning with white teeth, with half-shut eyes, with every flash of bare skin through his ragged garments. All

about him a swarm of ragged shockheaded cheerfulness was gathering and growing, and the boy spoke with impudent confidence.

"Ye maun forgit awfu' quick to need showin' that often," he said. "Wull I show ye again, sir?"

Wylde laughed; brought out a handful of coppers, and tossed them into the shouldering crowd. For a moment he watched the scramble, and his eyes were half-wistful.

"Go it, bubs," he said. "I've done it myself in the Winnipeg streets, but I generally managed to rake up more mud than money, some way." He walked on. "Lucky little beggars!" he said. "When one hasn't got boots he isn't expected to have morals. I was put into both at once, and I'm blest if I know which pinched hardest. I guess it likely wasn't the boots."

There was not a step of that ancient crooked High Street which begins at the Castle beyond the Lawnmarket and ends at Holyrood beyond the Canongate which Wylde had not trod with love and knowledge a half-score times already. But he cared for it best in the dim lights that hid something of the squalor and the nakedness of those old proud houses which had once sheltered the best and bravest of Scotland's blood. Those steep narrow stone steps, twisting up straight from the pavement to the low filthy rooms above, were worn into their hollows by the roystering lords and the light-footed ladies of Queen Mary's train. Through those small windows, bulging, half-blind with dirt and cobwebs, such women as Chastelar's love and the sparkling Duchess of Queensberry had once looked down. Along the paved uneven street such men as the gallant Montrose, whose quartered body, gathered from Scotland's gates, now rests in St. Giles's Church, Lord Lewis Gordon, Morton, that grim man who took the Regency from many dead hands and gave it up in 1581 at the bidding of The Maiden, Scotland's forerunner of the guillotine, Bothwell, Lord George Murray and so many more had gone swaggering in silks and plumes down to Holyrood. To that debtors'

prison at the great Tudor Gateway, rough men-at-arms, followed by jeering crowds, had haled men and women through many years; Cromwell's troopers had clattered down it, Prince Charlie's Horse had passed proudly, and those lads of a later date, Stevenson's "Lantern-bearers," had hid there in dark corners to whisper their counter-signs.

And then, past the dim light and the vivid odours of Edinburgh Old Town, Wylde went back to the big hotel, blazing in its many windows on Princes Street, and the Colonel, pacing the fire-lit room yet, knew that step at the door before Wylde turned the handle.

"Last mail's just in," said Wylde. "I got these before the boy put them in the rack. There are three for you."

"Thank you. Put the rest on the mantel-piece, will you? Peggy has gone to bed, for she is getting up at some mad hour to see a sunrise. Surrey wasn't in to dinner. And neither were you. Are you going out again?"

"Why . . . I guess so. It is only about eleven. I just came back for a coat: it was striking a bit cold."

The Colonel shut one clenched fist into the other behind him. It was his habit when nervousness threatened to control him.

"Unless you very particularly desire to go out," he said, "I should like you to stay. I have something rather special to say to you."

"Very well, sir," said Wylde.

He walked to the door; shut it, and came back with that same cold implicit obedience which he had given to the Colonel at the beginning and from which he had never wavered. The Colonel drew his breath sharply.

"You—you might as well sit down," he said.

Wylde found a chair; but he leaned his hand on it only, and stood, looking out of the dark that hung round him on the stern upright figure of the Colonel with the firelight pulsing behind him. The Colonel felt the look, though he could not see the eyes, and he spoke rapidly.

"When you first came over it was necessary for you and Surrey to believe that you were no relations of mine. At least, I considered it so. Now you will both have to know the truth. Surrey is my adopted son; but you are my own son, Wylde."

He stopped as abruptly as he had begun, leaving a kind of gasp in the still air. Wylde did not move. He did not speak, and against that big black column in the dusk the Colonel's words seemed to have fallen dead.

"You—may think that I have wronged you deeply," said the Colonel.

Still Wylde did not speak. Between his feet and the Colonel's the blades of firelight played sword-like, point and tierce. But the faces of the two men were in shadow.

"For God's sake--speak to me," burst out the Colonel.

Then Wylde spoke, very quietly.

"I have been wondering when you would be man enough to tell me this," he said.

The Colonel collapsed. He dropped into his big chair, and for a moment he felt physically sick.

"You—know?" he said.

"I reckon I do. I have known near as long as I've known you. When Smayne sent you Forbes's letter in Teignmouth he mailed me a copy at the same time."

Wylde did not move. His voice came, hard and relentless, out of the shadows. And still the fire-swords played, bright and fast, between the two.

"But Forbes—proved nothing;" the Colonel was trying to gather his forces again.

"I reckon I know that too. I have spent most of that allowance you gave me on making sure. He couldn't establish his claim of having known you in Plymouth any better than he established his knowledge of Plymouth by swearing to the position of those lighthouses. I know how he went wrong there. In postcards the view is always taken from the other side. I don't guess Forbes ever was in Plymouth."

"But you say . . . you know?"

"Once I had the idea it was plumb easy. I often caught you watching me when you thought I wasn't looking. And we have the same trick of carrying the right elbow—low down, and close to the side. Our hair grows the same way, too, with that kind of spout up over the left temple. I noticed that the first day I saw you." Wylde came forward into the light which seemed to darken on his dark face. "I knew that I was your son," he said. "And I knew that you hated me."

He said it so simply that it was less an accusation than a statement of fact. The Colonel winced.

"No," he said. "No. But I loved your mother, and she made me hate her before she left me. I have never dared to let myself love you. I am too old to suffer like that again."

"My mother?" said Wylde. He did not remember ever having used the words before, and they sounded forced and harsh on his tongue.

"She left me when you were about two months old," said the Colonel. "That was in Canada. She was a Canadian, and you were born there. But I met her in Plymouth. She was a very lovely girl, and I would have given up—most things for her. I did give up a good deal. She was—was not in my class. I took her to Canada, and one night I came home and found you both gone. I never tried to trace either of you. I wanted to forget that part of my life. Then my leave was up and I came back to Plymouth. No one knew about it."

He spoke coldly, bringing no appeal to the court of his son's judgment. Wylde looked at the blades of light thrusting to his feet. His unbroken silence explained that he was waiting for the whole. The Colonel shut his hands on the fat leather chair-arms.

"It was five or six years before I went back to Canada. I had last seen you in Quebec, but when I came across you in the streets of Winnipeg I knew you. You were a dirty little newsboy and you cursed

me for giving you an English halfpenny instead of a cent. But I knew you at once. You were a very pretty little boy, then, and you were very like her—like your mother."

Again there was silence. The Colonel was in the door, and he knew it.

"I—made inquiries. I did not want to, God forgive me. But I had taken up the threads of my life again. She was dead, and no one spoke a good word for you except to say that you had pluck. I had just adopted Surrey at that time. He was the son of an old chum who died beside me in Afghanistan, and I couldn't possibly have brought you near him. You were a little devil for temper. You would have corrupted a—Teddy Bear. And I hadn't the courage to own you. So I put you into Smayne's hands, and I told him a little, and he was to hammer you straight if it could be done. I doubted it, for I knew the warp in her and I knew my own faults. Perhaps he was the wrong man. I believe now that he was. But I didn't guess it at the time. Then—after a while I almost found it hard to realize that it was you and not Surrey who was my son. I had grown very fond of Surrey."

The silence that fell this time was longer: longer and harder. For the temper which was so at issue in these two men held them rigidly apart. Wylde leaned his arm on the mantel-shelf, staring down into the fire, and the Colonel looked back into that shoreless sea of the past where dark waves tossed restlessly.

"Smayne reported to me very regularly," he said. "He earned his money hardly, for you were a young fiend. He called you the wild coyote, and presently it dropped to Wild, and at last I never thought of you as anything else. You seemed no easier to manage as you grew up. Smayne wrote me that you would not stick to anything. I had told him to give you every chance, and I tried to put the idea of love out of my life and to bring you and Surrey up as experiments. I knew Surrey's weaknesses and I knew your strength, and I didn't know which would be the most fatal.

When I married Peggy's mother I told her, and she urged me to send for you. She could have given your life all the sweetness and beauty it needed. But she died, and I exchanged for foreign service. I only came back when Peggy grew up."

Wylde raised his head a moment.

"Smayne spoke badly of me always, did he?" he asked.

"Well, yes. He did. I would not ask you to verify it or to deny it when you first came over; but I must know your own life from your own lips now. For, whatever you have been, I do not believe that you have ever been a liar."

Wylde turned dull red, remembering that half-truth to Surrey which had been so much worse than a lie.

"If I had all this to my credit why did you bring me over among . . . all of you?" he demanded.

"I would sooner have had you before, while Surrey was in India, and Peggy at school. But Smayne could not make you come. And then he lost sight of you." The Colonel stood up, walking through the room with quick uneven feet. "I dreaded your coming," he said.

"I dreaded it. But I tried to be honest with you and just to you. I gave you equal rights with other men in so far as I could."

"In so far as you could! Well?"

"I had to warn Surrey, for I could not trust you. I suppose he spoke to Peggy. He had no right to, but I never thought to forbid it. You were as cold to me as Surrey was loving. It seemed the best way to throw you much together. I hoped that Surrey might soften you and you might strengthen him."

Wylde laughed for the first time, quick and shortly.

"That cat doesn't appear to have jumped, does it?" he said. "And why didn't you think it necessary to warn Miss Bouchier?"

The answer was unexpected.

"If Peggy liked you I knew that I could let myself like you . . . and love you. She has an unerring

instinct. True, her love for Surrey made her cruel to you. But she never disliked you. I have seen her turn from people of whom I knew no harm till afterwards. She has some kind of—of antennæ that curl up at the approach of anything evil, I truly believe. I have never had any fear in that way for Peggy."

Wylde looked back to the fire again. Outside the street was very silent with the hush that comes after midnight. The huge blazing mass of coals had fallen in, filling the dim room full of shadows that almost hid the Colonel's small erect figure going up and down, up and down. This crisis in two lives seemed to have swept in and swept out, leaving no traces behind, and drawing these two no nearer. The Colonel's feet dragged. His voice sounded tired as his feet.

"Have you not anything at all to say to me, my son?" he asked, at last.

"You don't expect me to say 'Thank you,' do you?" demanded Wylde, bitterly.

"No—not that!" The shortened tone showed its hurt. "But by and by . . . when we understand each other better . . ."

Wylde gave no answer. The Colonel smothered a sigh.

"I shall tell Surrey and Peggy to-morrow," he said. And then Wylde moved, straightening his tall head suddenly.

"You are going to—acknowledge me?" he said.

"Why not? I should have done it long ago but that I wanted to judge you both as impartially as possible, and I thought that the very fact of your using your rightful name—"

Wylde thrust his heel into the fire, and in the swift blaze he looked straight at the Colonel.

"My rightful name?" he said.

"Why, of course. My name." The Colonel stopped, and his face changed. "Is that what has been the matter?" he said, slowly.

"All my life." Wylde's voice was choked. "All my life." He turned, made a few vague steps, and

stood still again. "Why didn't you let me have that to grow up with?" he said.

"My poor boy! I never thought . . . I never realized. . . ." The Colonel's voice broke. He looked at Wylde, and he longed to go just one step nearer and to touch that black head which was turned from him until the muscles on the strong neck stood out. But the same reserve which kept it so kept the Colonel from it. These two would not come to love and understand each other in a day.

"A brute of a priest got hold of me once and christened me Laudate," said Wylde at last. "I don't know why he didn't make it Magnificat or Beelzebub. I didn't believe that I had a right to even a first name till then."

"You have always had a right to both," said the Colonel. "And you have four first names of your own. But I can't assure you that any one of them is Laudate."

He was watching Wylde half wistfully, half tenderly. But Wylde did not look at him.

"Surrey has to go to London for a couple of days," he went on. "But I shall tell him first. You will have to forgive each other now."

Wylde looked up vaguely. Then sudden memory surged through him.

"I guess I must ask you to let that stand over a spell," he said. "I want to fix some business with Guest before he knows anything more about me."

"If you mean that you still want to fight him——"

"I do. But that is not it." Wylde blazed out suddenly. "I hate him," he said. "He is too damned superior for me. I want to make him pay for all he's ever said or done to me. But I've got to give him the chance to call me a hound, and I reckon he'll do it. And he's got to have that chance without you behind me, sir. That is only fair to us both."

"Good Lord!" said the Colonel. "Is this Peggy again?"

"No. I mean . . . leave it right there, sir. I'll tell you later. But I must see Guest first."

The Colonel dropped back into his chair, pulling at his grey moustache.

"I really do wish I had left Peggy at school," he said. "I'll be bound she is at the bottom of this somehow."

The fire fell to ashes and blackness. Except for the light that streamed through above the door the room was perfectly dark. The Colonel lay back in his chair, with set sad face, thinking. Wylde leaned his arms on the mantel-shelf in as absolute a silence. He was giddy yet, and only half awake to realization. And he had kept his griefs and his triumphs to himself so long that there was neither desire nor power in him to speak of them to the Colonel. His eyes were shut against his coat-sleeve, but his brain was moving rapidly. For he was reconstructing the basis of his whole outlook on life and on what would come after life.

The door swung open, and Peggy's voice sounded gaily.

"I know I left them here. Wait a moment, Surrey."

Then she cried out as the light poured in and the vague blurs took shape. The Colonel rose stiffly.

"Wylde and I were talking late, and we must have gone to sleep," he said. "Are you off now, madcap?"

Behind the little grey-coated figure showed the tall breadth of Jean Challoner.

"Why, you two must be meaning to come with us," she cried. "Mustn't they, Peggy? Come. You *must* come. Mr. Wylde shall, anyway. He is going to carry my field-glasses. And perhaps he has never seen a sunrise. Have you, Mr. Wylde?"

Wylde's eyes were looking past her to Peggy. And in them was the look of one who sees sunrise, faint and far-off, and with bars between.

"Why," he said, "I shall be very pleased to carry your glasses for you, Miss Challoner." Then his glance caught the Colonel's for an instant.

"Good-night, sir," he said. "Or shall I call it good-morning?"

By reason of Peggy's arms suddenly round his neck the Colonel was somewhat strangled.

"Let us call it good-morning, Wylde," he said, and then he stooped to Peggy as Wylde went out.

"You will always love me, my Peggy?" he said, and his voice sounded thin and old.

"While I live . . . and afterwards," said Peggy, gravely. Then she kissed him again. "I must go, dear," she said. "You wouldn't think it possible for one man in one polite undertone to convey his opinion of the universe as completely as Surrey is doing just now, would you?"

CHAPTER XIV

GOOD-BYE TO —

ALL Edinburgh stood stripped of mist, blocked out in dark masses, struck to light-points by vivid star-shine. Across the deep well of the Princes Street Gardens the Castle raised its huge bulk, with its base sunk in shadow. All down the wynd from it the wonderful serrated skyline of universities, houses, churches lay pure, tipped with white stars, and pricked once or twice through their lower limbs with red ones. The statue of Scott glimmered palely beneath that great bulk which is so like the spire sliced from some much-ornamented cathedral, and Jean Challoner drew in a little closer to Wylde's side.

"Oh-h, don't you feel like a ghost?" She shivered.

The sharp air was hitting Wylde's face in separate little puffs, beating daily sense and understanding into him again. He lifted his head and laughed.

"Why, no," he said. "I guess I feel alive. Alive!"

"You always are," said Jean, resentfully. "You're abominably alive. I don't think you will ever allow that you are dead."

Wylde laughed again, swinging beside her with his long straight steps, taking in the sharp air with the full strength of his lungs. He had breathed deep many times in his life, but not as he was breathing in this dawning. He had to humble himself to the man he hated; he had to stand by and see the breach which he had made close over between Surrey and Peggy; he had to realize that not all the power the Colonel could give him now would fill his life so completely as that one small slim thing walking ahead by Surrey could have done. But the spot which had poisoned his whole life was healed with simple surety, and health was in

the man, spreading warmly, widely, laying healing balm on the raw places.

Through the sleeping town, past the dim squat bulk of Holyrood, and up the winding Queen's Drive Jean Challoner chattered and laughed, hugely content with herself and the universe. And no power told her that the quiet slow-speeched Canadian beside her was answering, in every fibre, every subtle sense, not to her, but to the faint far stirrings of dawn on earth's outer rims where the breezes chase warm vague colour and perfume and prayers into the flushing clouds, and light wakes with the sudden quiver of a field of nodding daffodils, and across the hush God calls without sound; and it is day.

In Wylde's heart it was growing day, though the stars were not yet dim and he did not know the voice which had commanded light. He believed that he had known it when he loved Peggy first. But that had been a madness; the sudden leap-up of white spray when a bull-necked wave runs its head against a strong rock. It had fallen back into salt and flat wetness, and Wylde's very skin had been cracked and bleeding with the rime when he went to Skye. If he had hated a little less he would never have come back from Skye. Now, walking slowly up the graded road that rose high and higher, with the sharp wind still hitting him in puffs, he knew dimly, for the first time, that there is something better than a satisfied love, something better than a gluttoned hate; but he could not put any name or shape to it.

Young Challoner and a boy-friend whom he had bullied out of bed were far ahead on the pale track. Peggy was standing on one foot clinging to Surrey's shoulder as he knelt, and she nodded to Jean as the two came near.

"I have developed a nail in my shoe," she said. "I do hope it isn't catching. It certainly doesn't seem to be, for Surrey can't find it. Are you still sleep-walking, Jean? And are you you or Mr. Wylde with that coat on?"

"I—think I'm myself," said Jean, sleepily. "But I was so cold Mr. Wylde made me put this on. He says nothing could kill him, so I'm letting him try. Surrey, while you are on your knees I wonder if you would mind tying my boot-lace? It doesn't seem as if it ever can belong to this boot, somehow."

Surrey's hands were cold, and his anger when he saw Peggy go forward with Wylde did not make them less clumsy. Peggy was afraid of that anger, but she had to dare it. The Colonel's words had made her brave, although even without them she would have known that she wanted to see this sunrise over Edinburgh with Wylde. Both to Surrey and to the Colonel she could have explained her wish quite naturally. "He will tell me what I want to know," she would have said. But that would have had no weight with Surrey.

For a little she walked by Wylde in silence, while the air grew keener and the night duller, even as the grub grows sickly before it breaks into the dragon-fly. Then she spoke lightly.

"I have been taking some notes of Scotch characteristics," she said. "Every chemist has a pestle and mortar outside his door, and every doctor has a monument—after he's dead, of course. Either the Scotch doctors are a finer race than most, or their patients anchor them down to make sure of them. And all the little girls tuck a baby in one end of a shawl and wind the rest of it round their small selves, exactly as they do in Wales. Did you notice that? I think those grave-faced babies and their staggering little nurses and the bandy-legged children are the saddest things in Scotland."

"I saw a sadder thing yesterday," said Wylde. "It was one of those bandy-legged children grown up and put into a kilt. The Indians do better than that when they strap their babies into moss-bags. The poor little beggars grow up straight anyway. But these are happy. I never saw such a lot of happy kids as I have seen in Scotland. There was one sliding down

one of the wynds yesterday, sitting on a stick across two old wheels, and guiding with his feet. His feet! On the naked pavement! But they might have been shod with iron for all he seemed to feel it. I turned them up and looked. They were callous as the pavement itself."

"I—I suppose you have seen a good deal of Edinburgh?" said Peggy. "You seem to be out most of the time."

"I guess I've seen most there is to see of the night part of it. That is quite different from the day. The hill you can just see over there is Carberry, where Mary of Scots gave herself up to that brutal brother of hers when her army wouldn't fight for her and Bothwell cleared out after doing all the harm he could. And that would be the way they brought her back to Edinburgh, with all the common people hissing her and raising banners with paintings of Darnley's death, and Moray riding at her bridle, never heeding her crying and her exhaustion. That was the last time she came into Edinburgh; for he sent her to Loch Leven next day, and she only escaped from that to be chased to Carlisle and Elizabeth."

"I really don't know what Scotch history would do without Queen Mary and Prince Charlie," said Peggy. "They are what you might call its standard works. But she seems to belong to the East, and he to the West."

"When the Prince came south he rushed the gates of Edinburgh and went into Holyrood with pipes skirling. And that very day he had his father proclaimed King James the Eighth at the Town Cross. But you are right, really. The east belongs to Mary Queen of Scots ever since the 'rough wooing' of Henry the Eighth when he burnt all but Holyrood and the Castle and a bit of St. Giles' because she wouldn't marry his son. She must have been a particular lady, for even that didn't win her. And yet she made no objection to Bothwell after Kirk o' Field."

"Ah! Don't speak of that. No matter how much

a woman hated a man she could never want him killed in that way."

"Couldn't she?" Wylde looked down on her sharply. "I thought women were very unforgiving. Could you forgive if—if a wrong had been done you?"

