

**CIHM  
Microfiche  
Series  
(Monographs)**

**ICMH  
Collection de  
microfiches  
(monographies)**



**Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques**

**© 1997**

## Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

- Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires:

L'institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached / Pages détachées
- Showthrough / Transparence
- Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /  
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10x	14x	18x	22x	26x	30x
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12x	16x	20x	24x	28x	32x

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

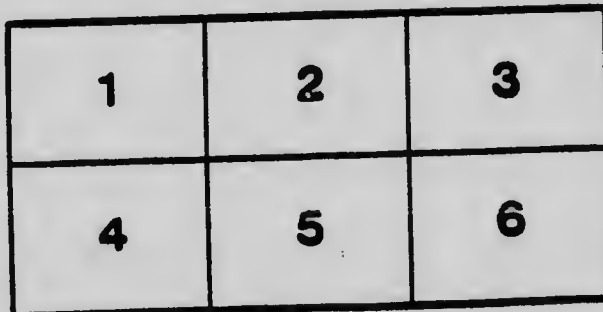
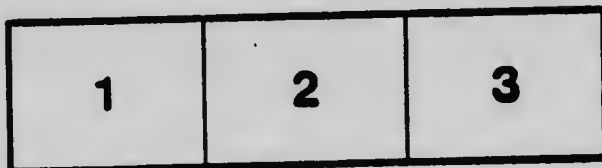
National Library of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche sheet contain the symbol  $\rightarrow$  (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol  $\nabla$  (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

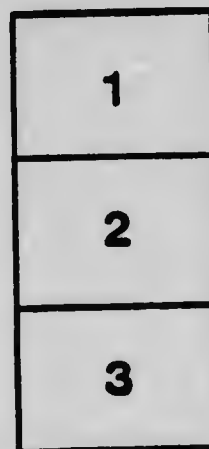
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaît sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole  $\rightarrow$  signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole  $\nabla$  signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.50