"I would try," said Peggy, simply, looking up at him with wide clear eyes. Wylde dropped his own. Then he gave her his hand.

"This is the very last bit of a short cut," he said. "And we will be on the summit before the sun."

On the rocky top Peggy sat down, looking out toward the east where the stars were fading fast and the wind brought the smell of the sea. At the far end of the plateau young Challoner and the other boy were skipping little stones across the rough surface. Out of sight below Jean Challoner and Surrey still trod the winding track. Near the last little pinch Jean stopped.

"I really cannot bear this coat any longer," she said. "It was awfully good of Mr. Wylde to lend it, but I don't think there is anything more horrible than the smell of the peat-smoke in these Harris tweeds."

Surrey shed his own instantly.

"Put this on," he said. "No. I am not cold."

He flung Wylde's aside while he buttoned his own on her. Then he took Wylde's over his arm, for he would have suffered several purgatories before he would have taken comfort from it. But Jean pointed with sudden laughter.

"Poor Mr. Wylde," she said. "Why have you left all his valuables behind?"

They were the natural collection which a man always carries in his breast-pocket, and Surrey went back to pick them up. Some photographs had slid out of an envelope, and there was light enough for Surrey to recognize Wylde grinning over the shoulder of the old man at Gretna Green. The size and style of the photograph told him all that was necessary. He thrust it back in the envelope and dropped the envelope into Wylde's pocket, and a few minutes later he gave the

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coat to Wylde in the middle of Jean's profuse apologies and explanations. But he did not look at Wylde or think of him. He was watching Peggy, sitting silent, with hands clasped on her knee and young eager face turned to the sunrise.

The world was utterly still and utterly grey except where the Forth trailed its white mist between the Lomond Hills dark beyond the Firth and the lower heavier lines of the fishing-villages strung along its nearer bank: Leith where Mary landed, Queen of Scotland and widowed Queen of France, to be met with rough raggedness of splendour, with uncouth rejoicings, and discomfort such as made her break her heart for courtly France until she learnt the worth of the soil from which those strong souls sprang; Prestonpans, now hideous with collieries, where Prince Charles fell on his first English antagonists under Sir John Cope and routed them; Pinkie, second battle-scene in the wooing by the child-hand of Edward the Sixth for the child-hand of Mary of Scotland; and then, seal of all, the desolate Bass Rock, where the solan geese and the sea-blrds cry restlessly with long necks stretched and sharp eyes glancing.

Bit by bit each bay and headland was rising up, rising out of the misty sheet. The smell of sea-weed was harsh on the air north and east, the smell of earth and of wet copses, the robust odour from turnip-fields and the straying scent of clover came from the Lamermuir and the Pentlands, crouching shapeless still under the skirt of night. Sky and earth were cold and entirely passionless, and these six who sat between sky and earth seemed to feel it. Jean Challoner had been nibbling chocolate; but she forgot it, watching the light quicken and spread, with no gracious warmth but with a cold colourless intensity such as laid bare to them each intimate little curve of hill and bay, each ridge on the hills, each green hawthorn hedge that cut the fields. It was almost terrible in its nakedness, and Peggy shivered.

"The earth is at confessional," she said. "It is not

hiding one of its secrets. We have no right to be looking at it, for it doesn't know we are here."

"I was just trying to put that into words," said Wylde gravely. "I guess you have done it, though. And we must go back. It is too cold here."

Jean Challoner was vociferously disappointed as the pale streaks of lemon and rose and blue merged into the white even light of day, and Surrey was laughing at her as they went down the hill together. He had said so very little to Peggy, and not even Wylde guessed at the anger in him. But Peggy knew it, and she called to young Challoner.

"You shall take me that shortest cut you know of, and we'll get home before Jean," she said. "What is it, Mr. Wylde?"

Wylde pointed towards the Pentland Hills, now turning purely purple.

"Swanston, where R. L. Stevenson spent his childhood, is somewhere there," he said. "I imagine those must be his 'hills of home.' You remember?"

"I remember," said Peggy, softly. And she went down the slope with the words ringing through her brain—

"Be it granted to me to behold them again in dying,
Hills of Home. And to hear again the call
Where around the graves of the martyrs the whaups are flying . . .
And then no more at all."

Wylde was late for breakfast, and he met Surrey in the doorway.

"Have you a few moments to spare?" he asked.

"Not one," said Surrey. "I'm sorry, but I am late for the train as it is. I will be back to-morrow or next day."

He nodded, and went out into the street. Wylde settled to his breakfast in silence. Then he said—

"I reckon she'll have cause to hate me at the end of those two days. But perhaps there is going to be something in life first."

There was, and Surrey's own foolishness had

arranged that it should be so. He had said good-bye to Peggy indifferently, with a kiss on her cheek only. And Peggy's pride and independence had come to her aid, bringing determination instead of tears.

"I shall just do absolutely as I like until Surrey comes back," she said: "and then, if I find that I want to keep on doing it, I will."

During the next two days it happened very frequently that what Peggy and what Wylde liked were much the same thing. With a curious shyness Wylde avoided conversations with the Colonel; but he had shed his sullenness, and all the little duties were done with a gentler touch which gladdened the Colonel although he did not speak of it.

The Colonel knew his Edinburgh before these two were born, and it was he who told them of that terrible and most stately rebuke to treachery when Macdonald, Head of the Army camped near Edinburgh, had answered the Campbell request for a guard of protection against the Macdonald soldiers by sending a troop composed of Macdonalds only. He went with them to Greyfriars Churchyard to seek the stone whereon the National Covenant was signed; to read in that dirty cracked slab against the wall how the dust of those who suffered for their faith "lies mixed with murderers and other crew," and to wander across that great diary of Scotland's dead to the Covenanters' Prison, now open to the sky, with the exception of such cells as are used as tool-sheds or vaults.

Scott's *Old Mortality* had given Wylde an idea of the crazy fanaticism, and the earnest truth of the Covenanters; of the deaths they died in Edinburgh, and of the judgments and the tortures in those Council Chambers near St. Giles'. But he had become strangely careful about speaking of those things to Peggy; and instead he showed her the fountain to the memory of "Greyfriars Bobby," the little rough dog who lived by his master's grave in the churchyard for fifteen years, fed by the tenement people whose back-doors edge the yard, and Scott's birthplace in George

Street, and Stevenson's home at 17, Heriot Row. And he talked to her of such things as the Flodden Wall, thrust up by terrified hands as protection against the young Henry the Eighth, and of the old White Horse Inn where Cavaliers toasted "The King over the water," and Dr. Johnson, in his wrath at the greasy waiter, flung his lemonade from the window.

On the Castle Hill, with the huge Mons Meg, split in firing its last salute, beside them and the bright cemetery for soldiers' dogs below, they spoke of Kirk of Field where the weak treacherous Darnley suffered; of that simple regalia, "the honours of Scotland," said to be old as Bruce's time, and lost in a chest for a hundred and ten years, and of the day, much more than a thousand years ago, when Edinburgh first became Edwin's Burgh . . . and of these things only did they speak.

Both Wylde and Peggy turned their eyes sternly from the future and looked to the present only. But the Colonel was looking to the future. He understood, as they did not, how very much had once been Surrey's, and how little, by his own incompetence, was his to-day. He had leaned on Surrey, loved him and trusted him. Now it was to Wylde's grave strength that he turned. Peggy had given herself to Surrey with that total abnegation which was her nature. Now . . . the Colonel watched her bright face as she and Wylde stood together in old Holyrood, and he understood what was going to come of Surrey's folly in flinging her back on herself over and over again.

"It is not all the boy's fault that they don't care for the same things," he said. "But there is too much else that is his fault. Too much else. Did you speak, Peggy?"

"According to Surrey that is quite a superfluous question. Of course I spoke. Can you tell me which is Darnley's tomb, dear? There are so many workmen about, and they have covered everything with bags and ignorance."

The Colonel went through the old topless Abbey with her, and in the passages returning to the Quadrangle he stopped.

"Rizzio's grave is supposed to be somewhere here," he said. "But you won't find his blood in the Queen's apartments. It has crystallized into a brass plate long ago."

"I know, dear. I have been to see. The little mirror is the saddest thing there. I can't bear to think of all the lovely and terrible scenes it must have looked at since Mary brought it from France. And that stiff Elizabeth over the door of her bedroom is said to be the one Mary got in exchange for the ring which might have saved Essex's life. And can't you think how Mary must often have sat sewing there among her ladies while Chastelar played to them, and of how stern and black John Knox would look when she had him there to ask him to learn politeness, and he only thundered at her the more! And if Holyrood was the 'resort of the gay and the gallant and the brave,' it was the resort of a good deal of savage cruelty too."

Queen Mary's bath-house, little old St. Andrew's Chapel against the height of Salisbury Crags; all the dim sad deserted front of Holyrood appealed to Wylde. But the teeming history, the strange beauty and charm bound up in "Scotland's head and England's other eye" from the deep cleft dividing the two towns to the top of Calton Hill never went into words for Wylde or Peggy. Perhaps they loved it the more from the knowledge that they now were both holding to something that would not last; a curious depth of history and delight about them and a curious surface sense in themselves.

It was on the way up High Street to St. Giles' that Peggy found a small boy sitting on the pavement weeping as she had not thought a small Scotch boy could weep. His explanations were deepest Greek to her, and Wylde elicited only something that sounded like "bunnet inner mutter." He called a passing girl, and Peggy asked for interpretation.

"I didn't think these little wretches could cry," she said. "We have had six of them spinning round us up the wynd this morning, and they all told us all the history that ever wasn't——"

Here the small boy brushed a torn sleeve across his nose and began—

"On Calton Hill. You will find. The disgrace of Edinburgh——"

Then memory overcame him and he melted into tears again.

"I've given him pennies regularly every two minutes," said Peggy. "Can you think of anything more effective? I can't tell him a story, for he knows far more than I ever did."

The girl raised her bonny Scotch face.

"He says he threw his bonnet into a motor, mem. And it has gone off with it."

Peggy shrieked with laughter. Wylde improved the occasion.

"This will make you more careful next time," he said, and the bonny Scotch girl smiled gravely.

"Happen he wull niver hae anither bunnut," she said, dropping into her own tongue. "Well, that is fell kind o' ye, sir. Look up, ma mannie, an' wish the gentleman an' his pretty lady gude-luck."

Wylde let Peggy escape, crimson-faced and very full of dignity. And he found her later in old grey St. Giles's Church, reading for the fourth time those glowing glass coat-of-arms of the men who were "out" with that Montrose whose broken body sleeps in the crypt below. Memories of Stevenson, with his bas-relief, against the wall, of Jenny Geddes who threw her cucking-stool at the preacher, of the fierce Regent Moray, and of countless soldiers who died away from Scotland, passed with them through the duskiness. But without was more history still, in the Shaft of the Old Town Cross, set up by the railings; in the curious mosaic heart worked into the pavement as assurance of where the old Tolbooth Prison once stood and from whence Jeanie Deans, heroine of *The Heart*

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of Midlothian, walked to London. Behind, near the Parliament Buildings Wylde found an equestrian statue of Charles the Second, and a small girl gave him interpretation of it.

"That angel settin' on his breast is to show that he was aye gude to hisself," she said. "An' the deil on his back shows that he was aye bad to ithers. And oop there an' roun' the corner is the hoose where they pulled Mary o' Argyll oot o' window an' hinged her for fear the sherras wud let her free. And Professor Blackie's hoose an' Lord Stair's are doon they Closes. An' along the Grassmarket the Marquis o' Montrose was conveyed in a hangman's cairt to his execution. And on Calton Hill the disgrace of Edinburgh——"

Wylde came away hastily because Peggy was laughing.

"You couldn't buy all that for twopence anywhere else, I guess," he said. "But if I gave her more she'd follow me up to Calton Hill itself. And, except for the view, which is very fine, there's nothing to see but monuments to Nelson and Lincoln and others and that unfortunate disgrace itself."

"What is it like?" asked Peggy, gently discouraging a new swarm of live guide-books with frowns that were half-laughter.

"Why . . . it started out to commemorate Waterloo. But funds or enthusiasm ran short. There are about six columns and the rest is wire fence. I reckon that Scott's Monument across the Gardens and the Crown of St. Giles' right here make two as handsome bits of out-of-the-way architecture as I know, and I wonder how Scott would like to come along one day and find all the creations of his brain turned to stone that way. And talking of stone . . . I guess we have got to go and see Roslin Chapel. You remember how all the Barons of Roslin used to be buried in the crypt in complete armour, and on the night before the death of the reigning Knight every pinnacle of it would spout fire? I shouldn't care about the suggestion myself, under the circumstances, but I

guess it showed they were something better than ordinary folk."

They went that afternoon to Roslin, and Jean Chaloner did not soon let Wylde forget the wrong road he took, so that they ran round Edinburgh in a circle, keeping always a correct four-and-a-half miles from the town.

". . . until we are just like Looking-glass people," cried Peggy. "We have to go as hard as we can to keep in the same place. But I don't mind."

She minded Roslin more, and quoted with delight a guide-book which asserted that "the variety and eccentricity of its parts are not to be defined by common words."

"For I don't like it," she said. "Though there are twenty St. Clairs buried here with titles so long that it would weary a herald to call them. Of course the architecture is very wonderful and very delicate, and if the chapel was ten times as large it would be impressive. But it is too—too over-dressed. It is like a little woman with flowers and feathers and ribbons and fruit all in her hat at once. It is architecture run to seed."

But the lovely Vale of the East, the brown flank of the castle ruin hung on a cliff among trees, the little pretty villages among the faint scents of honeysuckle and clover and lime-trees and the coarser smells of turnips, the purple lights on the far hills folding into dusk, and the great blunt head of the Lion on a sky of daffodil, rocked her in a peace that stirred to anxiety as they came back again to Edinburgh, where Surrey would be waiting.

But there was a telegram from Surrey only, and the Colonel brought it to the dinner-table.

"Surrey says he can't get back to-morrow," he told Wylde. "I think we had better not wait for him. Where had you arranged to be to-morrow night, Wylde?"

"Moffat. And Dunfries the morning after. I guess we want to see several things around Dumfries."

"I'll wire him to meet us there, then," said the Colonel. "What about luggage?"

"He took all he had with him," said Peggy. "You know, dear, we shall all begin to feel like snakes and other reptiles if we go on getting new clothes and shedding our old ones in this manner much longer."

"It will only be for ten days or a fortnight more," said the Colonel, and Wylde went out in a sudden restless trouble. He had known that it must end. But afterwards? He knew that he would have reason to fear that afterwards.

It was a morning of sheer vivid glory that bathed all the land in light when they left the jagged Salisbury Crag, the old serene Lion with beard laid on paw, guarding the town; left the twisted dirty Canongate where the rickety houses bore yet the devices of dead Earls and magnificent Marquises; left the shining Forth and the purple Pentland Hills; ran through ugly Gilmerton and lost all beauty; rose again and saw the Lion brooding still and the clear dark Pentland Hills. But Edinburgh was gone, sunk with all its mass of spires and memories beyond the hawthorn hedges and the round stone folds and the poppies in the cornfields and the sweeping parks and thick-set trees that clustered about old homes.

Craigmillar Castle, where Mary of Scots lived some of her happiest days, was gone; but down the lovely twisting road to Borthwick glimpsed and hid views of that rugged ruin where she and Bothwell had spent their early married days. The rounded hills were studded with trees and marked out with hedges, and Peggy laughed suddenly.

"Don't all the fields look just like coloured handkerchiefs after a washing-day?" she said. "What would happen if a wind blew them all off?"

Wylde's thoughts were on those great men who lay buried in Edinburgh: Adam Smith, Thomas de Quincey, Hugh Miller, David Hume . . . but he looked round with his eyes suddenly lit.

"Edinburgh was mighty good," he said. "But there isn't anything quite like the country, is there?"

"No. And motoring has taught me a new philosophy," said Peggy. "You know how dreadfully steep the hills ahead always look? I never expect the Blue Bird to be able to climb half of them. And then, as we get nearer, they seem to flatten and roll out till we hardly know they are there. And . . . I am sure it is the same with troubles."

"I should hope you don't know much about them," said Wylde, staring straight ahead again.

"Everybody who has the power to say 'will' and 'will not' knows the meaning of trouble," said Peggy, wisely. "But my philosophy is true, you know."

"I hope it may prove so—to you, anyway," said Wylde, gravely, and dropped his hand to the bulb as they ran through pretty Stow where the river was spanned by an unused bridge that suggested Roman origin in its queerly-rounded various-sized arches.

At Galashiels Wylde swung left, above the grey big smoking town set low among its greens; and so wound at length through the out-sprawling, old-fashioned little Melrose, down side-ways and up side-ways, until, beyond the hotel where motors clung round the door like bees in a swarm, the reddish broken walls of Melrose Abbey thrust up to the blue sky.

Peggy put her hand on the Colonel's shoulder as they passed through the tall fence to the wide green lawns and the red walls where daisies and foxgloves clung in the niches.

"Baedeker says that David of Scotland built it in the twelfth century," she said. "But I am going to believe the history that I read about it."

"What was that?" asked the Colonel. "It's a very fine old ruin, Peggy."

"I won't detract from it. But I am making it older. It was begun from Lindisfarne, where all the Christianity in the North was begun, and where charity didn't begin, for you remember what they did to Marmion's Constance? Well, when St. Cuthbert died

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at Lindisfarne in 687 the monks had to take his body away because of the Danes. They brought it here, because Melrose was an Abbey before King Oswy decided the date for Easter Day twenty years earlier. But St. Cuthbert didn't like Melrose; so he sailed down the Tweed in his stone coffin with all the monks following, and he stopped at all sorts of places until he got one that suited him. And that was Durham, and he's there yet. But every place where he stayed was specially holy, and so of course Melrose had to be."

"I wish I knew why you have such a rooted objection to fact, Peggy."

"It is fact. I saw his tomb at Durham. And—why; this is the little little coffin with Bruce's heart in it, because that brave Douglas couldn't get it all the way to the Holy Land, and this old rough stone is Douglas's tomb, I suppose. It calls him James."

She was down on her knees beside the small flat stone wedge propped against the hinder wall and trailed over with crude carvings. All about her the worn red sandstone walls looked swarthy in the shifting lights; and the broken columns, the side-aisles filled with old tombs, rotting beams, corbels and split bosses, and the delicate fretted tracery in the windows struck a note of solitary mournfulness. The wind was driving down into the corners, whistling shrilly, and Wylde drew her on to that flat slab which is supposed to shelter "the wizard, Michael Scott," where a grotesque image stares down on it.

"I guess they had to put this cross on the stone to keep him down," said Wylde. "And look at this horse-shoe, grown in the moss. I don't imagine Nature put it here to wish him luck."

"He did it with those books of magic that are buried with him. Don't you remember William of Deloraine coming through the night to get them, and Michael sitting up in his grave—didn't he?—with his lank hair and his lank hands and those burning eyes? I don't wonder the wind howls here."

Here the Colonel began to talk of Florid tracery;

of the splendid sweep of the arches, and the majesty of the nave that lay bare to heaven. But Peggy shivered up close to him.

"Yes," she said. "It is very grand and very solemn. But it looks too much like—like red flesh on those strong muscular limbs. When it is all dark and still at night I am sure Melrose Abbey rouses and struggles to live again. Look at those vigorous arches and the spring of the buttresses. It is more like something quickening into life than leaving it."

"Did you notice the tombs of all those Bostons near the gate who 'gave their bodies to the Lady Abbey to keep'?" said Wylde. "I reckon they aren't worrying about what it wants, or doesn't want."

His tone was raillery, but his eyes were tender to her fancies. Peggy looked up at the corbels and the strange uncouth pig drip-stone.

"It is so much better to be a living dog than a dead lion," she said. "And this place doesn't want to be dead, poor thing. It is too strong. Are we going to Dryburgh? I can quite understand that Sir Walter Scott would sooner be buried there than here."

"I believe he liked Melrose best. But all his people are buried at Dryburgh Abbey. And I guess we'll have to leave it, for it is just about four miles in the wrong direction. There are no end of interesting places around here. I should like to come back to Scotland some day, for I reckon I have only about scratched the surface yet."

"Perhaps we will," said Peggy, gaily. And then she bit her lips. For it was not possible that this unconventional half-sweet, half-bitter time could ever come over again. All that would soon be dead; dead as Melrose, although, like it, perhaps it would wake sometimes in the night and struggle to live.

Left of the Abbotsiord road stood up the purple round heads of the Eildon Hills; cleft in three by Michael Scott that True Thomas the Rhymet might meet the Fairy Queen in one of the deep glens and be kissed into a knowledge of all things that are not.