1.56

1.63

1.71

1.78

1.86

1.94

2.02

2.11

2.20

2.29

2.38

2.47

2.56

2.65

2.74

2.83

2.92

3.01

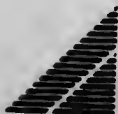
3.10

3.19

3.28

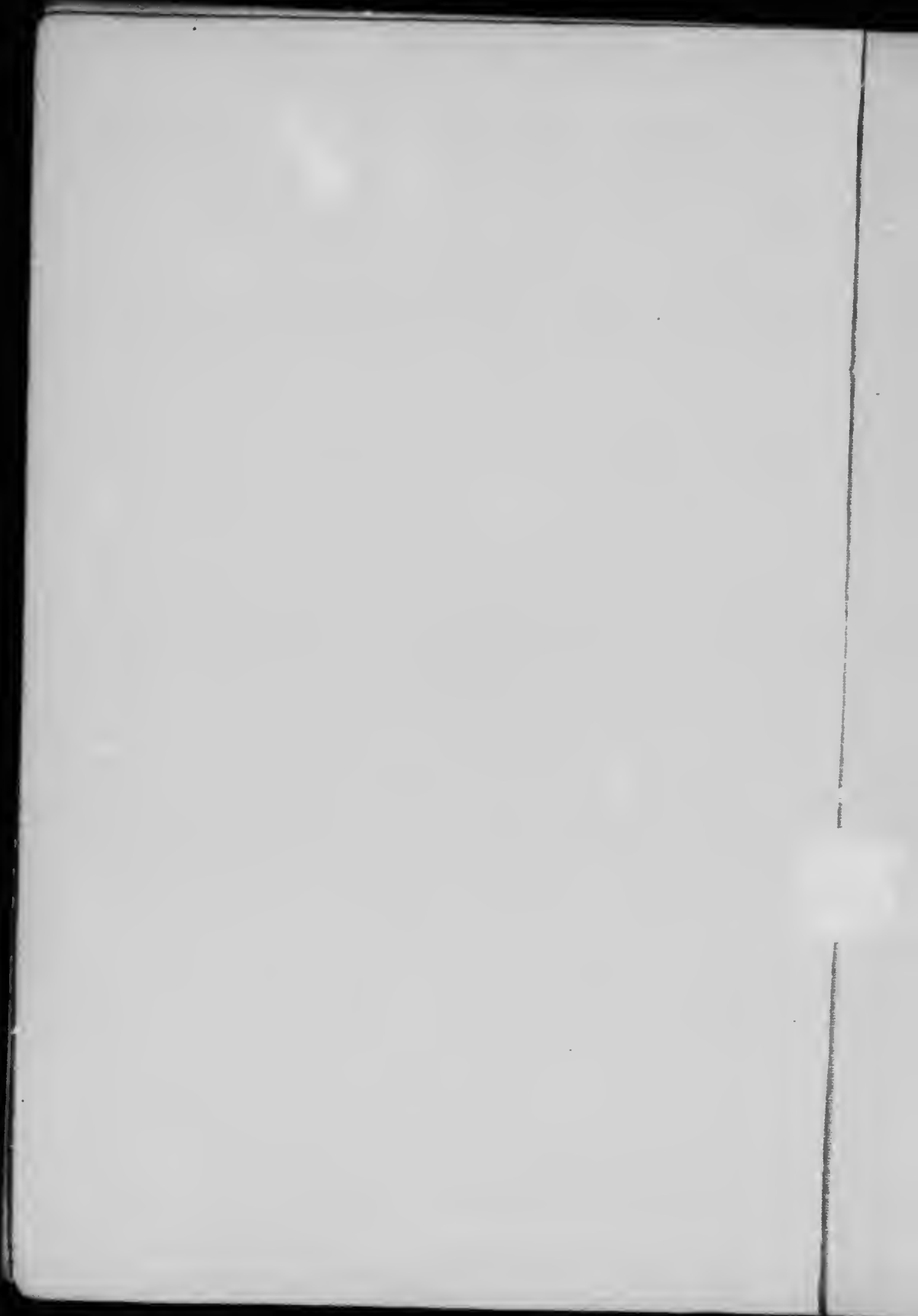
3.37

3.46

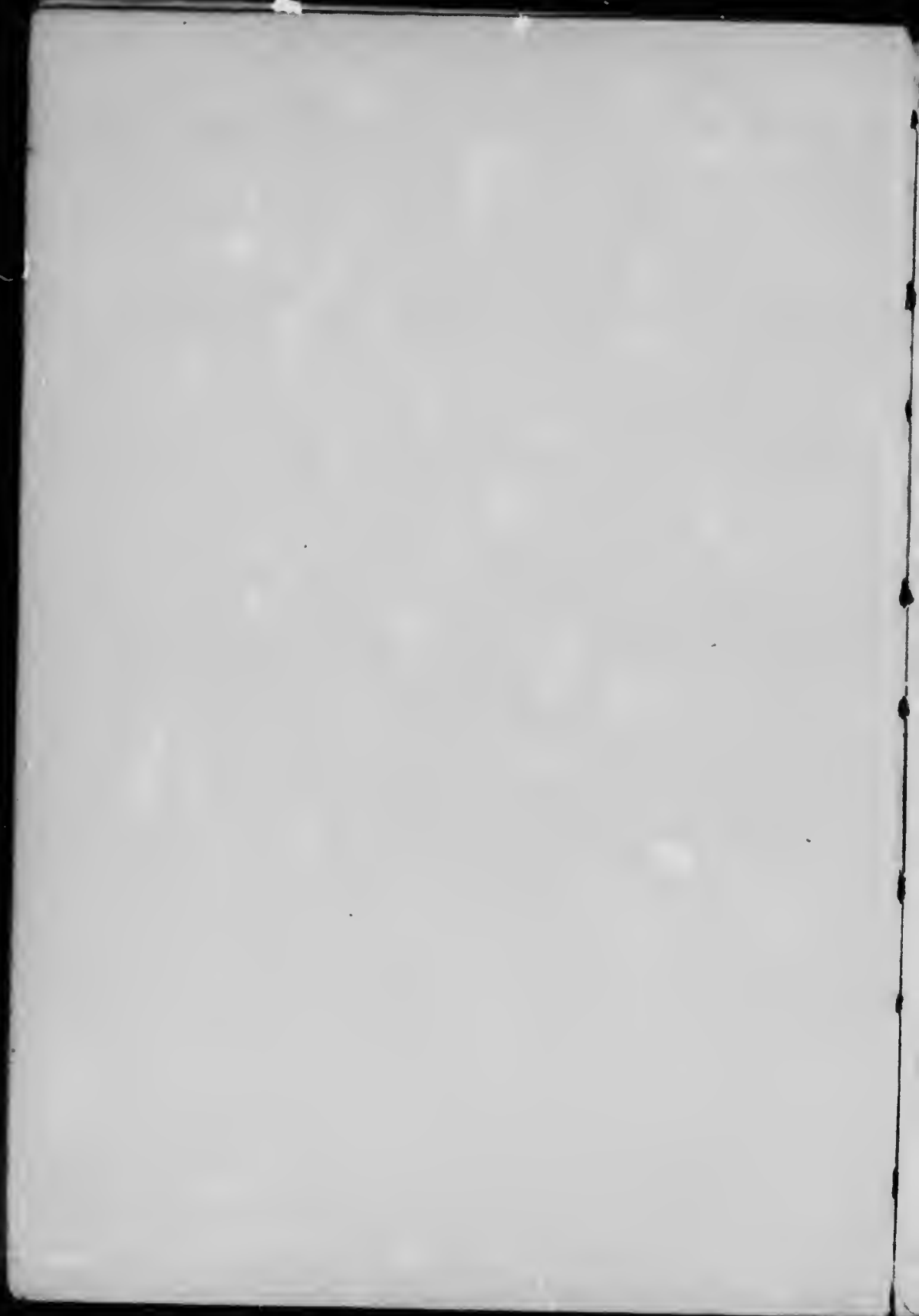


**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1853 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
482-5989 - Fax







**FENELLA**





# FENELLA

A NOVEL

BY  
HENRY LONGAN STUART

*Author of "Weeping Cross"*

"NAY, MY MOTHER CRIED: BUT THEN THERE WAS  
A STAR DID DANCE AND BENEATH IT  
I WAS BORN"



TORONTO  
MUSSON BOOK COMPANY  
LIMITED

Ps 3537

T925

F46

1911

p\*\*\*

PRINTED IN GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION  
INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES, INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

09501540

# CONTENTS

## PART I

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Morgengabe. . . . .	3
II.	Shadows Before. . . . .	12
III.	An Eclipse . . . . .	19
IV.	To Introduce Paul Ingram . . . . .	30
V.	"Sad Company" . . . . .	42
VI.	A Child Speaks the Truth . . . . .	50
VII.	Mostly Lady Anne . . . . .	60
VIII.	The Second Floor . . . . .	68
IX.	Sharland College . . . . .	73
X.	"The Way of a Maid" . . . . .	79
XI.	An Interlude . . . . .	89
XII.	Richmond Park . . . . .	92
XIII.	Find Soul — Find Sorrow. . . . .	101
XIV.	Athea Rees . . . . .	111
XV.	History of a Conversion . . . . .	119
XVI.	Hoahaka-nana-ia . . . . .	123
XVII.	The Continental Express . . . . .	133
XVIII.	Amende Honorable . . . . .	140

## PART II

I.	Financial Intelligence . . . . .	155
II.	Two Telegrams . . . . .	163

## CONTENTS

PART II—*Continued*

CHAPTER		PAGE
III.	In the Firelight . . . . .	170
IV.	An Affair of Outposts . . . . .	176
V.	Cicispeo . . . . .	179
VI.	The Benefit of the Doubt. . . . .	190
VII.	A Dress Rehearsal . . . . .	198
VIII.	Lady Anne's Deposition . . . . .	210
IX.	The Man at the Wheel . . . . .	220
X.	Monsieur de Valbonette . . . . .	232
XI.	" <i>Inextricable Error</i> " . . . . .	241
XII.	A Catastrophe . . . . .	247
XIII.	New Wine — Old Bottle . . . . .	255
XIV.	Some Theories and a Way Out . . . . .	265
XV.	A Last Wish . . . . .	277
XVI.	Azrael . . . . .	285
XVII.	A Dream Comes True. . . . .	294
XVIII.	Ice to the Moon . . . . .	302
XIX.	The Wages . . . . .	316

## PART III

I.	The Baths of Apollo . . . . .	325
II.	Lightning in the Fog. . . . .	333
III.	Valedictory . . . . .	338
IV.	Something Like Cloves . . . . .	346
V.	A Very Vulgar Chapter . . . . .	353
VI.	Genealogical . . . . .	369
VII.	The Waiting-Room . . . . .	372
VIII.	'Twixt Shine and Shade . . . . .	378
IX.	Berten at the Post . . . . .	386
X.	A Year and a Day . . . . .	393
XI.	Two Grains of Hope . . . . .	399

**PAGE**

**170**

**176**

**179**

**190**

**198**

**210**

**220**

**232**

**241**

**247**

**255**

**265**

**277**

**285**

**294**

**302**

**316**

**PART I**

**325**

**333**

**338**

**346**

**353**

**369**

**372**

**378**

**386**

**393**

**399**



I

MORGENGABE

**L**IKE the sudden, restless motion of a sleeper, a wave marking the tide's height, broke out of the slumberous heart of the sea, and laid its crest low along the beach. Fenella, who had been swimming to shore, rose in the foam, like that other woman in the morning of the world, and began to walk slowly, wringing the salt water from her hair, toward the bleached bathing hut that stood, by itself, under a shoulder of the dunes. The backwash of the wave swirled past her bare ankles as she walked. Beyond the strip of beach that it had covered with weed and spume, the sand was hot and loose as ashes to the soles of her feet. The noontide sun seemed to rob the earth at once of motion, of sound, of color. It grizzled the long sharp grass with which the sand hills were sparsely covered, quenched the red roofs of the little cream-walled fishing village, and turned the watered lawn, which lay at the foot of the flaunting summer hotel quarter of a mile inland, to a level smudge of dark green. All sound was stilled — all movement in suspense — all beauty, even, deferred. At such an hour, the supreme of the sun's possession of the earth, none can stand, alone and without shelter in its untempered light, and not realize that he is intercepting an elemental force as relentless as it is impersonal. Upon these barren, ragged edges of the earth, where the land casts its detritus upon the sea, and the sea casts it back, transformed, upon the land, it is felt to be what it truly is — a power that blights as well as fosters — death no less than life. All that has its roots firmly fastened in the soil — that has a purpose unful-



filled — fruit to bear — pollen to sow, feels the impulse — spreads, aspires, swells, and scatters. All that is weak or ephemeral — whose purposes are frustrated or whose uses past, turns from that light and fervor — withers — bows its head — wilts at the fiery challenge. To it the sun is a torch — the earth an oven — noontide the crisis of its agony.