"But," said the Colonel, "those hills used to be called Tremontium by the Romans, and there is a fortress remains on that third peak still. Michael Scott lived about the eleventh century. Peggy, Peggy——"

"Dear," said Peggy, "there is much truth in all legend and there are so many lies in all history that it doesn't really matter, does it? And the lies are generally much prettier."

"I guess she's got you beat there," said Wylde, and stopped before a wicket-gate in a high wall. "This must be Abbotsford," he said. "Shall I get one of these chauffeurs to keep an eye on the car?"

"No," said the Colonel. "I have seen it twice before. I'll stay. And you need not hurry, Peggy."

Within the walls the large garden swept down to the broad Tweed and the green hills that rose beyond. Wylde was thinking how Scott had taken this Clarty Hole and built it, piece by piece, with legend, history and love; a fairy home, full of the genius of the man and the genius of Scotland's charm and mystery.

White and vivid on the lawn was the statue of a young man, kneeling, praying, with eager supplicant hands. In the corner wall stood the Turn-again Stone where, in one of the fiercest Border fights the Scotts fought the Kers for the possession of young James the Fifth, and won. Down by the big hospitable door stood a table with bunches of heather ticketed "One penny. Grown on Abbotsford." Wylde held out a bunch to Peggy.

"Will you have it?" he asked. And Peggy, not forgetting the Serpentine Cross, pinned it under the lapel of her motor-coat and went in with him.

The next hour in Abbotsford was a pure delight that called to the senses and the heart. Marble flooring from the Hebrides, glorious old oak panelling from Dunfermline Abbey, escutcheons in glowing colours of the ancient Border families, huge suits of armour in the halls, the door of Edinburgh Tolbooth, and a thousand things more were there, and were forgotten by Peggy.

But such things as Rob Roy's purse, and dirk and skene dhu and sporrán, Napoleon's writing-case, Burns's coarsely-blown tumbler, Prince Charlie's dirk, the keys which young Douglas flung into the loch when he rescued Mary of Scots from Loch Leven, brought a glow to her heart and her face. There was a desk made from part of the Armada, and a chair from the house where Wallace was betrayed by the "fause Menteith." There was the very chest in which Genevra, the "lady in her earliest youth" of whom Rogers tells at Modena, shut herself in a childish frolic, and the heavy lid, dropping, "fastened her down for ever."

Folded in a glass case lay Scott's "body-clothes"; the dark green coat, the bulging black and white check trousers, the pale grey hat, chiefly napless, and the worn round-pointed old shoes, plain and generously roomy, and speaking more of the man than perhaps anything else could have done.

To Wylde the library meant most, with its balcony running round three sides for the upper tier of books, and its little stair down from his own bedroom. It was so easy to think of the big-hearted, eager, strenuous man working here by day and by night; grappling that terrible debt until he had killed it, and dying himself on its dead body. The caretaker explained that he had died in the dining-room.

"He wanted to look on the Tweed to the last," she said. "But that is not open to the public. And that statue outside the window is of his favourite dog. He used to nearly break his heart when his dogs died."

Among trees and sweet alluring scents they left the Tweed behind and took the Etrick Water to the land made tragic after Flodden. Across the bare braes of Yarrow by the river Peggy sang softly—

"There'll be no mair liting at the ewe-milking,
There'll be no mair liting at the break o' day;
For the flowers of the forest, when our need was the sorest ...
The flowers of the forest are a' wede away."

And then, with Wylde's deep bass, and a sudden

storm of wind and rain across the bare hills to help her, she swung into the slogan—

“‘ March, march, Ettrick and Teviotdale, ’”

until Selkirk, a royal hunting-seat before the days of Bruce and preserving still a standard wrenched from the English on that disastrous day of Flodden, was passed and purple moorland made distance about them, with pheasants running to shelter in the wet heather, and curlews calling down the long empty spaces cut only by the shooting-shelters and the wire fences edged with tufts of grass.

The Colonel commanded Peggy into the tonneau, but she shook her head.

“I can be a spirit of the storm better here,” she said. And all his life Wylde never forgot her, swaying and singing with vivid cheeks and eyes among those desolate hills made terrible with memories of battle and murder at Newark and Philiphaugh where Montrose's army was crushed and Scotland crippled, and made tragic by the nude shores of St. Mary's lake, pale and tossing under rain, and made sad by the song of “The Douglas Tragedy” in its little forsaken kirkyard. Past the statue of Hogg set in trees among the winds of his native hillside, past the little cottage at Foulshiels, rotting under ivy, where that great traveller Mungo Park was born, the track sloped south by way of Tibbie Shiel's famous inn where so many roosting songs were sung in the old days toward Moffat with the Moffat Water running by, clear and brown, the huge hydro lifting its head among trees and gardens, and all the wonder and the beauty gone out of life again in the clean wide-streeted fashionable little town.

Peggy was very wet when the Colonel lifted her down. She laughed triumphantly into his eyes.

“I shall be good to-morrow,” she said. “When I meet Surrey to-morrow I shall be good. This is our last night in Scotland. Did you know it? But

"The moon's on the brake and the mist's on the brae,
And the clan has a name that is nameless by day. . . ."

"Peggy," said the Colonel, "what is the matter with you?"

"I don't know. I suppose . . . I am losing Scotland. Yes. That is it. I am losing Scotland."

Her laugh was half a sob as she ran past him into the house. The Colonel dragged at his grey moustache.

"I wish she were not such a bundle of nerves," he said.

"She's a live wire," said Wylde, and backed the car, and swung it round to the garage. But that which the Colonel saw on his face did not content him much.

"And he is another," he said, looking after him. "And if, between the two, Surrey doesn't get a shock that will wake him up for the rest of his life I'm a bigger fool than I know I am."

After dinner the world gave a wet sky where swallows flew low and rooks homed to the dripping trees with long forlorn cawing and night came early.

But no power could keep Peggy within doors; and because she would walk the two miles and more to Watersmeet where the Moffat, the Evan and the Anan join among green sedge and flat stones, the Colonel and Wylde went with her, and the frenzy of nonsense which possessed her so drove the two men into laughter and keyed them up to retorts that they came home muddy and wet and cold and weak from laughing. At the hotel door Peggy stood a moment, looking out to the sky, blackened by the near lights. The Colonel had gone in, but Wylde halted beside her.

"You have had a long day," he reminded her, gently. "And it is getting late."

Peggy turned. There were drops on her dark lashes which did not come from the glistening banded hair or the little round blue cap.

"I was saying 'Good-night' to Scotland," she said. "And 'Good-bye.'" Then she put out her hand. "Good-night," she said.

Wylde held it for a moment only.

"Good-bye," he said, and stood aside to let her pass into the light and the warmth beyond.

"I guess she will understand by this time tomorrow," he said.

CHAPTER XV

' IT HAS QUITE GONE '

"I KNOW Robert the Bruce was born here, and not at Turnberry," said Peggy.

The Colonel removed his eyes from red cows wading deep in the loch and looked at Peggy where she lay along the very ancient ruined heap of what had once been Lochmaben Castle walls, trying to focus her camera.

"Why?" he asked.

"Why not?" said Peggy. "In this country a person is always right till he is proved wrong. That is the law. Besides, when you think of a sixteen-acre castle which was incidentally the greatest Border fortress and a special stronghold of the Bruces you may consider the matter settled. That doesn't worry me. But I haven't been able to find the place where he saw the spider. Now, I am going to take those two lovely little arched bridges over the moat in front with the slender trees between them. And you are to stand on them, dear."

"I don't deny you much," said the Colonel. "But when you demand what I can't give short of amputation . . ." He laid a hand on Wylde's arm. "You will have to put him on one of them, Peggy," he said.

He felt Wylde's arm tense to his touch, and Wylde flushed as the keen kindly eyes met his. Hardly yet did they recognize each other as father and son.

On the green slope Peggy was advancing and retreating for the focus, bobbing her bright head against the light. On the nearer bridge flung across what once had been the moat Wylde half sat on the

rail, with the Colonel erect behind him. And both men remembered that this was their first photograph together. Peggy talked incessantly as she moved.

"Mary Queen of Scots and James the Fourth have both been here. And it was here that Bruce gathered all the clans before he began to fight for Scotland. Oh, I do wish you two could make yourself look like clans . . . or even like a crowd on attendance on the Queen. But you can't even be Bruce's dunhe-wassels."

Dunhe-wassels is ancient Scotch for blood-relation. The Colonel looked at his son, smiling. Then he looked at the little girl under the huge oaks on their green mounds with the sweep of the sunny loch behind her.

"You—you haven't got over it?" he asked.

"No," said Wylde, very quietly. "I guess I haven't got over it."

It had been a morning of utter beauty, with glorious sunlight on hills of vivid heather; with rows of old oaks that were surely survivors of the famous Ettrick Forest, and with the tree-covered broken walls of lovely Lochmaben Castle, set among its many lochs. But time called insistently, and as they passed the little long whitewashed town again, with its stately statue of the Bruce, Wylde was telling Peggy of the "gentle Johnstones" who, in the village itself, slew, by straight blows and clean, so many of the Maxwells that their strokes earned the name of "a Lockerbie lick" from here to Dryfe Water.

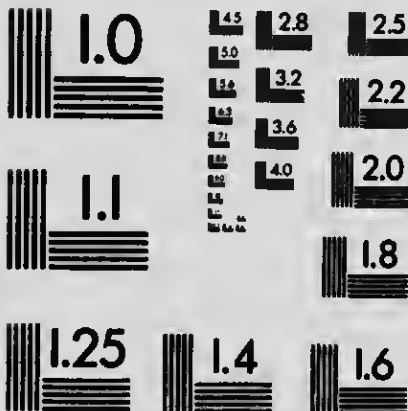
Beyond Torthorwald, where the little village crouched low from the road, came a pure level cut through the heart of a blaze of heather with the Dumfries towers grey and white at the end of it. And in the noisy town of flagged pavements they found the hotel and a wire from Surrey.

"Won't get here until to-night," said the Colonel. "So you will have another sleep in Scotland after all, Peggy. And you need not have taken us out in the rain last night."



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But Peggy knew that she had not mistaken. Last night was her real good-bye to Scotland. And she knew it still that afternoon, though Wylde took them away from the Burns memories with which Dumfries is flooded and turned east and south for Castle-Douglas village and Threave Castle, that grim fourteenth-century stronghold of the Douglas clan, with its "hanging-stone" above the gateway, which, by the word of the eighth earl, had "not wanted a tassel these fifty years."

"I read somewhere that Threave was Scott's 'Castle Dangerous,'" said Wylde; "and I guess it might well have been. That business of killing all the prisoners and animals and flinging them into the big dungeon on top of a half-year's provisions when the garrison had to fly before the English was just what you would expect from a Douglas. If they had to give way they'd give as little else as they could. Oh! I say; I'm sorry."

He had swung the car left and right with all the strength of his wrists. But the black hen in the centre of the road had evaded his care and run under the wheel. Peggy looked back; saw it rise and stagger cackling into the fence.

"That is your first sin with the car," she said. "And you couldn't have done it at a worse place. This village is called Bettyknowes. But I hope she won't tell."

"I seem to spend half my time dodging dogs and poultry," said Wylde. "I see them in my dreams, squatting in double rows along the trails and grinning. But I guess I think more of saving the car than the animals. These five tyres are the same we started out with, and I want them to see us home. It is going to be a record, you know."

"Do you still take out their splinters and put on healing ointment every night?" said Peggy. "Yes; the Colonel told me you used to."

Wylde assented rather curtly; and past Crocketford, past strange Springholm, where each little

whitewashed cottage carried its emblem of mortality in shape of a skeleton cottage beside it, the road led through the clean neat town of Castle-Douglas, where the hotel hung out the bloody heart on a field of stars which has been the Douglas crest since a Douglas took Bruce's heart to the Holy Land and there died beside it. Here Wylde made inquiries, and what happened next was set down in Peggy's diary that night.

"Came sixteen miles out of Dumfries to see Threave. Told in C.-D. that we could only reach it if tide was out. Said what we thought of the tide and drove on. Met girl by loch who told us we could only reach it if Colonel Somebody was in as he had key. Said what we thought of the Colonel and drove on. Climbed a hill through enough rabbits and pheasants to make Surrey wild for a week and found Colonel out and tide in. Tried to say what we thought of both combined and drove on. We should have applied by letter, but the regulation was too new for us to know it. How men do hate being made fools of. At Dalbeattie six people told us six different ways to get to Sweetheart Abbey, which they call New Abbey, because Devorgilla, mother of that John Baliol to whom Edward the First gave the Scotch crown, built it in twelve hundred and something. One way ended in a back-yard and another led up an impossible grade. So then I knew we'd have to go there if it took a week. But we did it in less than that. Repeat observation concerning men and fools."

Sandyhill beyond brought a splendour of scarlet sunset across a billowing sea of heather such as went with them for miles of glory; with every shade of pink, of mauve, of blood-purple, broken across and across by up-pushing lichened rocks, and splotches of green, and the bronzed crisp fronds of the bracken. On the right lay the Solway—faint grey streams of water among the broad yellow sands, and the Colonel leaned forward to Peggy.

"Love has ebbed," he said. "You know how 'Love swells like the Solway and ebbs like its tide' in 'Young Lochinvar'?"

Peggy flashed a laugh at him, but her face was very grave as she passed the quaint old door with its coat-of-arms that stood in the middle of the lawns of Sweetheart Abbey to welcome her. All about her were the strong sweet scent of limes, the warmth of the short cut grass, the wonderful colours of the red-brown stone washed by sunset and faced by deep white lines. The calm gracious kindness of the old place where Devorgilla had enshrined her husband's heart on the altar until she at last was laid in the nave with it upon her breast spoke to this maiden of a later day in a speech that she dared not hear.

Standing there Peggy knew quite surely that love had ebbed. That grief of the woman Devorgilla for the man John Baliol could never be hers for Surrey. Love had ebbed. But, for all his jealousies and petty suspicions, Surrey loved her better than he had done. She knew this unhesitatingly, and she knew just why she hurt him so deeply and so often. She watched the gold lights flicker along the columned nave and the broken tops where grass was growing. For a moment it turned the place where Devorgilla slept to pure gold and the walls glowed blood-red. Then the glory went, and Peggy went out with it. Love had ebbed too far to climb the sand-barrier again, and very soon she would know it.

Criffel Peak rose sharp against the lighted sky to southward, and overhead thick avenues of mighty limes linked their arms against the colour that flushed and flooded and faded. The scent of them was overpoweringly sweet. To Wylde it was always like the mixed scent of flowers brought to a grave, and neither he nor Peggy spoke much through that run back, while the Colonel dozed in the tonneau and the rooks cawed and flapped black wings in myriads, and soft blue dusk brought the ghosts of this land of history about them. First that Robert Paterson, Scott's "Old

Mortality," seeking the scattered graves of the Covenanters on brae and haugh, among bracken and heather, to scrape the lichen from them, and dying at last where no man knew his grave. Then the bold Maxwells, whose motto "I bid ye fair" shows yet above their ancient stronghold of Caerlaverock, from whence they harried the Debateable Land and slew "the gentle Johnstones." Dukes of Queensberry and Buccleuch at Drumlanrig Castle, yet a seat of the latter family; terrified Mary of Scots, halting at Terregles before she took that fatal journey to Carlisle; Helen Walker, the real Jeanie Deans, sleeping near lovely Routin' Brlidge in Iron-grey churchyard; Carlyle in his lonely farmhouse at Craigenputtock; Burns working in that long low whitewashed cottage at Ellisland, where much of his writing was done, and where some of his children were born . . . all ghosts, undying ghosts of this land of romance and history.

The Maxwellton braes of Annie Laurie were now a noisy suburb of Dumfries; but on the skirts of them Wylde turned off to glance at sweet Lincluden Abbey, and let Peggy carry back to the town a memory of a silver loch dashed by a streak of scarlet from a cart, and smoothly-grassed grounds ridged as though by a Roman camp, huge scarled oaks, soft glimmer of dusk, silence, and in the midst of it all the falling ruins of the abbey, railed in, clogged to the heart with trees; peaceful after its stormy life of kings and restless queens and of bold earls who used it for a council-chamber.

Over the new bridge beside that bridge built by Devorgilla before she founded Balliol College, Oxford, in memory of her husband, they came again to the stony noisy streets, the shouts of leather-lunged boys selling evening papers, the smudged lights in the smoky gloom, and a dinner that had waited overlong. Surrey came in when dinner was half done. He talked freely, with his usual easy courtesy, but his face was graver and just a little drawn about the eyes. Wylde went out later, to seek through those

crooked dark streets where Burns had walked, where brawls and fierce fights had been common since the days when the townsmen's savage slogan of "Loreburn! Loreburn!" rang first when Dumfries was made a royal burgh in the twelfth century, until it sounded last against Prince Charles six hundred years after.

The Colonel had a private sitting-room here; and in a little he left it to Surrey and Peggy, a gift for which Peggy had no thanks to give them. The night was chill, with wind off the sea, and she huddled in a big chair before the fire, dully wondering who would finally arrange for her the life which she herself so complicated.

Across the room Surrey put down the evening paper, and spoke.

"You told me long ago that you had never taken a photograph of Wylde."

Peggy knew that accusing note in his voice, and she knew that, for the first time, it did not hurt her.

"Dear Surrey, Queen Anne is dead," she said. "But I took one this morning."

"You have taken one before," said Surrey. "He carries it in his pocket." He crossed the room suddenly; took her hands where they were linked above her head, and bowed his face on them.

"Peggy, Peggy," he said, brokenly. "Why won't you be honest with me?"

Peggy jerked free, and twisted herself, a little white figure in the big chair with the light on her hair.

"I don't know what you mean," she said; and there was truth in her puzzled eyes if he could have read it.

"You took a photograph of Wylde at Gretna, and he has it in his pocket. Can you tell me you don't know what I mean?"

"Oh-h. I remember. But I didn't know he was in it until afterwards. Surely a little thing like that doesn't matter, Surrey?"

"It matters that you have told me an untruth. How did Wylde get the photograph? Did you give it to him?"

"I can't tell you how he got it."

"Did you give it to him?"

The white misery of his face made Peggy curb herself.

"No," she said. "I did not know he had it." Then she put her soft hands on his where they gripped the back of the chair.

"Dear Surrey," she said; "there are so many big things in life. We can't afford to spend our hearts quarrelling over the little ones. There is so much to do . . . so much waiting for us. I think . . . if I am to help you at all . . . you must put away this childishness, Surrey."

"I have done what I could," he said, miserably. "You have done things which have—have grated on me often. But I have made myself believe that you were scarcely a woman yet. I have tried to put all my thoughts to teaching you. . . ."

In the half-smile of her lips and eyes lay a pitiful wisdom which perhaps Wylde would have recognized. Surrey could not.

"Oh!" she said, intensely. "If I could make you understand. You have such powers. You have such a heritage. There is so much calling out for you to do it, and you'll never have another life on earth like this. And you are letting it all go. Oh, Surrey! break through all these little cobwebs that are growing over you. Put your heart into something—anything. Why, you can't even love me properly, or you would not distrust me so."

Surrey slid his hands from under hers.

"Your heroics are one of your worst points, Peggy," he said, coldly. "Wylde is responsible for them, I know. But they are bad form in you all the same. And there are other things. . . ."

"Do you mean that you do not love me now?"
But she knew the answer to that.

"No. You know that I love you. But I can't make you learn. . . ."

She slipped out of the chair and stood before him.

"Don't make me have to leave you," she said. "For your sake don't make me do that. I have known always what you were capable of. I would have given you my soul once if it would have made you what you were meant to be. I can still help you more than anybody because you love me, and because I understand. But you must treat me differently or—or I cannot. You tie my hands. You will have to choose between what you think is right and what is really right. And you must choose carefully, for it would mean a very great deal to you to lose me out of your life."

Surrey drew in his breath sharply. His heart said "I can't lose you." His lips said—

"I do not think it is for you to make conditions . . . considering your familiarity with Wylde."

For a half-minute Peggy stood quite still, staring at the bitterness in his blue eyes. Then she pulled off her ring, slowly, and laid it on the cushioned top of the big chair.

"I made the first mistake when I told you that I loved you," she said. "You have never treated me like a rational being since. You have held me too cheap. You have held your friends and your enemies too cheaply all your life, and by and by . . . I am afraid . . . you will suffer for it. Please don't say anything. This had to come. I guessed it would have to come. But it hurts because . . . I would have given you my life still if . . . you had wanted it. Please . . . don't touch me. Let me go . . ."

In her own room she looked at her hands through burning tears. The Colonel had always decked his Peggy with jewels, but she had stripped both hands bare for that one hoop of Surrey's diamonds; and now, to her fancy, they were very naked and forlorn.