At the door of the gray bathing-hut the girl turned, and, bracing herself, with her arms against her wet sides, to which her dark tight bathing-dress clung sleek and shapeless as its pelt to a seal, stood for a moment looking out to sea. Her bosom rose and fell quickly, but without any distress; her heart beat high with the sense, so rare to women until of late, of physical powers put to the test. A mile out, the fishing-boat to which she had swum — whose very bulwarks she had touched — seemed to hang like some torpid bat — its claws hooked onto the line where sea and sky met. She caught her breath at sight of the distance she had ventured: nothing in her life, she felt, had been pleasanter than this — to stand with the sun on her shoulders, the warm sand over her toes, and to measure with a glance the cold, treacherous and trackless space which, stroke by stroke, she had overcome.

Suddenly, and as though she remembered, she turned and looked inland. High up on the dunes to her left a little black shadow spotted the gray, reed-streaked expanse. Fenella waved one brown arm toward it, and throwing back the wet hair from her forehead, peered anxiously under her hand for some signal in reply. Apparently it came, for her face changed. Something that had been almost austerity went out of it and was replaced by a look so full of tender concern that the long-lashed eyes and sensitive mouth seemed to brim over with it. A moment later, and amid a charming confusion which draped the pegs and benches of the hut, she was humming a waltz tune softly as she dressed. The happy, interrupted

melody filled the hot silence like the song of a honey-seeking bee.

The blot upon the dunes was cast by a white sketching umbrella, lined with green, whose long handle, spiked and jointed, was driven deep into the loose soil. Near it, but somewhat away from the shadow, which the southward roll of the earth was carrying farther and farther from his shoulders, a man was sitting. He sat, with knees drawn up and with his hands clasped across them, staring out upon the colorless ocean, over which a slight haze was beginning to drift. A gaunt, large-framed man, but with a physical economy in which fat had no place. The skin upon the strong hands and lean neck was brown and loose, as though years of exposure to a sun, fiercer and more persistent than that to which he heedlessly bared his head now, had tanned it for all time. His hair, thick, crisp, and grizzling at the temples, was cropped close over a shapely head. A short beard, clipped to a point, left the shape of the chin an open question, but his moustache was brushed away, gallantly enough, from the upper lip, and showed all the lines of a repressed and unhappy mouth. The prisoner, his dungeon once accepted, sets himself to carve the record of his chagrins upon its walls; no less surely will a soul, misunderstood and checked in its purposes, grave the tale of its disappointments upon the prison-house of the flesh. On the face that confronted the ocean now, infinite sadness, infinite distaste were written plain.

He was oddly dressed, after a *bizarre* fashion which complexity, eager, we must suppose, for such simplifications as are within its reach, occasionally affects. A coarse canvas smock, open at the throat, such as fishermen wear, and dyed the color of their sails; corduroy trousers of brown velvet, coarse gray knitted socks, that fell in careless folds round his ankles and over the low iron-shod shoes. Under all this uncouth parade one divined rather than saw fine linen.

Suddenly that view of the ocean in which was so little

present help was blotted out. From behind him two hands, cool and a little clammy from prolonged immersion in salt water, were covering his eyes. Yet for a while he did not move; possibly he felt the eclipse a grateful one. It was not until the girl who had stolen upon him so silently shook him gently and whispered in his ear that he took the hands from his eyes, and, still without turning, laid them against his lips.

He might well have turned. For Fenella, one would think, would be always worth another look. She was quite beautiful, with the precision of color and texture that makes beauty for the artist, and sometimes, be it said, obscures it for the general. She was pale, but not from any retrenchment of the vital flame which burned, clear and ardent, in her gaze — glowed in the red of her moist and tremulous mouth. Her eyes were set full and a little far apart, and fringed with lashes that were of an almost even length and thickness on the upper and lower lids. Her face, broad at the temples and cheek bones, sloped to her chin with a slight concavity of the cheeks, in which a sort of impalpable dusk, that was not shadow, for no light killed it — nor bloom, for her tint was colorless as a lily, and which was probably caused by the minute and separately invisible down of the skin, seemed immanent. Her hair, fine, abundant, and nearer black than brown, grew low and made all manner of pretty encroachments upon the fair face. There was a peak of it in the centre of her forehead, and two little tufts waved near the temples which no mode of hairdressing had ever managed to successfully include. Her neck was slight and childish — her breasts scarcely formed, but her hips were already arched, of the true heroic mould of woman, and the young torso soared from them with the grace and strength of a dryad. Beyond all, face and figure possessed the precious and indefinable quality of romance. Fenella upon the *Barrière du Trône* in the livid light of a February morning — long, damp curls in which a little powder lingers drooping upon her slender shoulders: Fenella in *côte-hardie*

and wimple, gazing over moat and bittern-haunted moorland from an embrasured château window of Touraine: Fenella in robe of fine-fringed linen, her black hair crisped into spiral ringlets, couched between the hooves of some winged monster of Babylon or Tharshish, with the flame of banquet or sacrifice red upon her colorless cheek. All these were imaginable.

She sank gracefully upon her knees in the yielding sand, and, putting her hand across the man's shoulder, laid her cheek to his. The spontaneity of the action and its tacit acceptance by her lover — for he neither moved nor checked his reverie on its account — were eloquent of self-surrender, and a witness also to the truth of the observation that, in affairs of the heart, there is one who proffers love and one who endures it. But she was over-young and over-fair to know the chill of the unrequited kiss already.

"Are you still worrying, Paul?" she asked after a while, "still vexed and disturbed? You needn't answer. Your forehead was all gathers and tucks just now when I came behind you: I could feel every wrinkle. Tell me, this minute," with playful peremptoriness; "was he anxious about his young lady?"

"A little," her lover answered. "It's natural, isn't it?"

"But, dear, I swim so strongly," she pleaded. "There's no current when the tide's at flood. And, oh! Paul, it was such fun. I swam out to that fishing-boat you can just — barely — see. Look!" and she turned the listless head with her hand; "it's over there. I can tell you the exact number: *B759 Boulogne*. That shows I'm not fibbing, doesn't it, Mister Ingram. I hung onto the side and called out, '*Would!*' Have you ever noticed you can't say 'V' when your mouth's full of saltiness? And the man was so scared. He crossed himself twice, poor old soul, and his pipe nearly fell into the sea. Can't you imagine what he'll say when he gets home '*Cette Anglaise! — quelle effrontée! — quelle conduite!*' Now, who says I can't speak French?—Oh! Paul; why aren't you a swimmer?"

"It wasn't quite such fun watching you," said Ingram; "the sea's such a big thing. Why, your head looked no bigger than a pin's out on all that water. Things happen so easily, too."

The girl felt him shiver, and tightened her hold on his shoulder.

"And you've such an imagination to plague you; haven't you, Paul? Oh dear! Well — here's the pin sticking into you again: here's the head back, safe and sound, light and empty as ever. Isn't it hard luck for you?" And she laid it on his shoulder.

"Would you rather I didn't swim out so far again, Paul?" she asked presently, in a softened voice.

"Why should I break your spirit?" the man argued, more reasonably, perhaps, than he intended.

"Oh, but it isn't worth it if it worries you," his sweetheart said earnestly. "Nothing's worth that, when you have so much to bear besides. I've had my foolish way and now I promise you I'll paddle with you, dear old muff, in two feet of water all the rest of the holidays."

Ingram turned to her now. "Nelly, I don't want to disappoint you, but — but, there won't be any 'rest of the holidays' for us this summer."

She looked into his face; her own alarmed and pleading.

"You're not going, Paul? Oh, you promised to stay on until we all went back together."

"I know, I know," he answered, with an impatience that was none the less real because it was the expression of his reluctance to give pain. Silken bonds strain at times.

"Something has happened then, since last night? What is it, dear?"

"I had a letter this morning. It had been waiting at the 'Arrêt.'"

"A letter at last! Oh! Paul — Why didn't you tell me? Is it good news?"

"Only a straw; but then, I'm a drowning man."

"Tell me! Tell me!" the girl insisted.

"It's from Prentice; the man you saw in Soho the night before we came away. He's taken my MSS. to Althea Rees."

"You mean the woman who writes those queer books where every one talks alike."

"What does it matter? The talk's all good. Anyhow, she's 'struck.' Some one's actually struck at last. She's going to try and make her own publishers do something. But she says she must see me first, and Prentice thinks she's only passing through London."

Fenella's face clouded and was so far from expressing enthusiasm that her lover looked at her rather ruefully.

"You don't seem very glad, Nelly."

Nelly kept her eyes averted. She had already taken her head from his shoulder.

"I shouldn't care to publish anything," she declared slowly.

"Not — that way."

As though he had been waiting for her words, Paul Ingram sprang to his feet. All his impatience and dissatisfaction seemed to boil over. He began to pace the dunes like a caged animal, kicking the sand from his feet and tugging fiercely at the grizzling beard that was a daily reproach to his lack of achievement.

"That way! that way!" he repeated. "But isn't even 'that way' better than no way at all? I tell you, Nelly, I'm discouraged, aghast, at this conspiracy to keep a man bottled up and away from the people for whom his message is intended. I haven't written like all these clever — clever people; after a morning's motoring, and an afternoon 'over the stubble,' isn't that the expression? — three hours every day, while the man is laying out the broadcloth and fine linen for a dinner at eight. What I did was done with as much sweat and strain as that shrimper uses down there, who's getting ready to push his net through the sand as soon as the tide turns. And

when the work is done, between me and my public a soulless, brainless agency uprears itself that weighs the result by exactly the same standards as it would weigh a tooth-paste or a patent collar stud or a parlor game — as a 'quick seller.' ”

He would have said more, but Fenella was at his side, trying to reach his lips with the only comfort the poor child had.

“Oh! Paul,” she cried; “be patient just a little longer. Publish how you can! I wasn't blaming you, dear. I only meant that — that working as you do, it was only a question of time and you'd succeed without any one's help. I don't feel uneasy or impatient about you.”

Ingram sat down again, a little ashamed of his outburst, but his face was still bitter.

“Just so,” said he. “And it's precisely your limitless, superhuman patience that's doing more than anything else to kill me by inches. It would be a relief if you'd lose it sometimes, curse me — reproach me for the failure I am. After all, how do you know all these duffers aren't right? They're wonderfully unanimous.”

Fenella sat silent for a few minutes, not resenting his words, but racking her brain for some comforting parallel that would ring true and not be repulsed.

“Do you remember, Paul,” she said at last, “the story we read together at Christmas about Holman Hunt? How he got so sick of the unsold pictures hanging in his studio that he turned them all with their faces to the wall? And yet one of those pictures was the 'Light of the World.' ”

But Ingram, even if he had an equal reverence for the work in question, which I should doubt, was not an easy man to console. He brushed the poor little crumb of comfort impatiently aside.

“There's no comparison at all,” he declared. “A picture painted is a picture painted. A glance can take it in, and a glance recover for the artist all the inspiration and joy in his work that filled him when he painted it. But what inspiration is there in a bundle of dog-eared manuscript, that comes

back to you with the persistence of a cur you've saved from drowning? Besides, every artist worth the name has his following, however small, who help him — flatter him perhaps — anyhow, keep him sane. There's no unwritten law against showing a canvas. But the unpublished author — the unacted play writer — is shunned like a man with the plague. Oh! don't I know it?"

Fenella gave a weary little sigh. Amid all this glorified space, just to be alive seemed to her simple soul a thing to be deeply and reverently thankful for. Her own blood was racing and tingling in her veins, with the reaction from her long swim. She wanted to run, to sing; above all, she wanted to dance. As for books, her own idea of a book was a very concrete one, indeed. She knew that whole rooms were filled with them, bookstalls littered by them, libraries building everywhere to catch the overflow. She was familiar, for reasons that will appear in their course, with the reading-room at the British Museum. She had confronted that overwhelming fact. And yet, one book could mean so much to this man that, for its sake, the holiday she had so joyously planned had gone to pieces. The truth must be told. She had to draw a rather big draft upon her love and loyalty.

"When are you going?" she asked, in a little flat voice.

"I ought to have caught the mid-day boat from Boulogne," the man answered, with a briskness that sounded ungratefully in her ears. "But it's too late for that to-day. There's another at six or seven. They stop the Paris train for you here if you signal."

"Don't go till to-morrow, Paul," she urged patiently. "There's the eclipse to-night, you know, and you promised we should watch it together. Then we can talk things over quietly. I want — oh, I want so to help you! I have a sort of foolish plan in my own head, but I'm afraid you'll laugh at it. . . . And there's poor mummy, struggling over the sand with our luncheon. Run and help her, dear."



## II

### SHADOWS BEFORE

**M**RS. BARBOUR was a comely, wholesome-looking body upon the descending slope of fifty. Her face, like her daughter's, was of the *teint mât*, and her homely English figure had what a flippant mind has described as a "middle-aged spread" in its proportions. Her large oval brooch, a cunning device in hair, proclaimed to these skilled in rebus that without a cross there was no prospect of a crown, and a black bonnet of low church tendencies, trimmed with little jet-tipped tentacles that quivered and danced when she moved her head, honorably crowned her abundant silver locks. She had declined Ingram's proffered aid with a tenacity often to be noticed in those who have given hard service all their lives, and as she drooped with weary finality upon the sand, various parcels, string-bags, and small baskets were distributed to right and left.