"They—they feel so cold," she said; and then, half

baby-like, she put that third slim finger against her parted lips to warm it.

And after that, in a surge of pain, came memory of the day when Surrey had kissed the finger before he put the ring on; promising to put another kiss under that other ring which was never to come off, so that she should feel his lips near her, even in death.

Because a thing that is dead may quite decently be put to its grave with tears Peggy cried the night through over all the joy that was gone and would never come back. But the gracious gift of tears is seldom for a man. And besides, Surrey loved her.

The men did not see Peggy next morning until she appeared, dressed for the street, and demanded the Colonel's escort.

"For we have to see the whole of Dumfries in two hours," she said. "And there won't be even time to breathe."

The Colonel had had ten minutes' private conversation with Surrey before breakfast; and in face of the genuine grief that he saw, he could but agree that Surrey should speak to Peggy again before he himself did.

"Unless she speaks to me," he said. "But I don't think she will. She will know that you would."

And so he gave his time cheerfully to Peggy and to the old churchyard of St. Michael's filled with hideous misshapen monuments to make the living fear death, and holding its still more hideous mausoleum of Burns, where his fashionably-dressed image drives a white marble plough and simpers at the Spirit of Poetry.

"If he had had his plain old clothes and a 'wee modest crimson-tippit flower' it would have been more like the Burns that will live," said Peggy. "Dear, you must take me away from this place. It is too ugly even to be buried in."

They saw the brass plate in the church where Burns used to worship; and the "Hole in the Wa," with his wife's wedding-ring in the little museum, and

Carlyle's and Collingwood's walking-sticks, Prince Charlie's table from the Commercial Hotel where the Prince once had stayed, and many things more. They saw the fine natural statue of the poet in High Street, and the window in the "Globe" where he wrote a verse to one "Polly Stewart" on the glass. And, last of all, down a squalid back-way from St. Michael's Street, they came to the dull small house where he lived and died, with the row of little cottages crookedly before it, much as in his time, and the noise of the flagged street about him.

"So sad for a man who loved the daisies," said Peggy. And then she pushed open the door of the little closet where he used to write; a room bare but for his plain chair and its wealth of memories, and here she found Wylde. He spoke slowly, and without his occasional restraint.

"Genius doesn't care where her light shines, does she?" he said. "I have just been comparing this with Abbotsford."

He went out with her to the larger room filled with little but letters, a few bad paintings, and some medals belonging to the Burns Club. But the spirit of this man who had died at thirty-seven with all his best years to come was not gone from the plain dull house nor from the walks that he loved so well about the old town.

There was a weeping rain when they left Dumfries at noon, and Wylde, with Surrey beside him in the front seat, talked mechanics and a half-hundred things which did not matter, and Surrey met him painstakingly, point and point, though the minds of both men were elsewhere. Last night circumstances had forbid Wylde's confession. To-night he was going to defy circumstance and get rid of that shame which weighed more heavily than he had expected. At little Ruthwell he turned the car aside; found a small church behind a high wall with steps up and down over it; got the key from the Manse and led the way in.

Peggy had not expected what she saw; but it was not she only who explained at the great stone Runic Cross uplifted from its deep well in the side-aisle, a vigorous, wondrously-carved relic of the days when Christianity was new; solemn, splendid, dominating the whole of the little ordinary church.

"It was broken in the seventeenth century and lay under the floor of the church till some one restored it about a hundred years ago," said Wylde. "I guess the English on it has a right to be hard to read. It is supposed to be the earliest written piece extant."

Annan offered rain only, and the yellow Solway sands with the tide out again. Peggy sat close in her corner and watched it; and tried to think of all the poetry of the land she was leaving, from the Last Minstrel, trudging with blowing hair down Yarrow Braes by Braxholm, to Hogg who "taught the wandering winds to sing," and of all the wild Chapelknowe, close to the Border, and of herself, rieving reckless men of Annandale and Liddesdale. But she could think only of Surrey and of herself, and—against her will, of Wylde.

They did not pause at Gretna in the windy rain and dreariness; they did not halt in the Debateable Land between the dark running rivers. And England met them with weeping skies and drenched trees and hedges and yellow mud that flew from the skidding wheels. In Carlisle the Colonel insisted on hot tea and comfort for Peggy. But she submitted in haste and went out, under a blank windy sky where the rain spattered in sudden gusts and ceased, to see the Cathedral. For she was restless and troubled and afraid of something which she could not crystallize into understanding.

"I want to see where Sir Walter Scott married Miss Chantier after the girl he loved best married some one else," she told the Colonel. And the Colonel showed her without any comment; and showed her also the fine Norman arches squeezed out of shape by the settling of the fabric, and the bit of St. Mary's

Priory, founded by William Rufus, with its doors half sunk below the level of the grass. Then Wyld came with some information.

"I guess we'd have to go right away to Gilsland or Chollerford to see a real station of Hadrian's Wall," he said. "But we can run out of Carlisle on a length of it, and maybe that will be enough. I reckoned to get on to Keswick to-night and have the car cleaned before this mud has a chance to stick. It is the very devil on paint once it hardens."

"You are very tender of the car," said the Colonel. "But I think we had better. We may get out of the rain, though I believe the woman was right who said that in the Lake Country the greater part of the water was kept up above."

Until Bothel there was not anything but grey rain and mist; heather hills rising higher and more close, coaches with cowering people under umbrellas, and the knowledge that, back in those hills, lay the Roman Sanatorium of Caermote, hospital of the Soldiers of the Legion when they fell ill at the Wall; and more Roman camps beside, and British camps before the Roman, and camps of the races before the English. Near Ruthwaite, home of the joyous John Peel, the hills were growing mountains in the mist, and far to the right, at the head of Bassenthwaite Lake, lay Cockermouth, birthplace of Wordsworth, with Embleton lower down, where was found a Viking sword, now in the British Museum. And then the rain drew off, leaving the end of Bassenthwaite clear and grey, with the huge flanks of the mountains coming into sight, like kneeling elephants with their heads in the grey mist and their flanks purplish-brown and grey in baggy folds of scarp and hollow.

Keswick, crumpled round the shore of Derwent-water, showed gleams of light already, dazzling jewels in the rich deep-coloured air, and in the hotel entrance hall some one caught Peggy and kissed her wet glowing cheeks before she knew the kisser for the very last person she would have chosen to see.

"Oh, Lady Thrale," she said, "I shall be frightfully glad to see you when I'm dry; but I must go and wring myself first and let the water run back into the lake, for I think I must have taken most of what was meant for it."

But in her room she stood with her hands shut close together.

"She'll speak of it," she said. "If I put on fifty other rings she'll want to know where that is, for I know Kitty sent her a full description of it from Inverness. And the Colonel has never given me diamonds. He said . . . wasn't old enough. Oh, dear! I feel like eighty to-night."

Dinner was half over before Lady Thrale saw. She had deserted her own party for the Colonel's table, and her talk had over-laid Surrey's unusual silence. Then, quite suddenly, the bomb which Peggy had been expecting burst.

"Peggy! What have you done with your engagement ring? Surely you have never lost it? Kitty told me that there were really very fine diamonds in it. My dear girl, it is . . . it is really indecent for a girl not to wear her engagement-ring. . . ."

Wylde looked up suddenly, and saw Peggy's face with the dark eyes wide, and he knew. Then Surrey spoke, serenely—

"One of them seemed a bit loose, Lady Thrale. I made her give it to me, and I shall get it fixed here if I can. If not I'm afraid she'll have to wait till we get to York."

He smiled at Peggy easily, and turned to his plate again. But there was not any doubt in Wylde, and he scarcely knew how he got himself from the table when dinner was ended; overlooked for a moment the cleaning of the car, because that was a habit which had become second nature, and went at his swiftest pace up the road towards Crosthwaite, knowing only that he must have the fresh air blowing on him and the spurts from the dripping swaying trees in his face before he could think or clearly understand.

His intent to make reparation had come too late. He had parted these two as he had meant to do, and now he would have given more than would ever be his to have it undone. It was quite true that Surrey was wrong, wickedly wrong, to have believed so easily. It was quite true that he himself had told no more than naked fact. But he knew well why he had told it, and he knew that no excuses would clear him. And he knew also that he would give none.

Past Greta Hall, where Southey once lived by the brown dimpling Greta river, the rich smell of earth and of rotting oak and beech-mast after rain came strongly to his nostrils. The absolute silence; the immovableness of the heavy air goaded him into restless haste. Then his feet led him straight into the old graveyard at Crosthwaite Church, where Southey lies buried under a low flat stone slab with some of his family about him; where a child-sized tomb of dull grey slate covers Mrs. Lynn Lynton, the novelist, and the yellow piled earth of a new-made grave made one pale dreary blot in the dusk.

Wylde knew that there was a fine statue of Southey in the church; he knew something of its history, and of the linking of the lives of Wordsworth and Coleridge with it. But to-night that did not mean anything at all to him. He walked through the wet grass, among the half-neglected graves, under the huge dripping trees, and the chaos of his thoughts wheeled slowly into line.

But it was a double line, for temptation was strong in him. The temptation just to hold his tongue; now to Surrey, and later on to the Colonel, when the Colonel should ask full explanation of those accusations of Smayne's. It was such a simple thing, merely to hold his tongue. And the break would almost certainly have come, anyway. And he wanted Peggy. He wanted her, wanted her, though it meant the sinking of his better nature to have her.

His legs were wet to the knees with the long grass;

the warm stagnant air seemed heavy against his throat and forehead muscles. It was the crisis of his life, although he did not know it. For once Wylde chose for dishonour he would not have much else left to cling to. Love had not been offered him largely by either man or woman. Religion meant only some veiled blind good waiting the man who has flogged his heart and spirit off the desires of the flesh. Honour among his kind had never been his, and the man who is not strong enough to trample on his own private conscience is very surely a weakling.

All the dead, laid straight in their graves about him, did not help. All the wet trees, tossing together in the waking night-wind, did not help. But a something else, indefinable and very real, came in due time to help. It was the influence which he had drawn, unconsciously, from all the true and gallant men of history who had died for their honour, for their conscience, for that dim good which meant only renunciation.

And at last Wylde turned and went back, with the rain dripping from his shoulders; and he climbed the broad stairs to Surrey's room, and hammered on the door. He knew that if Surrey were twenty times asleep he would have to hear him now.

Lady Thrale was responsible for the fact that Surrey had not spoken one private word to Peggy this evening, and many other things were responsible for the thoroughly bad temper in which he had gone to his room. He opened the door to Wylde in white shirt and black trousers only, and he looked like a keen-eyed, strong-lipped sketch of Dana Gibson's.

"I am just going to bed," he said. "It is twelve o'clock."
"I guess I won't keep you more than ten minutes," said Wylde.

He shut the door, leaning against it; and he spoke directly and cruelly, not considering the heart of the man before him.

"I know that you and Miss Bouchier have broken

your engagement because of me," he said. "In part, anyway. You never thought me big peanuts, so I reckon I should feel flattered. Hold on. I've got something to say, and you've got to hear it. I don't know how much the knowledge that I've kissed her had to do with it, but, considering your exclusive kind of temperament, I should guess that it had a good deal. Well, I have kissed her, but she never knew it. She doesn't know it now. I kissed her forehead and her hands when she fell in the Gloucester crypt and I thought I had killed her with my fooling. If I had loved her less I guess I'd have kissed her lips. I thought likely I had killed her. That's all. I reckon you can gauge what effect it has had on your feelings to her better than I can."

Surrey was staring at him with lips and nostrils pinched and blue eyes wide.

He knew, even as Wylde had said, how that one little speck of suspicion had gradually rotted away all his belief in Peggy, all his trust. He had not doubted Wylde's word, and now he knew why. It had been the bald blunt truth which shoulders its way home through its sheer want of art. He straightened, with a long-drawn breath.

"Thank you," he said. "I won't detain you any longer, Mr. Wylde."

"I imagine this will tighten up that diamond," said Wylde. "You deserve something for thinking ill of her. But I am sorry it went so far as this."

Surrey had turned to the dressing-table, moving his brushes with uncertain hands.

"Good-night, Mr. Wylde," he said.

"I . . . am very sorry," said Wylde, simply.

Surrey looked round. His face was well under control.

"Good-night, Mr. Wylde," he said again.

The smooth stone wall of this man's superior training baulked Wylde as it had done before. He went out in silence. And he never knew that, behind the shut door, Surrey was broken down into something

nearer tears than he had known since the first stirrings of his manhood.

Next morning Wylde took a packet of sandwiches and went to the hills, to wrest from them the peace that he was seeking. He had done the necessary thing; but so far that knowledge was his only reward as he climbed the long smooth flank of Skiddaw among the rosy mists that parted for flashing gleams of blue sky, or were blown away into piles of fleecy white and dull clouds of heavy purples and indigos. Below these great heights of bronze bracken and shaded heather with shadows ink-black in the crevices lay beauty half unfolded and history put to sleep. Every inch of it, seen or unseen, was saturated with the lives of many races, and Wylde's nature forbade him pass without feeling their influence.

Sheer beneath lay Crosthwaite village, the "clearing made for the Cross" set up here by St. Kentigern in the sixth century; and south, by Walla's Crag, still suggesting its Viking name, lay Nuns' Well, where those women brought by St. Briga drew water in the days when they laboured with St. Kentigern. On the green mound heading Derwentwater the Vikings once held their "Thing" or Parliament, and the village of Portingscale, where they raised their "scales," now huts, keeps the memory still. On their cemetery hill of Latrigg many kist-vaens were despoiled two hundred years ago; and at the Pict Village by the stone-quarries the beehive huts were fallen in and the grass grown thick where those fierce painted men had trod, even as it had grown on the Roman Military Road over the hills.

The day was clearing, rolling the clouds in golden billows down to the dark south by the Scafell Pikes. Larks sprang in the heather under Wylde's feet, and mounted to the sky, drawing their endless string of separate jewelled notes with them as they rose. Golden butterflies and quivering white ones were thick in the purple-spiked heather-heads, Derwent-water unveiled, blue and fair, below; with its islands

clearly reflected and the rough peaks of the Catbells and Red Pike and many more flung doubled into it in heavy livid colours like bruises. Blencathra Heights on the Penrith road carried red streaks and splashes among their greens, and the distant line of the Pennines was the blue of heaven coarsened by earth. The sun was painting scar and water and fell with his bold blazing strokes, recalling the days of the sun-worshippers, whose Druidic circles stand yet among the hills; and, on the very top of Skiddaw, Wylde dropped among the warm heather in the utter stillness, and stayed there.

Down in little Keswick Lady Thrale had gripped the threads of all matters which came under her hands with such prompt decision that Surrey found himself elected leader and guide of her party of romping girls before he guessed at it. His dream of taking Peggy walking on the hills was blown out of sight by Lady Thrale's vigorous breath, and instead he drove a merry careful down the greasy winding road to Lodore, with its sharp corners, its many vehicles and its flashes of lovely Derwentwater between the thick trees.

"Driving a car is exactly like playing a pianola," explained Peggy. "You need to know the chart, or you are sure to swell out for fortissimo when it should be soft, and to put the lever down to top speed when you want bottom. No; the Colonel wouldn't come. He says that when a man has seen Niagara for nothing he can't be expected to pay twopence for Lodore. Besides, I quoted some of Southey's poems to him this morning."

Beyond the little bridge among the trees the girls watched the small torrent, prolonging Southey's verses with rhymed doggerel and teasing Surrey into emulation. Surrey shook his head.

"I never made but one poem in my life," he said, "and that was—"

"In Wales
All the sheep have long tails."

I really couldn't help that, it was so obvious. But this is not. A well-headed cask of ale poured down a flight of stairs would make as much show—and a good many more would come to see it."

He was cheerful, easy and courteous as usual, and it was only Peggy and the Colonel who guessed at all what that long day meant to him. For under Lady Thrale's management it included a drive round Chestnut Hill, where Shelley lived with his bride a hundred years ago; a very stiff climb for the car to that large perfect Druid circle of unhewn rough stones set on its mound behind Blencathra with the huge-headed mountains watching it all round as they had once watched the rising smoke of sacrifice; and lastly, the pencil manufactory by the flooded Greta, where he ordered pens and pencils and little match-boxes stamped with the name of each laughing girl, and gave to Lady Thrale a big bag of the scented cedar-dust. But the pen which he had had stamped "Peggy" only he put in his pocket. That was for her to take to-night, if she would.

In the afternoon, at the little museum, Peggy hung over the letters and the portraits of De Quincey, Harriet Martineau, Shelley, the Wordsworths, and all the others of that wonderful band of poets who once had lived near here. And thoughts of Wordsworth with his long sheep's face; of Scott in those clothes she had seen at Abbotsford, and of the fire and snow in the wild delicate face of Shelley followed her through the narrow twisting streets where children and men all wore the brass toe-clipped clogs that button over the instep and have their wooden soles shod with iron rims. Their noise was musical to Peggy, even as the noise of those stone dulcimers in the museum was musical. But before they had been found in the river bed they had run their scale perhaps to the hands of the Vikings.

From the Ruskin Stone at Friar's Crag Lady Thrale had swept her party homeward, and Peggy turned to the Colonel.

"Take me up on top of something, dear," she said. "And don't talk."

So the Colonel took her to Castle Head, overhanging Derwentwater, and there on the rocky top which no one else seemed to want, Peggy gathered her scattered forces again.

"How peaceful it is," she said. "I am so glad the earth hasn't a tongue."

"Shakespeare says that it has," said the Colonel. "You remember 'books in the running brooks, sermons in stones . . .'"

"The red-headed girl with Lady Thrale was speaking of that," said Peggy, wearily. "She said that if he'd said 'sermons in books, stones in the running brooks,' it would have been more sensible. I suggested that we had better give him the benefit of the doubt because compilers made so many mistakes."

The Colonel laughed, pacing the brown rocks behind her; and Peggy sat still, not heeding speech with this man who loved her so well, and watched the lights marshalling and changing in that wonderful power and intensity of colour which seems like purest distilled essence of beauty.

Across Skiddaw the skies were stormy, striking his purple and green flanks with their patches of burn into crude colours. Reflections from the near hills were ink-black in the pure slate-grey of the lake, and far to the south slid the young silver lines of a waterfall, brooded over by heavy darkness in the mountain-passes that led south toward Helvellyn. Everywhere were the softest warm purples and mysterious blues and reddish greys. Red Pike and High Stile wore the bloom of an over-ripe plum, and from them the pale green humps of the Catbells were thrusting boldly forward. Scafell, with gold across its bosom, seemed pushing crowding misty mountains off, and the sombre Walla's Crag was already wrapped in night.

In the green tree-meadows between crag and lake rocks were coming home in millions, rising and fall-

ing in waving masses like flags in the wind. And then Surrey came to the green seat beside Peggy, and spoke very gently so as not to startle her.

"The Colonel said you were here," he said. "He has gone down. Don't be angry, Peggy. I want you to listen to me for a little while."

He said what he had to say honestly, manfully, neither excusing himself nor accusing Wylde. He told her how, in the very beginning, it had offended his pride and taste that Peggy should stoop, as he believed it, to Wylde. And he told her how the thing had grown, colouring all and poisoning all, until he believed evil where there was none, and sought it where there was none. And then he humbled himself as Peggy had never thought to see Surrey humble himself in all his life, and after that there was a little silence, because Peggy was crying.

Surrey stared at the heavy bank of clouds rolling out their liner lining to the glowing heart of a shell; then he turned to Peggy suddenly, laying his hand on her knee.

"Peggy," he said, "come back to me."

Peggy looked straight out on the hills with her dark eyes very grave.

"I can't," she said, slowly. "I'm sorry. But it has all gone. Quite gone."

"I . . . don't understand. What has gone?"

"All that was you in my heart. It has quite gone. I'm sorry. I would bring it back if I could. But I can't."

"It can come again? Peggy? Peggy?"

His voice was sharp, but still she looked past him with her dark grave eyes, and the soft baby-face he knew seemed older.

"Indeed, I have tried," she said. "But it has been going all the time. And nothing can ever gather up the old leaves and put them on a tree again. They are dead, you see. Withered up. They are quite gone."

Her voice dropped on the last words and she sat

still, looking down on the rooks flying noisily against the sweeping sudden glory on the lake. At her side Surrey did not move. He was never a coward in the big things of his life. He sat silent for so long that Peggy looked at him at last.

He smiled, and stood up.

"Would you like to go back?" he said. "Perhaps it is rather cold."

Peggy's eyes ran over then. She put her hand in his.

"I wish I could help it," she said. "Now that you . . . understand it would all be different. But you understood too late. I could not, now. I could not."

"Never mind, dear," said Surrey, gently. "I know you have tried. It is all entirely my own fault. Please don't cry, Peggy . . . and give me your hand or you'll slip on that rock."