"Oh dear," she gasped breathlessly; "those dreadful, dreadful dunes."

"Have they tired you very much, mummy?" the girl asked concernedly, as she unfastened the lavender bonnet-strings.

"The sand is so loose to-day with the great 'eat — *heat*." Mrs. Barbour added the corrected version with almost lightning rapidity. One of her peculiarities, which it is sufficient to have indicated once, was a constant snatch at evasive aspirates. They can scarcely be said to have really dropped; she caught them before they fell.

"No, Nelly," the good lady went on, while Ingram unravelled the mysteries of the string-bag, and gathered drift-

wood for the fire. "Here we are in France, where you've always wanted to be; but, another year, if I'm consulted, Bognor or Westgate for me, my dear. Two hours' comfortable travelling" — Mrs. Barbour ticked off the advantages of home travel on her fingers one by one, and unconsciously quoted some railway placard she had seen — "no Channel crossing, no customs, and the sea at your door. And even when you've come all this way, no amusement, unless you call a horrid Casino amusing, where grown men, and women who ought to be sent home to finish dressing, make donkeys of themselves over little lead horses."

"There's very good music there in the afternoon," Paul hazarded, who was shaving a stick into kindling after the fashion of the Western plains.

"Music — yes; but nothing really tuneful. Do you remember the Elite Pierrots at Westgate, Nelly, last year, with the blue masks. That dark-haired one, my dear, who used to sigh for the silvery moon and cough so terribly in the intervals. Don't tell me he wasn't some one in disguise. No! I hold to what I've said. The French don't understand amusement."

The fire was lit, the kettle boiled, and luncheon eaten amid such conversation as a garrulous old woman and two very preoccupied people could contrive. Nelly was particularly silent, and had lost, besides, what her mother was pleased to term her "sand appetite." The talk ranged hither and thither listlessly. Paul's inability to swim, so strange in a man who had girdled the earth, was discussed in all its bearings till it could be borne no longer; the lurid history of Simone, Mrs. Barbour's strapping, smiling *bonne*, unmarried and unmoral, was matter for another half-hour. Followed various excursions into the obvious, and a list of "discoveries" made that morning. Mrs. Barbour collected facts like shells, and made some very pretty castles with them, too, at times.

“ . . . and Nelly, I believe I know who the two gentlemen are that you had your adventure with yesterday.”

Ingram raised his head at the two odious words very much as a horse would do if you were to explode two fog signals under his nose in succession; quickly enough, indeed, to intercept a warning and reproachful glance that the girl sent her mother. Mrs. Barbour clapped both hands playfully over her mouth. “Oh! now I *have* done it!” she exclaimed. Her eyes snapped with, perhaps, a shade more of malice than a kind-hearted old lady’s should ever hold. Without being a scheming or a worldly woman, she resented a little, in her heart, the monopoly which this man had established over her child; a man so alien to her in thought, so sparing of speech, so remote from her ideal, which, diffuse enough in all truth, would perhaps have found its nearest realization just now in some florid, high-spirited lad, who would have brought her his socks to darn and his troubles to soothe of an evening, been “company,” in a word, to the talkative, commonplace old woman. As far as she was concerned, Ingram swallowed his disappointments, and she rather suspected him of darning his own socks.

Fenella considered her mother for some time, though not as a resource to evade her lover’s eye.

“What a rummy way you have of putting things, mother!” she said at last. “My ‘adventure’ with ‘two gentlemen!’”

Paul’s face was blank, like the page of a diary awaiting confidences.

Feeling herself at bay, Mrs. Barbour grew flustered and tearful.

“Well, well!” she exclaimed, waving her hands helplessly in the air. “I’m sure I’m sorry, Nelly, since you choose to make such a mystery of it. But what there is in it to make you both look as grave as judges, I can’t see. I’m sure that, as your mother, I’d be the first to be offended if there was anything disrespectful.”

An awkward silence followed her words, which Ingram was the first to break.

"I think, perhaps, you'd best tell now, Nelly," he said quietly.

The girl blushed and covered her eyes for a moment with her hands.

"It's so — so *foolish*," she said, clenching them with an impatient movement. "Oh, well, if I must, I must. . . . It was yesterday morning while you were both at breakfast. I ran down, you know, to catch the tide. After I had come out — oh, well, there wasn't a soul in sight — I thought they would all be at breakfast at the *Grande Falaise*; I was chilly, too, and there *was* a kind of tune in the sea. So, after I'd taken off my wet bathing-suit, I threw on my kimono and began to practise the last dance Madame de Rudder has been teaching me — you know the one, mother, where she won't let me use my feet as much as I want — out on the sand where it was hard. And then, like a little fool I am, I forgot everything, until I heard some one clapping hands and saying, 'Bravo!'— and I looked up — and there were two men on the dunes, smoking cigars — I suppose they were coming from the golf links to the hotel, and I don't know how long they'd been watching me, and — and," with sudden passion, "I just *hate* you, Paul, for dragging it out of me when I didn't want to tell."

And Fenella, already overwrought, hid her head in her mother's capacious lap and had her cry out.

Mrs. Barbour stroked the dark head gently, but like the wise old mother bird she was, made no attempt to check the burst of tears.

"Such a dancing girl she is," she murmured complacently, "and she does hate to have it talked about so. Do you know, Mr. Ingram, I only discovered it myself by accident, after it had been going on months and months. Do you remember, dearie, that awful day, the first time I was up after influenza, that Druce got the spot on her nose that the doctor said was

erysipelas, and Twyford scalded her arm and hand making a poultice? It's the only time, I do believe, Nelly, I've ever spoken to you crossly."

A muffled voice, "You were *horrid*, mummy."

"Well, there, I really was, Mr. Ingram. I pushed the child out of the way and said, 'If you can't help, don't hinder. Run upstairs and play with the other ornaments!' I didn't think any more about it, with all that trouble on my hands, till about half an hour afterward, when down comes Miss Rigby with her face white — you know what a coward she is, Nelly — and in her dressing-gown, at nearly twelve! 'Do come up, Mrs. Barbour,' she says, 'I believe Rock has gone mad in the box-room and is dashing himself against the wall.' Oh dear! I ran upstairs with the poker, and what do you think it was, Mr. Ingram. My own crazy child, dancing and waving her arms about. Such a picture of fun as she looked!"

A hand was laid suddenly on her mouth, and a face, very flushed and penitent in its tumbled dark hair, emerged from between the parental knees.

"I'm a silly" — *sniff* — "fool" — *sniff* — said Fenella. "Paul, gimme my hank."

Ingram passed the handkerchief across the smouldering blaze. The girl looked at him as she blew her nose. He seemed absorbed, not angry, but *queer*, she thought. She had never seen his face look so wan and tired. He seemed to avoid her eyes.

"Aren't you well, Paul?" she asked at last.

Ingram seemed to shiver and then rouse himself. "I'm all right," he said; "but I think I'll go back to the chalet. I've got letters to write. Isn't the sun grown pale? And I guess I've either caught cold or some one's walking backward and forward over my grave."