As he opened his room door a little later he saw Wylde come up the passage with that free long step of his. There seemed an unusual alertness in it tonight, and Surrey shut himself in with bitterness hammering at his heart. He had been so sure; so very sure. There had never been any need for him to gird up his loins to the struggle; never any need for him to light the lamp of understanding. He had been so sure; so very sure. And now, swift and cruel as a razor-gash, came the doubt. Was it because of Wylde that Peggy was so certain that she could not . . . now?

The Colonel was dressing when Peggy's tap was followed by her head round the door.

"Lady Thrale has arranged a Bridge-drive tonight," she said. "Surrey and I couldn't get out of it, for she had it all settled before she asked us. And there is to be a little dance afterwards. Just a 'small and early,' and you are going to sit part of it out with me in that little alcove beyond the conservatory. I thought you'd be glad to know."

"I am," said the Colonel, gratefully. But when

they sat in the shadowed corner, so dark that the silver meshes of Peggy's wrap showed only faintly, he had to disburden himself of a new trouble before he could let Peggy speak.

"I have done a dreadful thing, little girl," he said. "Lady Thrale asked me if we could possibly take her as far as York, for her party leave her here. And I had to say we would be delighted. I had to, Peggy."

"Oh!" said Peggy. Then she put her warm ungloved hand on his withered one. "Of course, dear," she said. "And it really doesn't matter. Please smoke. I should like a cigar myself to-night. A real black cheroot."

"You would be mercifully unconscious of all your other troubles in less than three minutes. Then it-- it was no use, little girl?"

"No." Peggy's voice was very desperate. "I suppose you think me very wicked, and I suppose I have done about all the harm a girl of my size possibly could do. And I should like to go into a nunnery."

"And smoke black cheroots. Come here, my bird." He stroked the soft cheek where her head lay on his shoulder. It was burning, and he did not know that certain information concerning Gloucester crypt had made it so.

"If Surrey waited . . . perhaps in time . . ." he began. And then Peggy turned, and her big serious eyes met his in the dusk.

"Dear," she said; "you know better than that, don't you? You know what love is. My mother . . ."

"Yes, yes," said the Colonel, looking away. For it was of Wylde's mother that he was thinking, and of that passionate love which had grown to passionate hate. Peggy put her lips to his cheek.

"I want you to promise me something," she whispered.

"Peggy, don't be unfair. How do you expect me to refuse you to-night?"

"I don't expect it, dear. Surrey has lost me. But he mustn't lose more because of that. You meant to—to give all to the one which married me, didn't you? And as neither of them will marry me you must divide it. You know that I have enough of my own."

"Surrey has failed on every side. He has had his chance, and he has done—this. I am angry with him, Peggy."

"You are a very cruel bad-tempered old man, and you do bully us all dreadfully. But you are going to do just this one thing for me, dear. Surrey must know that the Manor is always to be his home. Oh, he must. I couldn't stay dead if he had lost it because of me."

"Good gracious!" said the Colonel. "What kind of a threat do you call that? Here is some one coming for you, little girl. And—leave Surrey to me, Peggy. I knew him and loved him before you were born."

Peggy accepted the black-coated arm and the apologies that came through the dusk. But there were words left unsaid on her lips. And it is probable that they would not have been said in any case, because they related to Wylde.

It was Wylde who came next to the Colonel where he sat in the alcove. Wylde had a good deal to say, and his language grew picturesquely forceful as he said it; so that the Colonel laughed, and was angry, and sighed, and laughed again, for this hot-blooded son of his had not spent himself on petty things.

"You are a good hater," he said, when Wylde stopped. "But you haven't told me much about love."

And then Wylde, sitting with his head in his hands, told of how he drove the wedge between these two whom the Colonel loved. There was a little silence before the Colonel said—

"Have you come to ask concerning the final developments?"

"Why," said Wylde, wearily; "he's not an utter fool, is he? I guess he has spoken to her again."

"Yes, he has spoken to her again. And it is of no use."

"What?" Wylde raised his head. "You don't mean——"

"I mean that his folly and your want of honour have done what you intended," said the Colonel, sternly. "She does not love him now. She has just made that clear to me."

Wylde stood up, leaning to the window where the night-wind blew strong. But his voice sounded stifled.

"She . . . does not love him now?"

"Quite so. She is free for you to continue your honourable suit."

"By ——," burst out Wylde. "Do you think that of me?"

"I fail to see what else you could expect me to think," said the Colonel.

"I could make her love me," said Wylde, slowly.

"She and I have more in common than she ever could or would have had with Guest. I am strong enough there, and don't you think I am man enough to have been tempted? But would I have said what I have to you and Guest if I had meant to do this?"

"Do not ask me to interpret your actions," said the Colonel.

"All right," said Wylde, and his laugh was suddenly reckless. "Think what you d——d well please of me. I don't care. I guess I'm not answerable to you, anyway. Give me some money—you owe me that—and let me go back to Canada. But don't you set Smayne on to me again or I'll do him up for good."

The Colonel's natural instincts began to call out. Besides, there was truth in this man's tone.

"What would you do if you went back?" he demanded.

"That's not your business, is it? But you've not

been such soft stuff yourself that you won't guess what I'll likely do."

His voice was broken by intensity of pain, and the Colonel's eyes dimmed suddenly. He came close to the big figure by the window.

"My son," he said. "My son. . . . God knows I don't want to misjudge you. Or to lose you. If you would only——"

Step by step, each fighting his natural reserve, the two men met for a little on common ground. But at the first hint of pressure Wylde drew back like the coyote Smayne had called him.

"I can't promise anything. I don't know what I'll do. I don't know what I want. But I must go——"

"If we could come to love and understand each other——"

"Better not. I guess a man is apt to lose more than he gains by taking any one else into his life. You have got those two, and maybe . . . I've got to go, anyway. Much more of this sort of life would kill me."

"You will wait until we get back to the "color?"

"Why, certainly. That's only a few days. I guess I can keep away from her. She'll help me there."

He laughed shortly, and the Colonel stepped back.

"I condemn Surrey every whit as much as I do you," he said. "And whether you go or not I intend to acknowledge you openly as my son first. So if you choose to ruin your life you will know that it is on my name and race that you are bringing dishonour. And I believe that you will be the first of your blood to do it."

Wylde opened the conservatory door, and the warm sweet scents touched his face.

"A man must break where he can't bend," he said thickly.

The Colonel heard the long light steps cross the floor and die into silence beyond. And after that he sat still in the dark for a very long time.

CHAPTER XVI

SURREY'S TEST

THROUGH the flat pallid morning light the bold wooded crags and mountains of Derwentwater gave the blue car good-bye; and Surrey turned down the Vale of St. John with its memories of the "Bridal of Triermain" and its small church and vicarage sitting by the road, and ran by lovely Thirlmere, where the small islands in the lake were glowing knots of brilliant heatler reflected in crystal water.

In the tonneau Lady Thrale talked cheerfully and incessantly with the Colonel, and Peggy, screwed into the corner nearest the lakes, felt the fresh wind on her face and a glad leaping of her pulses such as shamed and puzzled her. She told herself that she should be as unhappy as she knew Surrey surely was. But no stern schooling of her heart could dull its exhilaration. There was a sense of freedom for the first time in her life. Because, naturally and without a quickening of the pulse, she had believed all her life that she belonged to Surrey. The idea of injustice to him had galvanized that love into action. But the effort had killed it, and she knew, with a gasp of amaze, that it had not killed her. For the flying motion of the car, the keen wind hurrying her blood, the long sweeping rush round the rugged base of bare Helvellyn were telling her that she was young and alive, that life was in flower yet and the world a gallant place . . . a place of beauty.

But the scenery was rugged enough. Huge stones in circles and alone; streams dashing down the naked ways; heights of grey rock, and, beyond the Raise river, the livid roughly-shaped head of Dunmail Raise,

grim boundary-line of Westmorland, crowned by the rude stone-heap said to cover the dead Dunmail, last King of Cumberland. Then rain came, and greasy roads. Poppies and honeysuckle drooped wet heads; the mountains were gone and a sheet of solid grey wrapped round them through the lower road leading through long scattered Grasmere.

As Surrey swung the car round to the church the Colonel pulled umbrellas out of the straps and gave Peggy her rubbers.

"For you must see Wordsworth's grave," he said. "Though you have not read as much of him as you should, you irreverent monkey."

Then he held the umbrella over Peggy in the little churchyard where, close by the wall where the Rotha brattles and the yew-trees which he himself planted make dull shadow, "William Wordsworth, 1850, and Mary Wordsworth, 1859," sleep under grass with a plain stone at their heads. Dorothy Wordsworth and the son of Coleridge lie near by, and in the curious huge-beamed low St. Oswald's Church, where men worshipped long before the present building, which dates from the thirteenth century, was a marble tablet telling all that the world needed to know of the poet, beyond what his works would tell them.

In the rain Dove Cottage with its little Wordsworth museum held no beauty; Rydal Water was a grey blur, and Rydal Hall, where Wordsworth died, was passed unseen. But the old quaint town of Ambleside could not be spoiled by any power at all, and Peggy peered under the hood at the curious ancient cobbler's house sitting on a bridge; at the glimpses between buildings of quaint gardens and fascinating climbing streets, and at the old houses that seemed to grow like flowers, just anywhere at all.

The road by Windermere was thick with motors like scurrying brown beetles with their hoods up, and with drags and cyclists and pedestrians; but even the charming Low Wood Hotel where they lunched with all the glory of the lake spread before them was spoiled

by rain. The Falls at Troutbeck were a white gleam of loveliness over brown rocks; Windermere town was a long line of hotels and houses to climb out of, and from the high road beyond what should have been exquisite scenery was a cold block of mist. Near Kendal roads grew flatter and hills lower; all the vital characteristics of the Lake Country were gone, and the rain was going too; so that past the quaint long town with its seventeenth-century houses, and past that square hump of a castle where Katherine Parr once lived came landscape again.

There were good winding roads beside canals where slow horses pulled bright barges; there were bridges, brown, with white eyelashes, crossing the canals; fields of every shape and colour, like bold mosaic; stone fences, stone houses, little squat churches and big trees. It was a tidy country of neat small villages, pretty gardens and many Wesleyan chapels past Crooklands into ordinary Kirkby Lonsdale, where the quite new Market Cross was dedicated to a minister. A sharp swerve to right, to left, over a bridge where a flooded river foamed bravely, through Giggleswick, where Paley was educated, and into small Settle, a triune of British and Roman remains holding yet its Saxon name of "setl," a seat.

In Domesday Book Skipton is called Scepstone, this being Anglo-Saxon for sheep; and all these broad lands of Yorkshire are full of sheep and of lush grass, since the days when the Conqueror first gave it to that de Romillé who built the castle where fair Rosamund is said to have been born. Ann, Countess of Pembroke, raised again the huge castle gates which had been defaced at the Commonwealth, and beside them lies, along a mound, a church as old, wrecked and repaired in the same way. But Skipton was grey and ugly, with cobblestones sloping up from street to pavement and erections like bathing-houses balanced on the cobblestones and filled with meat, vegetables and varied things. Beyond it the way led over the moors into Ilkley, bringing a long sweep of hills and

of open country filled with good air and a vital freshness. Rumbles Moor carried its history back to the days of the wild brigantes (brigands), and it was a long day before the Romans found a footing here, although traces of that day are scattered yet among the hills.

Heather splashed the rough grey rocks, stone fences made the sky-line, and all the glory of sunset poured down the ragged slopes that led from the Cow and Calf Rocks along a razor-ridge that backed the town, so that from the Royal Hotel among its gardens Peggy saw the beauty of the evening and desired to go out to it. But her hostess-duty to Lady Thrale forbade this, and she spent some hours of irritation and torture whilst Surrey and the Colonel strolled in the garden with their cigars and took the winding way through the little old town which had grown mossy in a forgotten backwater, from the days when the Saxons pulled down the Roman castrum to build on the spot a Church Tower, which yet stands in part, to the eighteenth century, when the discovery of its chalybeate springs brought it into fashion for a little time.

Wylde went up the rough hill beyond the White Wells, where a track lay like a whip-lash. Peggy watched him from the windows, and helped Lady Thrale roll wool, and desired fiercely to be out with him in the glad electric air that came from the lungs of the great Yorkshire moors, once the home of giants in the days when Rombald's wife, stepping across the mountain-tops, scattered rocks the size of Stonehenge from her apron as she went. Wylde, climbing the hill with the light broad on his forehead, wondered idly if those rocks had been intended as a greeting for Rombald. Then he turned, looking down from the ridge on Ilkley, lying in the valley of the Wharfe, with its red and grey roofs pricked out already with the stars of night. Behind him lay gaunt Haworth, made sacred and tragic by the Brontës; before him, through Addingham with its

tumulus, its Roman camps and its cairns, was the rich pasture-land of Bolton Abbey parish, where the deep grass-meadows, the rivers teeming with fish, the tall hedges sweet with wild-flowers, had bred up the men who had followed Clifford of Skipton to Flodden. He turned again, walking slowly along the sky-line towards the rocking-stones and cup-ring stones strewn in huge soft boulders about the Cow and Calf. The lights were blood-red on them, but across the valley of the Wharfe they shifted in hazy duns and amethysts and the pale gold that was like Peggy's hair.

He sat on the edge where the high curious bluff is sliced off as though by a knife and looked inward on his thoughts, which such a little time ago had been in chaos like the hurled rocks about him and which now lay straight and quiet, like dead folk sleeked for burial. He was remembering lines he had read somewhere: remembering them vaguely, yet with understanding of their sense—

"Why we weep? 'Tis worth inquiry.
That we've shamed a life? Or lost a world?
Or missed a heaven, perhaps?"

To Wylde it seemed that he had very fully contrived to do all three. He did not want the Colonel's money now; he did not want the name and place which once would have meant so much to him. He wanted Peggy only, and he knew that he would never tell her so. To this man who had known and desired little of women all his life the memory of Peggy on Tom-na-hurich Hill was a something that frightened him. Love must be God-sent if it could make a woman look like that. And he had helped another man to kill it. From his very small boyhood fear had never troubled him. But he was afraid now of Peggy; afraid to catch her glance, to speak to her, to let the faintly-scented ends of her veil brush his face. He was afraid of her, and so he was going away. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and refilled it.

"And I guess the Colonel will mighty soon forget again that I am his son," he said.

But down the quiet shaded ways that led to Bolton Abbey the Colonel was just then remembering very clearly. His conversation with Surrey possessed none of the fierce recriminations of that one with Wylde. Surrey's nature was so widely different. But at one point the two younger men were agreed, and at last the Colonel touched on it with nervous determination.

"I had hoped that you and Wylde would not become actual enemies," he said.

"It is our choice, and I think we are content to leave it so," said Surrey.

"I am not." The Colonel laid his hand on the young arm. "I want to alter this if possible," he said. "For Wylde is my son, Surrey."

It was seldom that Surrey was thrust sheer off his balance; but it was done now, and his eyes still looked dazed under the tense forehead when the Colonel had finished those explanations which he thought it necessary to give. Then he spoke with effort.

"I can't take back what I said. But I should have known before . . . all my life."

"He did not, and Peggy doesn't. There was no need. You are as much my son. I adopted you when dear old Jack died, and I have loved you always. He knows that."

"Excuse me," said Surrey, slowly. "That does not hold. He is your son; your natural heir. I step out of it all now, sir."

"D——n it!" said the Colonel, "I can do what I like with my own."

"My consent is needed there, I think," said Surrey, stiffly. "I was willing to fight Wylde for what I considered my right. But his right! By ——, I wouldn't touch that for all the gold in Africa."

"'Pon my soul," said the indignant Colonel; "you are as mad as Wylde. He doesn't want his rights. He only wants Peggy."

"Peggy!"

Surrey stood quite still with his face rigid to the lips. But it was the tone in his voice which upset the Colonel most.

"Oh, Lord!" he said. "Why didn't I send Peggy back to school? He doesn't mean to tell her so. He has behaved badly, but he is making what reparation he can. She is free, and he loves her. And he is going to leave her."

For long the two men walked in silence through the quiet loaning where the sound of cows cropping the long grass, of rooks in the trees, and of the stray whistling of a man across the dreaming fields seemed only a part of the twilight stillness. Then Surrey said—

"She . . . couldn't give him up. They had too much in common."

"He knows that. He knows he could make her love him. But he won't try."

"I don't know that he is more to blame than I am," said Surrey, bravely, but the Colonel had seen him wince from his words.

"I don't know that he is. But it is only you could make him believe it."

"Ah! Don't ask me to do that!"

He swung away to stand staring over a gate at a little cottage red with home-light. In the road the Colonel beat the nettles and loose-strife with his stick until the dust of a passing motor sent him down beside Surrey.

"Pah!" he said. "Do we get all the cursing we deserve, I wonder?"

Surrey did not move. For the first time in his life he had been trying to put himself in another man's place. Because that place happened to be Wylde's he had found it difficult to stop there. But a few minutes had shown him much. He spoke, watching a man crossing the misty meadows to the cottage.

"What is Wylde going to do?" he said.

"I don't know. He will leave me and go back to Canada. I am afraid to think of what he will do

there. He had am' 'ion to keep him straight once, but he seems to have lost even that. He has never had much of a chance to count himself among honourable men, poor lad, and he thinks that chance is gone for good now."

The man had come to the end of the cottage path. The door opened and a woman showed in the light that streamed out. Then the door shut on both. Surrey turned round.

"Of course you have offered him what is rightfully his?"

"That would make no difference. I can't hold him; though, Heaven knows, I'm beginning to realize that I would give a good deal to be able to. You and Peggy are like my own and always will be. But . . . he is my own."

For a long while the two stood silent, watching the coming night. Then the innate good in Surrey grew slowly concrete into words.

"If I can make him stay with you I will. I don't know if I can. It would be worse than useless to give him lip-words only, and I don't know yet if I can do more. But I will try, sir."

"There is no need to doubt your love for Peggy," said the Colonel, huskily.

"Or for you, sir. You have always been all the father a fellow could want. Is she to know who he is?"

"I mean that every one shall know once we get back to the Manor. He is—is shy of it, I think. He has not had your up-bringing, you see. I don't know if I did wrong over that. But I believe he would have broken loose wherever he was. He might settle down now, if——"

Surrey shut his lips tightly, and they walked back in almost unbroken silence. The Colonel had spoken truth when he said once that he was too old to bear sorrow now. But, despite his will, he had let Wylde farther into his heart than he had meant to do, and the parting would hurt very cruelly. Because it would be

a parting without any meeting at the end of it. He knew his own stubborn nature too well not to recognize it again in his son.

Surrey was seeing a few outstanding points in his life very clearly. For Peggy's sake he could have taken all that the Colonel chose to give. Wylde would have gone as surely as he meant to go at present, and there would have been no wrong done nor suffered. Now it must all go to Wylde, and with his own mouth he was to ensure that it should be so. He had meant to leave the car in York and go straight to London. But he realized that he must see this business through, though it took him back to the Manor which had been his home all his life and which was rightfully Wylde's. Then he stood aside to let the Colonel pass through the garden gate at the hotel, and he smiled down on him.

"Don't you worry, sir," he said. "Wylde and I will fix this up without fists."

"You—you, oh, damn it all, my dear boy," said the Colonel. "Why in h—— didn't you hold what you'd got when you had it!"

It was at Lady Thrale's desire that they turned towards Bolton Abbey when they left little pretty Ilkley with its Crusaders' and Heber tombs in the church; its fine Norman arch to the door, and its ancient Saxon crosses where disciples climbed among strange beasts in the churchyard, and took a narrow winding road which made Wylde think again of the British way to Pevensy. The trees along the hedgerows were giants; crouched, knotted and broken out into hideous knobs and knots of age over their scaly trunks. Bolton Woods and deer-forests and rich loam upturned in the meadows led on to a group of houses and a glimpse through a breached wall of tall red cliffs, green graceful trees and brown water that tossed to white foam. And then, through that plain Hole in the Wall which has no gates, a smooth green field swept down past the strong square block of the Duke of Devonshire's shooting-lodge to the small ruined Abbey, standing

beyond a block of ivied buildings among huge beautiful beeches.

"I came here on my honeymoon," said Lady Thrale. "Long before Lord Frederick Cavendish was killed at Phoenix Park. That must be his monument on the hill, Peggy, below those rocks that look like a little Stonehenge on the mountain beyond. And Sir Maurice quoted all that Wordsworth had said about the place. But I forget it now. I know he told me that all the Mauleverers and Claphams in the vaults are supposed to be buried upright, and it made me think of a horrible little church near Lucerne where all the skulls are ranged on shelves round the walls and ticketed. Yes; go and take your photographs, child. The Colonel will look after me."

Where the tall stately ruins flung shadow on the grass and the broken walls were sunken and the way to the doors led up worn steps Peggy came to the many scattered graves where forgotten names stood up in moss, and thought of the "White Doe of Rylstone" stepping here with delicate feet through the moonlight, and tried to think of the story of the founding of the Abbey. And then she called to Wylde where he stood on the broken wall.

"You told me once about the 'Noble Boy of Egremont,'" she said. "But I have forgotten. Please tell me again."

She was looking up at him with the young soft face that had grown more earnest and grave of late, and Wylde swung himself off the wall, and stood beside her in the sunlight.

"He was young Romillé," he said. "And sometime in eleven hundred he was drowned in the Strid up there, where a chasm about five feet wide takes the Wharfe that is fifty feet wide above and below. And his mother had the Abbey removed from some place down the valley and put here, beside the river that killed him. I guess I've forgotten the poem about it except that she asks 'What is good for a bootless bene?' And the answer is 'Endless sorrow.'"

"But that is an impossible thing," said Peggy.
"Oh, don't you think it is?"

"Why . . . I guess so. A woman can give herself up to grief, I'm told. But a man generally finds some way of killing it—or himself."

His voice was very guarded. He was wondering if Peggy was giving him the chance to beg her pardon and knowing that it could not be so. Peggy seldom tried to account for her impulses. It would have been too difficult. She flung out her hands to the red cliff lifting from the clear water.

"Oh, don't talk of grief," she said. "I suffered enough last night. . . ." The colour came under his quick look. "I wanted to climb mountains, and I had to stay and talk to Lady Thrale," she explained, hurriedly.

"Oh!" He smiled. "Well, I guess that was hard work. I did quite a lot of climbing last night. So much of this country is turned up on end, isn't it? I shall remember it when I get back to the prairies—though they are not so flat as people think."

"Are you—going back?"

"I guess so," he said, and he would not look at her.

"In a week or so. England isn't big enough—though she's the finest thing of her size going. And . . . of course I've enjoyed my stay here immensely."

"And you have learnt so much from her history, haven't you? And you are going to do big things when you get back," said Peggy.

"Why, certainly." The dull red was in Wylde's face, and his voice was dull to match it.

"The Colonel will be so glad to help you there, I know. He thinks so much of a man who tries . . . tries"—Peggy's voice was beginning to tremble—"to be all he was meant to be, you know."

"Why, certainly," said Wylde, again. "I guess the Colonel will help me to all I want. And I reckon that is him calling now, isn't it?"

There was nothing really in tone or words to tell

her. But as she slipped into her corner of the tonneau her heart said one thing.

"He means to let go. And that is worse than never taking hold of a life. And I really don't know what I was made for."

Beyond Bolton Bridge, where Prince Rupert's troopers encamped before that battle of Marston Moor where Cromwell and the Scotch beat him out of the field and so paved the first step for King Charles to the scaffold, and where another Charles, the Scottish Prince, lay on his way to Derby, steep hills with glorious roads led over the moors among soft exquisite colouring of bronze and green bracken, of faint heather, and of splashes of black where a late burn had been. But the strong vivid tints of the north had gone, and all the land looked pale and gentle with warm winds blowing and loneliness among the shooting-shelters and the scattered mossy cottages, and all the world of noise and life sunk far in the valley below.

Down a two-and-a-half mile slope beyond great sharp rocks that looked like houses Wylde was running the engine against compression, and the hum that Peggy so dearly loved cut the air. The scent of pines was everywhere, and the gleam of red on sycamore-seeds, and then a curious small collection of stones built up into houses and watched over by the smallest of churches with a sharp alert spire.

"It is just like a tiny sleepy brown mouse in a field," said Peggy. "But *why* do they call it Blubberhouses? I can believe a good deal, but I cannot believe that whales were ever found here."

Steep grades and good roads where motors without cease climbed hills on the lonely length of moor and ran away down other hills gave at last to the tall spires of Harrogate far below; a huge patch of red roofs and glancing lights which offered a specially evil smell from its sulphur and chalybeate springs as they swept down and round the great aristocratic Spa and crossed the Nidd into Knaresborough, with a flash of the Castle, and gleam of water, and a glow of bright colour.

Up and down and through the town Wylde lost and found his way again to the Dripping Well with its lovely view of the river and little bridge, and there he stopped.

"I guess we have got to see St. Robert's Chapel," he said; "and the Cave where Eugene Aram hid the man he killed after the wind swept the leaves off him."

"I don't want to remember anything about Eugene Aram," said Peggy. "But I wonder how many of you noticed that the trimmings on the top of every cottage garden-wall to-day have been exactly like preserved ginger turned to stone? It must be the effect of the Yorkshire air, for I can't think that anybody would do it on purpose."

"I wonder if you will think that any one did this on purpose," said Wylde, and showed her the strange rough figure of a Crusader drawing his sword that is cut in the rock outside the ten-foot-square hole where Count Robert, warrior and saint, is said to have lived and prayed and died. The caretaker was smiling.

"It is said to have been done to guard him when he was dead and they had to leave him here," she said. "And this narrow stone bench is where he slept, and that hole scooped in the floor is for sacred relics—see how the live rock round it is worn with his knees. They say he cut this chapel out of the rock himself, and my grandfather cut himself a room out up there, and a flight of stairs up to it. He was a very industrious man, and the great folk of the county gave him an admiral's uniform to show how much they thought of him. It was a very great honour."

The reason for this award seemed more mysterious than the identity of St. Robert, and Peggy left it unsolved when they passed by ways of grain and turnip-fields, by the wide parks and fine old trees where red cattle clustered beyond the walls of Hopwell Hall near Flaxby, through pretty straggling Green Hammerton where a sign-post gave the way to Marston Moor, and over good roads hinting at traps to a sudden sight of York Minster spire majestic against the sky.

Across the Ouse Bridge where bright boats rocked in the water, and through grand old gates they entered York, once the British *Caer Evrauc*, where emperors wore the imperial purple of Rome and the breastplates of Roman Legions glanced in the sun; where the winged helmets of the Danish Vikings had passed and brown monks in hundreds had gone out to spread Christianity through pagan England.

Even to Peggy York was not new; but to Wylde no private trouble of mind could dull entirely the delights of this quaintest of English cities packed with its history that goes back to days forgotten and days unknown. He saw the huge benignant bulk of the Cathedral first from the line of the fourteenth-century city walls beyond Bootham Bar, with the green of the Deanery gardens laid in between and the calm of evening over all. And then he took the great Gates, or Bars, by turn, recalling the history of each. Monk Bar, with its tall loop-holed turrets and square block of a prison-house above the ridged portcullis-lines: Walmgate, beneath which runs the Roman Watling Street; the broad graceful height of Micklegate where the heads of the Duke of York in a paper crown and of Salisbury turned ghastly in the sun after that fierce battle at Wakefield during the Wars of the Roses, and Fishergate and Skeldergate by the river.

In The Pavement, near Wren's red-brick block of St. Crux's Church, that Earl of Northumberland who sought protection from the Regent Moray in Scotland suffered when delivered again to Elizabeth; in the Clifford Tower, all now remaining of the castle first built by William the Conqueror, Eugene Aram waited punishment, and those Jews, harried by John while *Cœur de Lion* was in Palestine, chose death by fire with their families rather than surrender to the mob, and here Margaret of Anjou and the weak Henry the Sixth waited the issue of Towton Moor without the town, when Warwick, the King-maker, slew his horse and fought on foot with his soldiers and so turned the day for the White Rose of York.

The King he made that day was crowned at York; Cromwell gave praise there after Marston Moor, and of all the fifteen kings, beginning with William of Normandy, which Wylde saw on the rood screen of the minster in the morning, there is perhaps not one who has not worshipped at its altar.

In the narrow crooked streets of Petergate and the Shambles where ancient buildings bowed out to kiss each other; where Elizabethan houses and houses dated 1428 thrust their peaked gables to the sky; and where the ruins of sweet St. Mary's Abbey lie among their gardens beyond the Museum, Wylde went eagerly, imbibing memories which he would not lose again. And lastly, in an old grass-grown neglected churchyard, he found the long-disused little church of Holy Trinity, with its split and very ancient tower, its saddle-back roof, badly broken, its squint for the lepers to look through, and its curious window of St. Olaf holding the loaves of bread which turned to stones because baked on a Sunday.

Peggy was in the minster when Wylde went in by the morning light that streamed gloriously through the Five Sisters window in the north transept, and the enormous hollow mass of the building was echoing with the rolling of the organ and the rich deep voices of the choir. It was in Winchester Cathedral that he had first seen her kneeling at prayer, and that time she had prayed that harm might come to him. He had stood away from her then; but now he went forward and knelt at the chair beside her. He did not want to pray; he had not any thought of prayer, and why he came he could not have told himself. Then Peggy, with that impulsiveness which no teaching would kill, put her left hand on his arm, and Wylde saw that she was crying.

"You've got to forgive me . . . all the harm I ever did you," she whispered.

Wylde stooped his head to her. But his tongue fumbled the words clumsily.

"I guess that's forgiven long ago. But don't think about me any more. I am going away."

She did not answer, and he got up, walking through the stately yet kindly might of the place which some one has called "an oratorio in stone," where every tall column and glowing window cry, "Oh, ye nations, praise ye the Lord." And then he found a verger who took him to the crypts, and told him how the whole history of the Church lies in York Minster; from those rough pedestals believed to have been the stands of pagan gods, up through the strip of Saxon herring-bone wall and staircase and the strong-springing arches of Norman work with their deeply-incised dog-tooth to the glory of the present building, with its great towers standing against the pure skies of night, or the black of storm, or the banked crimson wonders of a sunset.

The Colonel had come to Surrey that morning somewhat troubled.

"Wylde ordered our letters to be sent to Matlock," he said. "That means an extra day, and of course I could write to have them forwarded on to the Manor. But if you don't mind I think we'd best not change our plans. Peggy is looking more than a little peaky, and the open air is good for her."

"It's all right, sir," said Surrey. "One place is much the same as another, and I hope I'm man enough not to make things awkward for her."

"You don't. Though Lady Thrale must have been a thorn. We'll keep the route, then. I sent orders that we would reach the Manor some time on Friday."

Surrey hesitated a moment. Then he went out in silence. For he believed in his heart that by no power of his will could he say to Wylde that which might make him alter his decision to leave England. And yet he knew that, for the Colonel's sake, he would have done it if he could.

With all her arts Peggy tried to drive the anxiety from the Colonel's face as they flashed through hideous Riccall and took the plain road that led by flour-mills,

huge elevators and a toll over the Ouse into healthy red-brick Selby, said to be the birthplace of that strong Henry the First who welded English and Norman until the whole became England and the hated name was nearly forgotten in the country.

But she felt dull—dull as the heavy grey skies that hung over the fine ancient Abbey Church and Market Cross, and over the long line of women trudging the road from Burnley, sad-faced and cheerless, poorly dressed and bent as they went by with empty baskets and no sound but the trampling of their feet. And the Colonel was dull; wrapped in his coat against the chill air and watching the dim stoked fields and the bean-crops spread in faded browns and the strange dark sky that looked charged with thunder; so that at last Peggy lay back, and wondered what was the matter with the day and with the Colonel and with herself.

Good roads led through Whitley and Askern into Doncaster, an energetically new town; with nothing old but the name of a street—St. Sepulchre's Gate—and nothing of note but the name of a race—the St. Leger—run here each September. Near the tall white tower which stands on its green mound at Coningsburgh Wylde turned round.

"Do you remember fat Athelstane, the royal Thane of Coningsburgh in *Ivanhoe*?" he asked. "It shows out well with those green hills behind it. And Hooton Roberts comes next. Where do you English get your names from? Why did he hoot, and what?"

"I don't know," said Peggy, stupidly, and thereafter looked down on a desert of roofs, which was Rotherham beyond Thrybergh and which led down into a very good Dante-picture of Purgatory.

Wylde was at the wheel, and he did not forget that drive under a sky growing darker and heavier with lowering rain where smoke which lay above the trees from the constant trains was solid as white paint squeezed from a tube, and the atmosphere turned from grey to a thick dirty yellow. Buildings rose up, closer

and more close; tram-lines came greasily thick under the wheel at Rotherham, until night shut down at this five of the afternoon, with a horrible murky air and a sun put out by smoke. Against the dark the great Sheffield chimneys stood up, panting fire and red smoke; all the air among the houses was a tangible yellow; and, ripped through the black, again and again, came glimpses of pit-mouths yawning flames and of black quick figures moving behind them.

It was an unreal world, and very horrible; the electric lights burned sickly-pale; passing men were dead-white where the black had not smudged them. All things looked huge and silent as London in a fog, and Wylde climbed through it as through a nightmare, until the air was clean again, and flowers and trees grew once more, and big houses made strong prosperous beauty, and the Purgatory down below was past.

Peggy had not forgotten the sorrowful years of captivity spent here by Queen Mary of Scots before that last act at Fotheringay near Peterborough, nor had she forgotten that straight across from Sheffield lies the Peak country, where Peveril, that fierce son of the Conqueror, once had a stronghold, and the fair gipsy, Fenella, flitted about the rugged stairs and the turrets with her dumb lips and great eyes. And Wylde was thinking of Dick Turpin's ride to York through Newark, and of how he probably took the road they had come at Doncaster.

Near Totley Derbyshire offered forgetfulness of all the horrors of Sheffield when a long climb brought its delights round them; sharp air, clear as crystal; far dropping distances of fields in all-coloured mosaics; deep glens and gullies where evening lights shimmered in the trees; fold on fold of hill and mountain, stained with purple heather; patched with grey rocks, and the russet and bronze and dull green of the bracken. The sunset was gold and scarlet and splendid among the purples of the ringing hills, and near the little pretty Peacock Inn on the top of the grade Wylde stopped.

"I guess it was worth going through hell to get this heaven," he said, and Surrey, though his natural reserve kept his lips shut, understood that the man was as far from any other heaven just then as he felt his own self to be.

The car hummed sweetly down the good-surfaced ways through the glowing moorlands; grouped shining trees stood about a little brown river; a second lovelier Peacock Inn beckoned from a tiny village; Chatsworth House had already flung out its great black-and-gold gates against the streaming sunset, and at the Devonshire Arms Peggy leaned over the front seat to Wylde.

"Chatsworth is the Duke of Devonshire's seat, isn't it?" she said. "There are some Titian and Correggio sketches that I wanted to see. Will it be open?"

"I guess not till Saturday. I'm sorry. But we can see Haddon Hall to-morrow. I reckoned on staying in Bakewell or Rowsley, or running back from Matlock if it was necessary to get the letters to-night."

"To-morrow will do," said the Colonel. "We will stay at Bakewell, Wylde. Peggy must see Haddon Hall, for there's nothing else quite like it in England."

But beyond the quaint old bridge over the brown Derwent Bakewell was having a Fair. Merry-go-rounds, cocoanut-shies and a half-hundred things else were going forward unabashed in the principal street, and so they waited only to see the stiff figures of Dorothy Vernon and her husband praying in the church with the Norman doorway, and ran past the widespread beautiful walls of Haddon Hall beyond the river into Rowsley, where a third Peacock Inn, dated 1652, gave them welcome with its roof-garden and its peacock with spread tail above the door.

When the evening had almost darkened into night the Colonel found Wylde on the road beside the meeting of the Derwent and the Wye, and he added the red of his cigar to the glow from Wylde's pipe and strolled forward with him. The knowledge that this journey together was so nearly ended and that a week

or so would part them again as fully as they had been parted before was on them both, and the Colonel's manner showed a greater tenderness, and Wylde laid aside his half-shy defiance to meet it, so that presently the Colonel took his courage in both hands again.

"Will you let me come out to Canada with you?" he said.

Wylde stopped short; a big tense figure in the darkened twilight, and his voice was hurried and uneven.

"I guess you don't quite understand me," he said. "I am not running away from pain. I have . . . lost my grip, I think. It didn't seem that I'd likely ever come to say that. But it is so. Guest never had it. You'll make decent enough stuff of him in his way. I meant to do so much when I came over. Now I guess I don't want to do anything—except clear out."

The Colonel laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You are not coward enough to tell me that you are giving up everything because you love a girl who doesn't love you?" he said, sternly.

"No. I could make her love me if I set my mind to it. . . . I don't mean to. I'm not fit for her, though I am your son. You couldn't hammer me into a gentleman. You couldn't make me feel I was an honourable man. And I reckon I wouldn't ask her to have anything to do with one who was less."

"You would have done it once."

"I know better now. I was plumb crazy that time. I reckon I can see now that she is meant for fellows like Guest who—who could have the King to breakfast and not turn a hair. She has half broken his heart, and I've been a cur to him; but he can go around like—like an English gentleman, just as kindly and as easy as anything. Look here, for all he's a fool who won't use the common-sense he's got, and for all he makes me feel I'm not in his class, I could . . . I could honour that chap if he hadn't played that one mean trick."

"What was that?"

"When he . . . asked her to marry him." Wylde

was shuffling his feet like a restless horse. "And you forgave him, though you had forbidden it."

"Good heavens!" said the Colonel; "if I had kept Peggy out of all this the matter would have been settled in two days. My dear boy, she asked him, and I was angry enough with him until she told me so. He wouldn't, of course, any more than he would tell you. But you know what a bundle of impulses she is, and—I don't think it would be fair to tell you her reasons. She thought she could help him better that way."

Wylde was silent for a long time. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and refilled it, walking on slowly.

"I came over here hating everybody," he said. "I meant to hammer Guest out of the field, and when I got Smayne's letter I meant to make you smart. I forgot all that when I thought she loved me. I remembered again in Skye, and I came back to give the three of you all the hurting I could. And I guess I have done it."

"My poor boy," said the Colonel, "I believe you have hurt yourself the most."

"You're likely right. I can't hate any one now, and I guess that's what's kept me going all my life. I knew there was some one—some place that I had to get even with. I don't want to do that any more. And I daren't love any more. You know the stuff we're made of, you and I. We can't do things by halves."

"I know that you have twice the vitality, twice the powers of Surrey. You have developed your strength of will as he never did. If you let it all go you know the sin of it as he never did or will."

The Colonel's voice was shaken with earnestness. Wylde shrugged his shoulders.

"You told Guest who I was about two days ago, didn't you?" he asked. "I reckoned you had. Say, would you make me your heir if I promised to stay with you for the rest of my life, and if I could get Peggy to marry me?"

"I—yes, I would," said the Colonel.

"Guest knows that." Wylde laughed shortly. "He isn't treating me quite so much like a hired chauffeur now. Oh, don't you make any mistake. He has never been rude to me, though I've tried hard enough to make him. When he was nastiest he always knew how to do it so's I couldn't kick. But . . . why, he had the whole thing in his hands, and he has let it slip. And I could have it if I would. And . . . I won't. Sounds queer, doesn't it? But I reckon he isn't feeling me a kind of something that doesn't count, now."

"I thought you said you didn't hate him."

"I don't. I'd stay and make him smart if I did." Then, for the first time, Wylde touched the Colonel of his own will when he put his arm for a moment round the wiry narrow shoulders. "You must let me go," he said. "But I would be what you want of me if I could, father."

He was gone, with the unaccustomed touch and the unaccustomed word still warm about the Colonel, and it was the light of Surrey's cigarette which later led the Colonel up to the little roof-garden at the hotel for a moment.

"Has Peggy gone to bed?" he asked.

"Just gone. I've been helping her write notes. She told me that you were wanting a few people asked for the night after we got home. And she has implored Aunt Kate to come over and help her play hostess. I don't think she relishes getting back to that kind of life, somehow. Have you been with Wylde?"

"Yes," said the Colonel, with a sigh. "Good-night."

He went down with the step and face of an old man, and Surrey laid his arms on the rail and dropped his mind again into that arena where it had been fighting so often since he knew the extent of the Colonel's trouble.

In all the small daily tests of life he had missed, stupidly, blindly, until they had built up into the

supreme test such as had carried his father to death in a forlorn hope by the strength of those centuries of manhood and honour and courage which had gone to his making. Surrey could meet this kind of test more easily than the little ones because he could see and realize it. But it was hard—bitterly hard.

He knew rather clearly the one thing which might touch Wylde and lead him to give the Colonel what the old man was so longing for. And that one thing meant that he himself must meet Wylde as he had never met him before—as an equal and a possible friend. Most men are very sensitive of men's opinion. Surrey knew Wylde to be peculiarly so. The Colonel could not count in this matter because of his near relationship. Peggy could not count, for she was only a girl, swayed by so many things. Surrey could and did count, by reason of those very tenets which separated him from Wylde. More than once Wylde had called him "D—d exclusive," and Surrey knew the truth of that. His birth and up-bringing, his life at school and in the army had helped his natural pride to make him so. But only by stepping down from that pride, honestly and simply, could any words of his have weight with Wylde. He knew that—well as he knew that Wylde's suspicions and defiance would instantly detect anything less. At best he had never liked Wylde. At worst he had always loathed the possibility of Peggy's contact with this rough virile nature. But . . .