They went home together, for the women would not be left behind, taking the longer way in order to avoid the sand-hills. Along the loose, tiring beach — dried sea waifs crackling

underfoot, by the *douane* with its toy battery and lounging sentry; up a narrow path that was half by-street and half flight of steps, near whose summit a Christ flung his saving arms wide over a yellow *affiche* of the *Courser* at Wimereux, and into a straggling village of low-browed houses, cream, pink, light-blue, and strong as castles, through whose doorways leather-faced crones and tow-headed children swarmed and tumbled. They were nearing the inn of the *Toison d'Or*, where the new road to the hotel turns out of the village, slowly, for Mrs. Barbour climbed with difficulty and rejected assistance, when two men in tweed jackets, flat-capped and flannel-trousered, swung round the corner. At their backs two shaggy town urchins straggled along, each with an arsenal of clubs and cleeks peeping over his shoulder. The two men raised their caps and bowed slightly, but certainly not in response to any recognition that any of the party accorded them. Fenella blushed and hung her head.

Paul turned sharply on his heel. "Are those the cads who stared at you?" he asked, in a voice which he took no pains to render inaudible.

Nelly caught his arm before she answered. "Hush, dear! Yes. You're not to be foolish," she added.

Her mother, glad of a respite, stopped and looked after them, too. She held it a legitimate source of pride that she had always had an eye for a fine man.

"Those *are* the two, then," she said triumphantly, with an air of sagacity justified. "Then, my dear, I can tell you who they are. The short dark one is Mr. Dreyfus — no, Dollfus — who manages the 'Dominion' in London, and the big, handsome one with the loose hair under his cap at the back is Sir Bryan Lumsden, the millionaire, and a *frightful* reputation, my dear. Mrs. Lesueur told me all about him this morning when she came in to borrow Simone for ironing."

Meantime, the two men whom they had passed turned likewise, but only to whistle up their caddies, who, with an

avidity for the "*p'tit sou*" which would seem to be sucked in with the maternal milk in French Flanders, were holding out claw-like hands to the family party and more especially to Ingram, who had already acquired an unfortunate reputation in this respect.

"What d'you make of it, Dolly?" the big man asked. "Husband?"

The Jew shook his head decisively. "No, no, my boy! She's not a marrit woman. Relations, more likely. Eh?—ah?"

"Or lovers, likelier still. I's highly respectable, anyway. They've got the old lady to come along. That looks as if he were French."

"I'd like to meet the liddle girl, alone," said Dollfus, fervently.

"Some dark night?—eh, Dolly!" remarked Sir Bryan, beginning to whip the Dominion director's stout calves and thighs with the handle of the putter he was carrying. "You're such a devil — such a devil, Dolly."

Mr. Dollfus raised a corrective hand.

"Don't mithtake my meaning, Lumpsdén," he said, getting out of the sportive baronet's long reach as quickly as was consistent with dignity. "I only wanter tell her she's got a forchune in her feet and legth if she'd go in training. I oughter know something about legth, oughtn't I, old fellow. Becoth it's my bizzyness, ain't it, Lumpsdén?"

"Tell the lunatic in the red shirt instead," the baronet suggested, derisively. "She's bored, anyway. See her bat her eyelid when we bowed? Oh yes, she did, Dolly. Just one little flicker — but I caught it. Hullo! there's Grogan and old Moon at the tenth hole."

And, this being a world where the incredible is always happening, it is possible that Bryan Lumpsdén didn't think of Fenella again that day.

### III

#### AN ECLIPSE

**I**NGRAM took her down to the beach again that night, as he had promised, through a sparse, pungent pine wood that by day and night seemed to keep something of the peace of the primeval world in its coniferous shade, and across a trackless little wilderness of sand-hills, scooped and tortured by the earthquake storms of winter into strange, unnatural contours, over which the moon to-night spread a carpet so white, so deceptively level, that often they could only be guessed by the abrupt rise or fall of the ground beneath one's feet. Rabbits popped in and out of the earth, the sharp reeds that bind the sand barriers together bit spitefully at the girl's tender ankles, and withered branches, catching in her silk skirt, snapped dryly as her lover helped her through the hedges with which the dunes are ribbed.

Although the night was cool, she was wearing the thin dress she had put on for dinner. Over his shoulder Ingram had slung a soldier's cloak of blue-gray cloth, long and wide, that was to cover them in to-night as it had often covered them before. Fenella was already familiar with its every fold — knew exactly when the rough backing of the clasp would chafe her delicate cheek, could recall at any moment the peculiar fragrance of cigar smoke with which the heavy frieze was impregnated, and some other smell, stranger still, sweet, foreign and spicy, that she could not define, but which, evanescent as it was — the very ghost of an odor — clung obstinately to her skin and dress, and which she loved to lie awake at night and feel



exhaled from her thick hair like some secret earnest of joy upon the morrow.

She slid her hand into the man's as they descended the slippery, needle-carpeted path, and turned up a face to him in the darkness of the wood that was contrite and humble as a reprovèd child's. She had been a bad child, in fact; had failed in sympathy — had told him in her passion that she hated him. Hated — him! When they had found the fire, still smouldering, and had blown it into a blaze, she crept silently within his arms, under the folds of the cloak, and, laying her head upon his breast, watched the flames, creeping like fern-fronds through the gnarled roots and sodden bleached faggots that Paul had heaped upon it. She began to suck her thumb too: always with Fenella the sign of a chastened spirit. The moon, serenely unconscious of the earth shadow that was creeping upon her, made a path of crinkled glory across the waters, straight toward them, and, like foam at the foot of a silver cascade, the phosphorescent surf tumbled, soft and luminous, along the shore.

"Are you warm enough?" Ingram asked presently, feeling a tremor, perhaps, in the yielding figure that rested in his arms.

Fenella nodded her head, but she might more truly have told him that she was cold and sick. For her the night was full of voices that threatened her happiness. The ripple of the cold wind along dry grass at her back, the soft thud and effervescence of the surf against the sand, were all so many whispers telling her that her lover was going — going to some other woman who could help him, and away from the weak arms that only clung and hindered. She had no confidence in herself — no belief in her own power to hold him a moment, once his will should feel an alien attraction. The very profuseness of the poor child's passion, its abandonment of one uninvaded reserve after another, had been proof of this inward unrest. Let no mistake be made. Fenella was a good girl,

who could by no possibility become other than a good woman: nevertheless it is as true as it is, perhaps, disquieting that she might have remained at the same time happier and more maidenly in contact with an affection less worthy and less spiritual than that which she had encountered. For, so long as the attraction of sex for sex, beneath all modern refinements and sophistications, remains endowed with anything of the purpose for which nature instituted it — so long as its repulsions are a definite distance, to be annihilated toward a definite end, so long, if one party to the vital bargain hangs unduly back, must the other press unduly forward.

She was silent so long that Ingram put out his hand, and, touching her cheek, found it wet.

"You're crying!" he exclaimed sharply.

"I'm n-not," Fenella protested unevenly, and even as she spoke the great drops splashed down on his hand.

"Nelly, look up! Do you love me as much as you say?"

"Oh, my heart! — my heart!" she sobbed, covering his mouth with kisses, salt as the sea. And while she kissed him he was making a mental note that women were unduly robust on the emotional side.