He tossed the butt of his cigarette over the rail and stood up. He had given the Colonel his word, and if he had the power he would keep it. But he did not know yet if he would have that power when it was needed.

By breakfast-time Peggy had laid her impudent gay hold on life again. She tormented the Colonel with history; she insisted, for the third time, on taking the wheel as they drove back the short road to Haddon Hall, and the tracks left by the car were a grief to Wylde. In the tonneau Surrey was laughing as he

had done on the day when Peggy's hands were under his and she drove a tortuous way on a mile of level track.

"There are about six motors behind us," he said "I am glad that they can't blame me."

"I shall give up the wheel to Mr. Wylde the very instant they get level with us," said Peggy. And she did, and talked placidly of Buxton, where Mary, of Scots and the Earl of Leicester "drank the waters" in an hotel still standing, while Wylde went red as a passing chauffeur threw a glance of interested contempt at him, and swung cleverly in at the open gate before him. Peggy chuckled in a sinful delight.

"I wonder if that man will come and ask us if we want to hire a chauffeur?" she said. "And do you observe that we are going to be 'like dumb driven cattle' in a herd of tourists? It is extremely nice of the Duke of Rutland to let the public see his most ancient family mansion. But this bit of public would so much prefer to do it in private."

Beside the great gates on the rise stood a set of "mounting-steps" in the days of pillions, and through the little postern door, cut low in the tall oak slabs where the stone step was worn almost ten inches deep in the shape of a foot, they came to the courtyard and the buttressed castellated lengths and towers, gleaming with many windows, and hung about their hoary sides with ivy: a beautiful majestic empty shell of the quick warm life which had made a home of the original Haddon since Saxon days and which had left it for ever more than two hundred years ago.

To Wylde, whose life had belonged chiefly to log shacks, York boats, Indian tepees and "frame houses," this place where the "King of the Peak" had once lived in almost royal state was a something that disquieted him. These English who had such history, such traditions, such homes, could not look at the world as a man who begins life with his naked feet flat on the naked earth must do, and he followed the others through rooms, corridors, galleries and stairs with the

surety of what he had told the Colonel last night burning deeper in him.

In the banqueting-hall the polished ceiling-beams and rafters were black with age; the antlers on the walls were bleaching white; the fine old table on the dais was dropping into dust. But from the huge fire-places that once had roared flame to the wainscoted minstrels' gallery which had once rocked with stirring music this room and every other room was redolent yet of the many fair maids and stately women and strong men who had lived out their lives here.

In the withdrawing-rooms window recesses with grotesque carvings looked down on the terraced gardens. The Manners peacock and the boar's head of the Vernons leapt in deep carving or faded painting from walls and mantel-shelves. Royal arms, quaint bosses, crests, arms impaled and impaled again carried the story of marriage and inheritance from floor to floor, along galleries panelled with fading oak and into windows splendid with deep-coloured glass. There were fleurs-de-lis on the grates, guarded by great brass fire-dogs; there were bronze water-coolers, sturdy jack-boots, matchlocks, pewter dishes, a Norman font in the chapel, an ancient oak cradle, and a strange wooden frame for the stringing of cross-bows.

Tapestry in the drawing-room was perfect still; tapestry in the Earl's Chamber was gay with hunting-scenes; the State Bed where Queen Elizabeth is said to have slept and where George the Fourth did sleep at Belvoir was embroidered in its green velvet and white satin by the wife of a Manners who died in the fifteenth century. On the broad rounded steps that led up to the ball-room Peggy halted, whispering to the Colonel.

"The guide says that all six steps are cut out of the solid root of one oak-tree grown here, and that the ball-room is floored—all its one hundred and nine feet—by the rest of the same tree. But she says we needn't believe that unless we like. Do you?"

"I could with practice," said the Colonel. "This is the fourth time I have been here. These long

narrow rooms are infinitely prettier for the old-fashioned minuets and country dances than any other. I wish the long gallery at the Manor were more this shape."

"I wonder what all the 'dainty snooded damsels' and the ruffled gallants of other days would think to see that flock of tourists tramping over this lovely floor?" said Peggy. "Dear, I would absolutely love to waltz down it. And do look at those recesses made on purpose for sitting out between the dances, and the spread-tail Manners peacock and the grim boar's head staring out of the glass. And this little ante-room where Dorothy Vernon slipped away from all the revelry and pushed open that big heavy door, and then . . .

"'She's o'er the Border, and awa'
Wi' Jock of Hazeldean.'

And it would have been just the same to her if he had been only 'Jock' instead of a son of the Earl of Rutland."

"Would it?" said the Colonel, suddenly curious.

"Why, of course," said Peggy, and ran down the steps and out to the winter garden beyond the yew-trees where, at the outer wall, that John Manners of three hundred and fifty years ago had waited the coming of the auburn-haired Dorothy.

The terraces, the gardens, the bowling-green, the flights of steps, up and down, the archery-ground, little foot-bridges over the bending river, tall yews and wide sweeps of grass made a full frame for the old grey grandeur of the place, and Wylde took the car away from it, soberly and somewhat sadly. Time, which could pull the heart out of all this sweet home life and leave it desolate, seemed cruel to brutality.

Through Rowsley again they crossed the Derwent and left the Wye behind with its lush banks of burdock and osiers, and ran down through pretty Darley Dale to sudden steep banks by the river and the High Tor of Matlock rising a sheerly-rugged four hundred feet straight out of the narrow gorge where the Derwent

was swirling into foam. Knots of tall trees thrust among fine grey slabs of rock, high crags, all the beauty of a wild and natural gorge, were brought to a level below bathos by close-set houses, merry-go-rounds, placards announcing "This way to the Lovers' Walk," conjuring tricks, boarding-houses, invitations to Roman caves, caverns and lead-mines, an old hat being petrified under a dripping well, a crowd of people eating peanuts. And then Matlock Baths with more placards. Peggy shut her eyes.

"Take me out of it," she said. "It is one of the loveliest places I've seen if only it could be swept clear. But Hampstead Heath has no right up here."

At Little Cromford Richard Arkwright originated the spinning-jenny, and some of the old mills yet stand. At Ambergate the way threaded over and under railway bridges and a mill showed chimneys exactly like the smoke-stacks of a four-funnelled steamer. Two roads led into Alfreton, but Wylde chose the longest for the grade's sake. And all about them trains and chimneys laid thick smoke on the air; high smoke-stacks were lifting among the trees; dirty red-roofed towns lay out to the south. Four Lane Ends was a thatched village, quaint as its name, with its long old stately church; Swanick was a small new brick town, Alfreton a larger one like it. Beauty was going with Derbyshire, and long flat roads ran into horizon through Normanton, Sutton and Mansfield.

Suddenly came a corner of Sherwood Forest, and great trees and glades dredged with sunlight. The Dukeries lay to northward: Welbeck Abbey, Clumber, Worksop Manor and the rest, seats of the Dukes of Portland, Newcastle, and Sir John Robinson. Somewhere away from sight was history still: Hardwick Hall, Bolsover Castle, Rufford Abbey, ruins of King John's Palace, Robin Hood's Whetstone, and many more to be had for the seeking.

But there was not one in the car that day who cared to wait; and they swung up the glorious roads through huge Spanish chestnuts, oaks and seeding sycamores,

wide beeches, horse-chestnuts and long vistas of bracken russet and gold under dark boles set in the grass. A group of slouching men called on Wylde to stop and asked for tobacco. He was wroth enough to refuse it; but Peggy poured pennies into their hands.

"It is the very nearest thing to highwaymen Sherwood can produce now," she said. "I am so glad they did it. A hundred years ago they wouldn't have been so polite. But there is no romance under the greenwood tree now. And there is nothing left like fat old Friar Tuck with his venison and his 'pax vobiscum,' and Little John . . . oh, did you see that stone set up by the road 'To the memory of Elizabeth Sheppard who was murdered'—somehow? I couldn't read any more. Wasn't Little John the real Jack Sheppard?"

Wylde searched his memory without result as beyond stone walls and huge shady trees and a near horizon edged with soft hills big gates rose at a lodge and all the space before them was filled by an ancient glorious oak.

Wylde halted.

"Newstead Abbey," he said. "But it is open on Tuesdays and Fridays only, and then we would have had to write for tickets. I reckoned there was no chance. It has passed through a good many hands since a schoolfellow of Byron's bought it about 1824, I think. Wasn't that the year Byron died?"

"Yes," said Peggy, looking up the long avenue from which the house was hid. "But he nearly lost it often enough before. Do you remember the story of the bill of sale on the front door and how his old servant pasted brown paper over it? And how he himself wanted to be buried there in the garden with his dog? I would like to think that this perfectly lovely old oak at the gate was the one he planted. But I'm afraid it wouldn't be."

"I guess he loved that place," said Wylde, moving on slowly. "And I guess it hasn't held a man who loved

more and hated more since it was first built in the twelfth century. I am glad folk have kept his room almost the same. He tangled up his life if ever a man did, but he was too big a genius to take life easily. . . . The bit I like best to remember about Byron is his coming post-haste from London to find his mother dead, and sitting crying by her all night, saying he had lost his only friend. I reckon he made that true, too. He had more enemies than friends."

Past curious small Papplewick and villages infinitely smaller still a bridge led over and round into a red-brick end of Hucknall-Torkard. On that day, almost ninety years ago, when the hearse bearing Byron home crawled at the end of its eight-day journey into Nottingham and crawled out with eleven carriages only behind it into Hucknall-Torkard the little town was rough and poor and squalid with colliers' houses. On this day it was clean and importantly prosperous with red brick; and the small grey old church of St. James had been renovated, though the dark Norman tower still stands above it, and the huge pillars and timbers of the nave still close in the low quiet place to dull shadows.

It was Shelley who called Byron "The Pilgrim of Eternity," and this is scored round his bust, there. But the slab without the altar-rail bears the word "Byron" only, in letters of brass flanked by the two dates, and it is shut in with a wreath of brass sent by the King of Greece. From somewhere a line of verse was marching through Wylde's head.

"So ends Childe Harold his last pilgrimage," he said, half aloud, and Peggy looked up at him.

"He calls existence 'a sad jar of atoms,'" she said. "I hope he knows better now. And doesn't it seem strange to you that one poet should lie in that lovely peaceful Stratford-on-Avon and another, also a mighty genius, should have this ugly colliery town? And even the names of them! Nothing could be much harsher than Hucknall-Torkard."

"He might have been happier in his garden," said

Wylde. "But here he has his mother and his daughter either side of him. They burnt their way through life quickly, didn't they? All three died young. Byron was only thirty-six."

Among the trees in the churchyard the wind was muttering, and the slanting crosses and stones looked mournful in the grey light. A few drops of rain fell, slow and heavily; and under the brown hood Peggy curled in her corner of the tonneau again, remembering that to-morrow would end all this, and wondering what she was going to do when it became necessary to do more than sit still and let others direct her ways.

In Nottingham the standard of King Charles first rose against the Parliament of England and for six or eight miles various policemen told Wylde to "Follow the tram-lines." It was a clean ordinary town, busy with its lace and stocking manufactories and forgetful of its ancient Saxon derivation and its place as one of the "Five Boroughs" of the Danes. The Conqueror built the first castle, in which Owen Glendower was imprisoned. It once was called the Key of the Midlands, and the dungeons where men suffered are strong and dark there yet, beneath the Museum and Art Galleries with their collections of pottery and lace and pictures. In the huge Market-place the upper stories of the houses are propped by pillars, and a tall fine Market Cross showed as the car ran out to country sights and air again, a dim distance of straight reddish roads past straggling Plumtree, and high thick fences of thorn.

Up the steep climb to Broughton Hill the red road was greasy with drizzling rain, and then the way wound unevenly down into pretty bosky Melton Mowbray, chief hunting centre of the Midlands, with all its jolly memories of Whyte Melville and Market Harborough and all good huntsmen. Peggy was humming—

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky
Foretell a-hunting mo-o-orning,"

as the wind blew keen under the drift, and the hilly

wooded country seemed to dash past at a hand-gallop by steep larger hills and little hills, barer country, and then Barleythorpe with its first notice of Rutland.

Oakham was near, drenched in rain, and Wylde turned straight to the George Hotel.

"We haven't got much choice here," he said. "And this is the most historical. Some of it is twelfth century, I believe, and—good land, it looks like it."

Down a narrow side-alley he drove to a door that opened near a bar. Then he looked again at the Colonel.

"You needed to stay here to-night?" he asked. "It is only about sixteen miles to Stamford."

The Colonel had been consulting the letters he got at Matlock.

"I must meet Marten here to-morrow morning," he said. "It's all right. Peggy won't mind roughing it a little."

But Wylde's face and words meant more to Surrey than he had thought. This man chose rather to drive sixteen miles in the fierce storm that was now yelling down the street than to bring Peggy to a place of less comfort than she was accustomed to. Surrey would have more than hesitated about going on himself. In his thick gloves his hands were numb, and Wylde never wore gloves at the wheel. He stood a little, watching him run the car on into the yard and through the garage doors. And when, a half-hour later, he went to the door again, seeing Wylde in his oilskins with a hose going patiently over the body of the car, he thought still further.

He would not have done that, either, for there were two men watching, and if the paint was scratched by careless handling a few pounds later on would have set the matter right.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO MEN AND A MAID

THE George Hotel had seen glorious days when it was once the private residence of some forgotten nobleman. Now its rambling stairs and empty rooms looked sad and dreary in the dim lights, and the storm that whistled and shook about its many corners seemed to drop it into a deeper desolation still. But there was comfort of roaring fires and big chairs and a smoking dinner at which Wylde, dripping and dirty in the garage, did not appear. And after dinner Peggy took a chair and a novel to the corner of the fire, and the Colonel settled down to write letters, and Surrey strayed out to find some place where he could smoke his cigar.

Through a dim landing an open door led into a low long room, suggestive of bygone balls or banquets, and littered now by cane chairs, a small piano covered with dust and torn comic songs and rag-time dances and a table thrust in a corner and strewn with broken glasses and some empty bottles. In its pitiful deterioration the old room seemed to murmur with tongues of the past, and Surrey walked up and down the length of it many times, smoking and thinking.

He felt curiously quiet and steady to-night. During the last few days he had sunk low with the self which wanted those things that he had believed to be his all his life, and he had struggled up into honourable renunciation, and he had stumbled and fallen again. Just now he had got self under his heel, and if Wylde would only come while he could keep it there he might be able to do that which he was pledged to do.

About ten o'clock Wylde came, purely because he

was too tired to change, and too dirty to go before Peggy otherwise. He had dined off two whiskies and three pipes only, and in the faint light from the landing he looked rougher than usual. But, because Surrey's senses were abnormally acute to-night, he knew that the spirit in the man was flagging more than the flesh, and this made him bold.

"For Heaven's sake bring your pipe along here, Wylde," he said. "This old place is full of ghosts, and they'd be the better for some smoking out."

Wylde fell into step beside him, silently. It was the long gliding step which Surrey remembered on that first day in London, when, just for a little while, his fear of this man had waked. So much had gone by since then that it seemed more like a year than a few months, and even now, whilst he and Wylde dropped out their casual surface conversation, he was feeling the pulse of that light long tread which had walked across his life and trampled out so much in the doing of it.

Wylde was talking of the car, jerking out his sentences between strong puffs at his pipe.

"She's a little thoroughbred," he said. "I never want to drive a better. We'll have covered over five thousand miles in her, and I've never known her refuse anything or play dog on me yet. Why . . . I guess I'll hate leaving her as much as anything."

"I have been wondering why you are so determined to leave her and everything else ever since the Colonel told me you were his son," said Surrey.

"Have you?" Wylde's tone was curt, and his tread rang crisper.

"He is an old man," said Surrey, "and you have made him love you. He has been all a father could be to Peggy and me, but we can't give him what you can. I was a penniless little beggar when he took me, and I'd gladly give him what he wanted if I could. But it is only you can do that. And I understand that you don't mean to. You'll forgive me if I say I'm sorry, Wylde?"

But Wylde's nerves were strung too tightly to be loosed by even the real sincerity in Surrey's voice.

"Don't you give me that fool talk," he said, roughly. "How could I ever let him have what you couldn't? By Heaven, d'you think I don't know what you think of me and of yourself behind that d——d smoothness of yours? I guess if you have any sense at all you won't pretend to me that you think me your equal, for I know better."

Surrey stopped. The rain was tapping on the old-fashioned window-panes where the storm shook the fastenings with fierce hands, and in the dusk of the room he could scarcely see the man opposite him.

"I won't tell you that I consider you my equal," he said, very quietly; "because I know that in some ways you are my superior."

Wylde made a half-step, and Surrey heard him take his breath in a gasp.

"By ——, if you try to make fun of me——" he cried, and Surrey answered swiftly to the ring of fury.

"You know it yourself," he said. "And I know it. I have wasted my powers. I have lost what seems to me just now pretty much the only things I have ever cared for because I am less of a man than you are."

Wylde felt the sudden blood in his face and ears. He knew, just a little, what it was costing the reserved Englishman to say this.

"Would a man who was your superior have done what I did to you?" he said.

"If I had not been your inferior there you could not have done it. My own honour was weaker than yours when I distrusted her."

Surrey's voice was cold with the pain in it. Wylde turned and walked through the room, leaving Surrey by the window where the rain beat restlessly. Then he came back.

"You know why I can't stay," he said with sudden passion. "Good Lord; what does one man more or less matter! Let me go, and the Colonel will fill up

his life with you and . . . her again. I'm not fit for her. I'm not fit."

"I think you've expiated some of your sins, haven't you?"

"You think!" Wylde half laughed. "You can think what you like, but I reckon you won't think what I've been feeling since Killin. You . . . a man like you . . . who's never wanted to live with every inch of him . . . and she meant about the only thing that had ever been sacred to me . . . and I . . . would have said anything against her then to get my knife into you. . . ."

Surrey could not understand. The huge primeval forces that dwell in some souls had never swayed him.

"Poor old chap," he said, simply.

And as Wylde turned down the room again Surrey fell into step beside him, and the Colonel, going to bed an hour later, saw the two figures in the dim room where the storm rattled, treading up and down, up and down, together.

But he did not halt, even a moment, though his heart asked the question which was in his eyes when Surrey came to his room next morning.

Surrey looked tired, for Wylde's sharper, fiercer nature had not been easy handling. He looked out of the window on the street of sickly sunlight, and he spoke bravely.

"Wylde will stay with you six months, sir. At the Manor, or where you please. But you will have to let him go then. And nothing would move him in regard to Peggy. I would have had no right to give him any hope there, but he did not want it. He says he won't ask her, and he will keep his word . . . unless that temper of his upsets him again."

"That is more than I had hoped for," said the Colonel. "I . . . I could not have lost you both at once. And Surrey . . . my dear lad . . . you will always be my son, too. Always."

"I know that, sir. I know you have room in your heart for us both. And for Peggy."

"I wish I could send Peggy back to school. Surrey, you know I have asked the Sutton-Comptons and a few more of the people about to that little dinner to-morrow night. I shall introduce Wylde as my son then. It will give him his place. And I will make my friends understand that he has not ousted you from yours."

Surrey went red. This promised to be an ordeal for himself as well as Wylde.

"I think it would be easier if you did it privately," he said.

"It is not going to be specially easy in any case. But that has nothing to do with it. He has got to understand, as I have already told him, that if he ruins his life now he brings disgrace on more than himself. And Peggy shall not know until then. I think he won't forget the public recognition from the friends round my own table and from the servants in the house where he should have been born."

"I'll be bound he won't. But you'd best let me coach him a bit first, or I think he'll probably run."

"Would he let you?"

"I fancy he would . . . now," said Surrey, simply, and the Colonel said no more. But he went to breakfast with a lighter heart than he had carried for very long.

When the Colonel went to his appointment Surrey and Wylde took Peggy round this small capital of Rutland with its ancient history and its sleepy suggestion of a half-forgotten village. Surrey had been through it many times before, and he led straight to a small shop where he procured a tall boy and the key of that old Hall which is all remaining of the Norman Castle, and in which it is almost certain that the Assizes have been held without cease from the Conqueror's day until this.

The tall boy knew his history and legends well, and he gave Peggy both with careful precision; from the style of architecture in the Norman pillars and massive

oak beams and rafters to the story of the horse-shoes of all sizes, all shapes, and metals which hung on the white walls to the number of about two hundred.