"If you do," said he, "you'll stop crying — at once."

He spoke so sternly that the girl clenched her hands and struggled and fought with her sorrow.

"That's better," he said, when, by dint of swallowing her tears, she was, outwardly at least, a little calmer. "I'm sorry if I spoke harshly just now," he went on; "but everybody has a last straw. A woman crying seems to be mine. It — it strains my heart."

"Do you think *I* like it any better?" his sweetheart asked, desperately.

"I suppose," he hazarded, with a shyness that was almost grotesque, "it's because I'm going to-morrow."

"Oh yes, dear, yes," the girl told him, eagerly seeking relief in words since tears were forbidden her. "Oh, Paul! how I

shall miss you! You don't know what it's meant to me to have you living in the same house — to even know you were sleeping near me. Darling, do you know I've sometimes wished you *snores* so I might hear you at night. Don't stop me, love!" she went on, buttoning and unbuttoning his coat with nervous fingers. "Let me confess my full shamelessness. I've even helped Simone do your room sometimes in the morning. You're not shocked — are you? Oh! you *are*," she cried piteously, drawing away from his arm. "You think me unmaidenly. But I can't *help* it, love; I can't *help* it. Don't you see? You are you. It's different to all the rest of the world."

Ingram's chest rose and fell unevenly beneath her cheek. She could not but perceive his distress.

"Listen, Nelly," he said huskily. "Don't cry again; but — but perhaps it's a good thing for you I am going away for a while. Things are so unsettled, and it may help you — get you used, supposing the worst happens, to the *idea*. There's so much in custom — in habit."

"Paul!" she cried once, and grew rigid in his arms. It was a death-cry, and he flinched. Who has struck at life and not drawn the blade away quicker because the first blow went home.

"Nelly, I'm not young."

"I don't care if you were sixty — seventy." Fenella was not crying now, but fighting for her love like the brave little girl she was.

"I'm a man without home, or country, or friends."

"I'm not a baby. I'll go with you wherever you like. We'll make them for ourselves, together."

"And I'm deadly poor."

"I'll lend you money, Paul. How much do you want? I've seventy pounds in the Post-Office."

I think if I had been Ingram and had only one more kiss to give, I would have given it her for this; but I am trying to tell

the truth; and the truth is that these futile interruptions to his hateful task harassed and angered him. It is so much easier to confess to sin than to failure.

"Nelly! don't interrupt me! Let me say what I have to. I'm telling you that at thirty-seven, an age when most men have home and wife and children and see their way clear to the end, I haven't taken the first step upon a road that is haunted by tragedy and littered with the bones of those who have fallen by the way."

"I'll wait for you," said poor Fenella, but no longer with the same energy. What a gorgon head has common-sense to turn hearts of flesh to stone!

"Yes, you'll wait for me! Spend your youth waiting for me; your middle age — waiting. We'll save every cent; spend hours figuring out on just how much or how little life for two can be supported. Hundreds of people are doing that to-day who, thirty years ago, would have been setting out, full of hope and confidence, to make money. That's a by-product of industrial development. And, if we're lucky, just about the time your own daughters should be telling you their love affairs, you'll come to me and we'll crawl away together to some cottage in Cornwall, where I'll cultivate vegetables a little, rheumatically, and at night you'll sit opposite me by the kitchen fire — we'll call it our 'ingle-nook' — and listen to an old man babbling of his wrongs between spoonfuls of bread and milk, with enlightening criticisms upon the fools who succeeded where he was too clever not to fail.

"You'll think it strange, I suppose," he went on, no more interrupted now by her sobs than by the sough of the sea; "strange that I should wait until now, just when I've heard I'm to have the chance I've been whining for, to realize what a phantom I've committed myself to following. But it's not as strange as it looks. As long as there's some petty practical obstacle in the way, mercifully or unmercifully everything else is obscured by it. It's like a hill, hiding the desert you'll

have to cross when you've climbed to the top . . .  
Oh, Nelly! look at the moon!"

Little by little, as the man talked and the woman paid in tears and heartscald for the reckless passion of her first love, the portent they had come out to watch was passing over their heads. At first it was but a spot — a little nibble at the silver rim of the great dead, shining orb; then a stain, that grew and spread, as though the moon were soaking up the blackness of the sky; last it took shape and form of the world's circumference, and for once man might watch his earth as, maybe, from some happier but still speculative planet his earth is watched, and idly conjecture at what precise spot upon that smooth segmental shadow any mountain or plain, roaring city or dark tumbling ocean that he has mapped and named, might lie. Two thousand years ago — a day as men have learned to count time — this man and woman, who had come out to watch the moon's eclipse for mere diversion, for an effect of light and shade, and who, in the multiplied perplexities of their own artificial life had even forgotten to watch it at all, would have been lying, prone upon their faces, wailing — praying until the ominous shadow had passed, while in the fire before them some victim of flock and herd smoked propitiation to the threatening heavens. And out of all the straining and striving toward knowledge of those two thousand years — out of all the Promethean struggle wherein learning, hot to unlearn, can but lop off one visionary beak or claw to find itself clutched more cruelly in another, not enough wisdom reached them now to comfort one simple, trustful heart, or to teach an intellect that had roamed the earth to its own undoing, the primal art of all — how to rear a roof and feed a hearth for the loving creature that clung at his breast.

No! Nelly wouldn't look at the moon. She left his arms and sat apart, bolt upright; her lithe body quivering with resolution.

"Paul Ingram," she said incisively, "I've listened patiently to you and you'll have to listen to me. You've been prophesying woe and misery, and now it's my turn. Shall I tell *you* what's really going to happen?"

Hope is like measles. No one is too young or too foolish to catch it from. In spite of himself the man's face brightened.

"Well, what's going to happen?"

"As soon as we get home I'm going to have Mme. de Rudder to tea, just our two selves, nice and comfy, and when she's lapped up her cream and I've stroked her down a little, I'm going to say, 'Now, Madame! For the last two years you've been buttering me up, to my face and behind my back, and showing me round, and if you've meant half you said' (and I think she does, Paul, though she's such an old pussy), 'there ought to be a living for me somewhere.' And then — oh, Paul! — I'll work and I'll work and I'll w-o-r-k-work. I'm not sure whether I'll see you" — with an adorable look askance — "perhaps once a week, if you're good. And, at the end of the year, I'll bring you a nice, newly signed contract at — oh! well, *pounds* a week, 'cos I've got a *head*, which you'll never have, poor dear. And then — don't stop me please — we'll get married, and have a little flat of our own or turn ma's lodgers out, and you'll write your mis-e-ra-ble, *mis-e-ra-ble* books all day," she took his head in her hands and shook it gently from side to side; "and at night you'll call for me and I'll go home with you, sir, in my own dear little taxicab, all warm and cosy from dancing — and, dear, you shall never have another money trouble or even hear the word mentioned as long as you live. Now, what does he think of that?"

She looked closely at her lover's face and suddenly shrank away, with a little cry, at what she saw there.