"Some say that when Queen Elizabeth was a-passing through she had her horses shod here, and so she made a charter that every titled person who came through Oakham should leave a horse-shoe," said the boy. "I don't know. That might be all, for she was fond of making charters. But I've heard she was fonder of reviving old customs, and the story goes that a Norman Duke named Farrier used to take a shoe from the horse of every visitor who came to see him here——"

"As a guarantee of good faith," explained Surrey. "Did the guest get a stirrup-cup when he was allowed to depart again?"

"I don't know, sir. But he couldn't go until the Duke's blacksmith put the shoe on. No, sir; I don't know if he did it for nothing. He ought to, one would think. And it's just likely that the word 'farrier' comes from that Duke. And anyway, the horse-shoes are here."

"That is undeniable," said Peggy. "And I'm quite sure the Duke was responsible. That was a much nicer way than imprisoning his guests if he was doubtful of them. But you can't guarantee that even this little plain real horse-shoe with no name on it is older than Elizabeth's time?"

The boy could not. But he pointed out to her the names and titles which ran in gold lettering round each of the crowned, coroneted or plain shoes sent by dukes and earls, by princes and barons, iron, steel or gilt, large or small, well or evilly shaped according to the fancy of the sender.

"And maybe you've heard of the poetry about the Lord of Burghley at 'Burghley House by Stamford Town'?" he said. "That's his up there . . . 'Henry, Earl of Exeter, 1774.' That's not the Burley House near here, sir."

"I know that, my boy," said Surrey. "Now, will

you cut the young lady one of your horse's-legs from the chestnut-tree before we go!"

It was a perfectly-shaped shoe and foot and pastern that the boy made from a joint of the huge horse-chestnut without the Hall where the green mounds of an ancient fort and moat circled the whole; and then Peggy took photographs of the splendidly-preserved Buttercross which spread its wide wings in a high-pitched round in the street, cherishing yet in its shade a long strong set of stocks, so arranged that a man on the stone step of the centre pillar could be locked into them, and so sit in the midst of the on-going market in open shame.

It was Wylde who offered himself as a victim to be photographed in them; and Peggy took this, her third picture of him, with a curious feeling of unreality somewhere. She was taking him shackled and helpless when he was just going to be free. In the little fifteenth-century church they found a Norman font, and then Surrey laughed.

"And this is really all there is in Oakham," he said. "Shall we go and see if the Colonel is ready?"

"But it was a dear little church," said Peggy. "And there should never be a picture of an English landscape without a church spire in it, for they are always there in reality. And on this side of the country it is all spires and windmills like razors with all their blades spread, or a collection of combs without any brushes."

"One missed the spires in Scotland," said Wylde. "I can't remember seeing any there. . . . I reckon that is the Colonel coming now."

His manner was quiet, almost to sternness, and he talked little with Surrey when Surrey swung the car out of the small town and up the road to a green bank set about with enormous chestnuts, where a small blacksmith's shop with brown horses dappled in sun and shadow outside it claims to be the original of Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith."

"And quite probably it is," said Peggy. "It could easily be the little church at Oakham where—"

"He goes to church on Sunday, and hears his daughter sing,
And thinks "How like her mother!" who's dead, poor thing."

"Peggy, Peggy," said the Colonel, "that is not Longfellow."

"That is quite true. Nothing in this world is what you reasonably might expect it to be. For instance, you wouldn't expect the Duke of Rutland to live at Belvoir in Leicestershire, or the Duke of Devonshire to live in Derbyshire . . . or any one to have so little consideration for the human anatomy as to make the car 'plop-plop' as if we had a geyser from Yellowstone Park underneath us. Do go on, Surrey. What kind of developments are you expecting?"

Surrey shifted the lever slowly.

"That's the other Burley House through those gates," he said. "You don't often see side-wings built in such a curve as that, and I believe Cromwell held them both at the time of the battles round Nottingham. The old house was burnt down about two-fifty years ago; but this is a fine block. It belongs to a Mr. Finch, descendant of the Dukes of Nottingham."

He gave his information conscientiously, and for some unexplainable reason Peggy felt the tears rush to her eyes. He tried so hard now to give her what he thought she cared for . . . now, when nothing could make any difference.

The way was lined with fields of wheat, and of red clover; with tall chestnuts thick with their green prickly burrs; with poppies and pale honeysuckle fluttered over with white butterflies. And yet there was little of interest, and the narrow twisting ways were muddy and dull until Surrey struck the main road four miles from Stamford.

Great Casterton was infinitesimal, charming; a cluster of thatched houses with deep eyebrows and flowers up the walls. Just beyond a by-road led off to Little Casterton, and Peggy sat up in amaze.

"If that was Big Casterton what could Little be like?" she said. "Surrey, can't you go down and see?"

"We wouldn't find it, Peggy. Don't you remember that time we saw the sign 'Ten mile limit through the village' and we went on looking for the village till we found the end of the limit? But we never found the village."

"The angels forgot to take it out of the toy-box that morning. Mr. Wylde, you will have to go over to Tickencote Church some day. It has the most glorious Norman Arch. And there are all the Stamford spires marshalled along the sky-line. This feels quite like getting home, doesn't it? Which way do we go into Peterborough, dear?"

"Wylde wanted to go round by Crowland to see the bridge and something of the fens. And the day is young yet. We'll lunch here, I suppose, Surrey."

Peggy approved, for in her heart she felt a strange dread of coming to the end of this day which was to mean the end of so much more. The Manor had never been the home to her it was to Surrey, who had spent many holidays there. But the Colonel had so seldom lived at the Manor since his wife's death, and almost all Peggy's years had been spent abroad. And it would be so empty. In a few days Surrey would go to London, and then to India, and so out of her life. In a few weeks at most Wylde would go back to Canada, and so out of her life more surely still. And these intimate months which meant so much more than years of ordinary intercourse could not snap off short without leaving loneliness and pain. Even yet Peggy could scarcely believe that the tone of Surrey's voice, the sound of his step would mean nothing to her any more. It had shocked her into a terror lest she was fickle, heartless, lest her love had not been love at all. And yet, knowing with a knowledge that would not go with years, how she had suffered before she allowed her love dead, she wore a brave face, even as Surrey did, and kept her eyes from the future.

At lunch she forbade Wylde get his guide-books.

"I can tell you all you want to know," she said.

"There are four old churches here, but they are only

interesting outside; and though Stamford was once very celebrated for its monasteries they have all been blown up or blown down—anyway, they are gone. The very first English newspaper, called *The Mercury* was published here at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the very fattest man in the world, called Daniel Lambert, is also published here on postcards, because he was born in Stamford. Tennyson's 'Burghley House' where the village maiden came as a bride is quite near, and there is a nice old church. And Hereward the Wake's camp is supposed to be at Bourn, about five miles north of this place."

"But history says that he had a fortified island in the fens round Ely," said Wylde.

"I can't help that. He was 'the darling of the English,' so he is sure to have had lots of stories told about him. But I believe it is true that the only way the Conqueror could get to his stronghold was by putting his army into flat-bottomed boats all round Hereward while he built two miles of road through swamp and bog and forest to the island and forced the English to surrender. But Hereward went out of the back door and got a ship, and he returned to discourage the Normans so much by killing them that William gave him his island back and he lived happy ever after. And that is all quite true, isn't it, dear?"

"Absolutely," said the Colonel. "I didn't think you could have done it, Peggy. And now we'll go straight on."

But the scanty remains of a grand old priory, now used as a cattle-shed, called a halt from Peggy just on the rim of the town while she went down the little twisted track to take a photograph of it.

"I have never had my camera when the priory has been here before," she said as Wylde put her back in the tonneau. "And I have got three snaps of that glorious unusual old Norman arch which they have bricked up to keep the cattle from getting cold. And all those great rafters where incense and the sound of

Latin chanting used to rise is filled with fodder and cobwebs. I do want to buy that place."

"Your taste is catholic," said the Colonel. "And it is also rather expensive. If I remember right you want to buy Lochmaben and those rocks at Land's End, and a Highland accent——"

"I've bought something which I don't like so well," said Peggy, with her head close to his arm. "And I paid a good deal for it, too."

"If you have been buying imitation antiques, Peggy——"

"No, dear. It was only experience. And it isn't antique at all. It is so new that it feels quite raw yet. And it is not imitation, either."

The Colonel moved to put his arm about her as the quiet trees and hedges slid by.

"You told me it was going to be a colossal chaos, my darling," he said. "But I think all this had to be. Only we would not have put it through so quickly in any other way."

"But is it put through? I am afraid you will end by having to give your worldly goods to a Society for the Suppression of Something, dear."

"I have tried to rule two lives," said the Colonel; "and they have taken themselves out of my hands as you told me they would. God knows what will come of it . . . but you won't leave me, my little girl?"

"Never while you want me," said Peggy, gravely, and curled up in her corner again.

Past charming flowery Uffington, where great gates and gardens proclaimed a private place of importance, a few brick-built houses showed at the beginning of Deeping on the edge of Lincolnshire. And then came two miles of single-storey scattered hamlet through Deeping, Market Deeping, and Deeping St. James; with the road twisting and swinging right and left, and the Blue Bird singing a serene way round every corner which Surrey expected to lead into the country again, and Peggy laughing in the tonneau and children boating on the Welland river by the road.

The fen country was wet and flat as stale beer, and almost of the same colour. The red twisting road was narrow and built up like a railway embankment, and all across the level distances wound other lifted roads where passing motors and vehicles looked curiously unsafe. In the drained low fields by the canals men were cutting the faded grass, and windmills helped to make the scenery yet more un-English.

On the far right stood up the old Abbey walls of Crowland, and in the centre of the little narrow-streeted town was squatted the three-arched bridge, dry with the dust from unnumbered generations of feet in the street about it, and hoary with an antiquity beyond knowledge. Peggy climbed the rough steps to the tread of the bridge itself; paved with coarsest stones, humped clumsily in the centre, and shaped very like the three legs on the device of the Isle of Man. Tradition says it was once the boundary between the two counties, but the present boundary is five miles away. Tradition says also that it was built about the end of the tenth century in the time of Edward the Martyr or that Edwy the Fair who followed him. It says, moreover, that the very ancient crude figure hewn out of rough stone against the bridge wall is a monk with a loaf of bread, a Saxon King, and William the Conqueror, but it can give no hint of the time when the water beneath the bridge ran dry for ever and its strange squat hog-backed strength became a matter for curiosity only.

Beyond it were very worn, very crooked steps for mounting to the pillion, and at the street end the grand arches of the ruined Abbey rose against the sky. Many of the figures still in the niches were boldly fine, but the general architecture seen from the front gave the suggestion of two coffin-boards, one upside down. Guthlac, a Saxon hermit, is said to have been the original founder of Crowland Abbey, but Surrey knew the present building for twelfth century at earliest. It was little more than a mask; a brave front hiding ruin behind it, and through the darkening

afternoon they took the plain dull road to Peterborough, where men were cutting grain and grass in the low level fields ridged by drains that sometimes seemed to take the place of hedges.

Eye Græen was brick-red chimneys and old grey beautiful windmills. Beyond Eye came tram-lines and a black-and-yellow wicked sky promising the storm that caught them savagely in the narrow zigzag streets of Peterborough, where the large seventeenth-century Market Cross is now a barracks, and the gleam of a grand old gateway showed the base of that towering spire which had stood bold and grey against the black for some time past.

Peterborough was the Colonel's own town, and Surrey swung straight for his own hotel and through to the garage, where they gasped, dripping, while the thunder rocked the earth and the yellow clouds split with lightning.

"It will pass in an hour or two," said the Colonel. "Then we'll get home. You must go in and be dried, Peggy, but I expect Wylde would sooner go and see the Cathedral."

He did not offer to go with him, and Wylde was thankful. He was feeling utterly restless and at war with himself. His promise to Surrey had been given with effort, and he guessed well that it would be kept with effort. And yet that night in the dim room at the George was one which neither man would have forgone, or would forget. For the first time the Colonel's dream of the good which might come to those dissimilar natures by their understanding of each other had the possibility of realization—now, when it was almost too late.

And yet it was not quite too late; and Wylde knew it when he beat through the rain to the door of the Cathedral and entered suddenly into a sense of enormous height and width and length, dark with the storm raging without, except where a few lights in the choir made the dusk darker, and silent, except when the echo of the organ rolled down the nave and passed

again. Outside was thunder and an occasional flash of lightning against the windows. Inside was this majesty of Norman pillars; of heavy black up to the painted tall ceiling; of awe in the knowledge that people had praised God just here ever since Penda, King of Mercia, built the first Saxon church on these foundations in 656. Here Katherine of Aragon, the cruelly-divorced first wife of Henry the Eighth, sleeps in the upper aisle; and here, fifty-one years after, the body of Mary Queen of Scots was brought hastily to interment from Fotheringay, just a few miles distant. And here, on the right wall near the door, in crude colours, with his grave-digger's shovel, is painted a portrait of Old Scarlett, who, according to the legend underneath—

“... Inerred two queenes within his place
And his townes house holders in his lives space Twice over.”

In later days Cromwell's men destroyed the monuments of both. But Mary's son had already removed her to Westminster Abbey, already razed the place where she was beheaded to the ground.

The Cathedral was very dark, and the roll of the music coming to Wylde among the shadows put slow peace into him. He had suffered and struggled all his life through; and now he was asked to give up the struggle and to take what ease life offered him. And he could not do it. He knew with every fibre of him that it would be stagnation; living death. He knew that the long empty distances and the winds unbreathed until they struck his lips from the snow-mountains called his blood back to them, and he knew that he must go. And he knew that he would not ask Peggy to go with him. And yet, because Surrey had given him back his self-respect in that night which neither would forget, he was tempted to do it as he had not been tempted before. But the strength of the man knew how to meet a thing like that. Jealousy had gone, the desire for revenge had gone, Surrey had

sweetened remorse, and sheer pain of mind or body had never frightened Wylde.

For long he sat there, with his forehead on the chair before him, and he knew that he had got back his grip on life again. He knew it, though he did not put it into words until some hours later. And this was after Surrey had brought them through great gates and parks and down a huge avenue of horse-chestnuts, splendid in dusk, to the wide-winged Elizabethan house where light streamed from the broad doorway and a double row of servants stood on the steps to welcome them.

The Colonel's hand was on Wylde's arm as they passed under the door together, and he said, low in Wylde's ear—

"Welcome home, boy." And Surrey, turning back in the wide hall where the light streamed on his broad shoulders and fair head, smiled at him with that new comradeship which braced Wylde's shoulders and carried him past the curtseying army which he would have feared much less had they borne naked weapons.

It was to an old part of the Manor, up and down rambling passages and over broad landings where the feet sank noiseless in thick carpets, that the Colonel himself took Wylde into long low rooms, opening with French windows on a raised terrace with a sunk garden beyond lying wide to the park.

"These were my rooms when I was a boy," said the Colonel. "I gave orders that they should be made ready for you. Surrey never used them."

Wylde turned from the firelight leading along the walls hung yet with the Colonel's trophies and rifles and fishing-rods. He wanted all the air that those open windows and broad lawns could give him. The Colonel came to his side, and his voice was anxious.

"You are not regretting that you have promised me a little while, are you?" he asked.

"No." Wylde spoke slowly. "I guess I am regretting that——" He turned suddenly. "You thought that when I saw all this you'd be able to keep me," he

said. "God knows I'd do it if I could. But I can't. I cannot. I must go. I must be free. I must be free."

He would not look at the Colonel, though he felt the keen eyes on his face. Then the Colonel touched where he had not dared before.

"If Peggy loved you——"

"She would have to come with me. But she will never love me, for I won't try to make her." He looked away to the window again, and his voice dropped. "I must go in a while," he said. "It is too late to make over my life now. But I want you to know, sir, that I guess I've got it mapped straight again. I'll take your name when I go back, and I won't make you ashamed of it."

Down in the inner hall, where light from the huge fireplace splashed over polished oak floors and ran away in shimmers along the suits of armour that Peggy had personal and irreverent names for, Surrey, coming down the shallow stairs carved and black with age, found Peggy herself, a slim small white outline against the red light where she warmed her feet on the hearth. Surrey had a handful of letters, and he came straight to her.

"I have got to go down and report the day after to-morrow, Peggy," he said. "The date of our sailing is put forward. We leave the next week. I should go to-morrow, but the Colonel wants me at night."

Peggy moved out of the flare of light, leaning on the wall where the Colonel's coat-of-arms, which was also Wylde's, was cut deep in the oak.

"You will come back to say good-bye?" she said.

"I am afraid not. The Colonel will be down to see me off. But——" He hesitated. Then he came a step nearer. "Peggy," he said, "is it no use?"

"None, dear," she said, and put her hand on his black sleeve. "Oh, Surrey! don't think me heartless. It—it has hurt me, too."

"I know," he said, huskily. "It was my fault, Peggy."

"I don't know. I meant to manage everything

myself. And . . . I have just broken it all up. If I had waited for you . . . for you——”

“Never think of that again, dear. I was a brute and a fool. I can’t understand why I didn’t tell you long ago. I always loved you. But I just let everything slip.”

“You—you won’t do it any more, Surrey?”

“I hope not. I think not. Wylde and I have talked that out. . . .” He stopped, then said with an effort: “We are going to be better men because we have loved you. Not worse.”

“Oh, don’t!” cried Peggy, and dropped on the settle in an agony of weeping. “Oh, don’t! You couldn’t hurt me more, when I know . . . I know——”

Surrey stooped to her and his healthy clean-skinned face was white.

“Don’t cry, dear,” he said. “God knows you shouldn’t cry over anything that has taught me to understand myself . . . or taken the bitterness out of Wylde.”

“That wasn’t my doing,” sobbed Peggy. “And—he hates me now.”

Surrey drew a long breath. By Wylde’s order his lips were sealed here. Then he straightened, seeing Wylde on the stair beyond Peggy, and knowing quite surely that Wylde had read in the broken voice what he himself had read. For a moment the two men looked at each other full. Then Wylde turned and went up the stairs again, and Surrey brought Peggy back to her poise, cheerfully, tenderly, so that she never knew that one despairing sentence had told two men who loved her what she did not know herself.

Through the next day, by Surrey’s help Wylde stiffened himself for the torture that was to come with the night. This big ancient house with its liveried servants, its luxury, its rows of painted ancestors in the Long Gallery, oppressed him as the knowledge that he had only two cents in his pocket had never done. Surrey, the thoroughbred, with the fine physique and that easy dignity which would never be Wylde’s, was

the real heir to all this, let birth say what it would. Wylde was a stranger in the home of his fathers, and though he lived here until his latest day he would always be a stranger. And the soul of him would always struggle for freedom.

Sadly enough the Colonel watched Wylde all that day. But he had come to understand that no words which Wylde could force his lips to speak would make any difference. He had chosen that this dreaded son should grow up apart from him, and now the law of circumstance was too strong. His son and his son's children would never make the old silent Manor glad again. His son would never give to him the frank loving thought that Surrey gave. As he had bent the twig at the beginning so the tree had grown—away from him. And because he knew this without hesitation it was not Wylde only who felt his heart come thickly to his throat when the Colonel stood up just at the moment when his sister was gathering glances round the table, and called Wylde to him.

It was all said in a half-dozen direct simple sentences to these neighbours who had known the Colonel in his youth. And then Wylde was hemmed in by kindly unfamiliar faces, and strong hands were gripping his, and many voices were calling him by a name that sounded strange in his ears. Surrey had looked at him in the first moment, seeing the dull flush run from chin to forehead and stay there. And after that he had not moved his eyes from Peggy.

In a little while the Colonel came through the moving crowd, speaking low in Surrey's ear.

"Where is Peggy? Did she go out before the others? I—I couldn't look at her."

"She went through the Long Gallery—to the library, I expect. And," said Surrey, bending his tall head, "I am just going to send Wylde there for that book he got in York."

"Good heavens! Are you mad? It is too soon, in any case. And you don't know——"

"I know that it is now or not at all. They are both

knocked clean off their base, and if we give them time to get on again they'll stay there. One can't expect such a combination of circumstances again—thank the Lord!"

Surrey had been tried more than a little himself. But he passed one and another with his frank smile, finally extricating Wylde, giddy and blind with nervousness, and sending him stumbling down the Long Gallery, where rows of his painted ancestors looked down on him without recognition, and into the dim library beyond.

The ordeal had fully come up to Wylde's expectations; and the noise, the lights, the tension in his brain had stupefied him. He crossed the library where on the thick carpet his feet made no sound, and fumbled along the book-cases, not knowing what he had come for.

Then he looked over the room, seeing Peggy on the floor with her golden head down in the wreath of her bare arms on the seat of the Colonel's chair. And, quite suddenly and surprisedly, he knew what he had come for. He crossed the room and lifted her. And Peggy, trying hazily to make her world stop spinning and sit steady on its axis, felt his lips on hers, and gave up the attempt.

THE END

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