"Think of it?" Paul repeated, his nostrils quivering. "I'll soon tell you what I think of it. That if I didn't know your words were a mere childish fancy — if I really thought you

were going to dance on the stage in London or Paris or New York or any city I've been in, I believe, Nelly" — he paused a moment — "yes, I believe I could bear to take you up in my arms, now, as you are, and carry you down to that sea and hold you under until you were dead."

Fenella moaned and covered her face with her hands. Then she jumped up. Paul caught at her silken skirt, a momentary cold fear at his heart.

"Nelly, stop! I know I shouldn't have said that."

She disengaged herself with a swift turn. "Let me go!" she cried angrily. "I'm not the sort of person that commits suicide. You can drown me afterward if you like. I'm going to dance first."

"To dance?" Ingram repeated, thunderstruck. "Out here? Sit down at once! Sit down," he pleaded in a changed voice. "Be a good child."

"I'm not a child," she cried rebellious. "That's the mistake you're making. And I won't be forever kicked and scolded by you, Paul. I will have some comfort. Oh, I knew you'd laugh and storm. I'm only a silly little thing that dances and that you pet when she's good"; her eyes flamed at him. "But it means as much to me as your books and long words do to you."

She stopped, not because she was ashamed, but because her mouth was inconveniently full of the pins which she was pulling from a rather elaborate "*chevelure*." She shook her head with the usual transforming result, kicked off her shoes, and, bending down, began to unfasten her long silk stockings under her skirt. Paul turned away his head, and perhaps it was as well she did not see the disgust in the averted face.

"Sing something," she commanded, throwing the long silk stockings on the sand and stretching her bare toes.

"I don't know anything," doggedly.

"Oh yes, you do! Sing the Algerian recruit song."

"It's too sad for you in your present mood of exaltation."

Fenella did not seem to resent the withering tone. She had drawn a little away from the fire and was looking upward, her hands clasped behind her neck and under her hair.

"Just to get a note," she said, dreamily.

Without quite knowing why, and in the teeth of his own shy distaste, Ingram began to sing. He had a fine baritone voice, to be exact waere exactness is not called for, full of strength and feeling, that was none the less tuneful because it had only been trained to the tramp of gaitered feet along the blinding white *chaussées* of French Africa. The song rose and fell, haunting and melodious —

*"Me voilà, engagé  
Pour l'amour d'une blond—e. . . ."*

The fire was between them, throwing all the beach into shadow, and, sung thus, squatted upon the sand, and his feet to the dying embers, with the old song so many memories crowded upon the man's own brain — so many visions peopled the lurid shadows around him — that he had arrived nearly at its end before he thought of regarding the swaying, tossing figure beyond with any degree of attention. But, when he did, the last words died away in his throat. This is not the place to describe Fenella Barbour's dancing. Many pens have done it justice. It has been described and overdescribed — ignorantly arraigned and disingenuously defended. Tyros of the press, anxious to win their spurs, and with a store of purple phrases to squander, have attempted, through a maze of adjectives and synonyms, to convey or reawaken its charm. She burst on the world in a time when such things were already grown a weariness to the plain man; yet never, I believe, was any success due more to the frank and spontaneous tribute of the people who sit in cheap seats to a wonderful thing wonderfully done, and less to the kid-gloved applause of stalled and jaded eclecticism in search of new sensation. And the key to it all, I believe — though mine is only one opinion



among many — was to be sought in the mechanical precision with which, through all the changes and postures of arms and body above the hips, unstable and sensuous as vapor, the feet below the swirling skirts beat — beat out the measure of the dance unerringly and incisively as the percussion of a drummer's sticks upon the sheepskin. It was this that, for the man in the street at least, lifted her art out of trickery and imposture and veiled indelicacy into some region where his own criticism felt itself at home. "A clog-dancer with sophistications," she has been called; but at least it was upon honest toes and heels that Fenella danced into popular favor.

And all this the man by the fire watched with a sinking heart. Not altogether unmoved. He could not, being flesh and blood, remember that the girl dancing before him had just left his arms, and at the close of her transport would fling herself, breathless and glowing, into them again, eager for his approval, and spending upon his lips the aftermath of her excitement, without many a desire and emotion of his youth awaking and clamoring for its deferred due. But his desires had grizzled with his beard: he had analyzed the emotions and discarded them. Where the passions are concerned intellect is never impartial. It must be either oil or water — foster or extinguish. And he had chosen once for all the harder way. He was full of shyness, constraint, and the panic instinct of flight: shocked yet arrested, like some hermit of the Libyan desert watching the phantoms of his old life at Rome or Alexandria beckon him from his cave. Not only was the old dispensation void. He could imagine no ground upon which it could be renewed. His authority had been one of those gentle tyrannies of heart over heart, that are valid only so long as they are unquestioned. Having claimed her liberty, though it was but for an hour — resumed the possession of herself though it was only to dazzle his eyes — Fenella became to him from that moment a new woman, to be wooed and won afresh; and, being a wistful far more than a lustful man, in the very measure that

## AN ECLIPSE

29

the delayed revelation of her beauty penetrated his senses, he shrank further and further from its recapture.

It must have been a strange sight, had any been there to see it. The dying fire; the shadowed moon; the man with his head bent above his knees; and the barefooted girl, with fluttering skirts and dishevelled hair, singing and dancing on the sand before his averted face.

#### IV

#### TO INTRODUCE PAUL INGRAM

**E**XACTLY why it should be I who sit down to write of the loves and errors of Paul Ingram, his descent into hell and resurrection therefrom, is a thing that is not quite clear to me now, but which will not become clearer the more I try to justify it. It is certainly not because I was at one crisis of his life the instrument to save him, since I know how very careless Fate can be in the choice of her instruments. I am not his oldest friend, nor should I care to say — his dearest. We have done a good deal of work together — shared a good deal of opprobrium. I still bear upon my forehead the mark made by a stone that was meant for a better man, on the wild night when the Home Defence League roughs broke up our meeting at Silver-town. Yet, and notwithstanding, I am by no means sure, should the inevitable happen in my own lifetime, whether, of all the disciples who pass from the oration at the graveside to the whispers over the funeral baked meats, mine will be the pen chosen to write the life — mine the fingers authorized to untie the letters — of Paul Ingram, novelist, dreamer, and reformer.

A good deal of what I have written I was witness to myself; a good deal more I learnt from Ingram during what, with so many cleaner and pleasanter ways of leaving the world, we all hope will be his last illness of the kind; and a not considerable part has been told me by his wife, for whom it is notorious that I entertain an affection as hopeless as it is happily engrossing. Even so, when all is admitted, each part assigned to its proper

TO INTRODUCE PAUL INGRAM 31

source of inspiration, I am aware a good deal will remain unaccounted for. This I have no alternative but to leave to the sagacity of my readers. Even to their discretion — a little.

To begin with myself, only that I may get myself the sooner out of the way. My earlier years I have regarded from different points of view at different periods of my life. It is only comparatively lately that I have attained the true point of view and come to see that all the early portion should be regarded as a joke. For what legend can ask to be taken seriously whose sole remaining evidence is a small white towel, of the sort technically known, I believe, as "huckaback," lying folded now in a drawer of the desk at which I am writing. Two simple motions of the extensor and flexor muscles of one arm, and the proof of former greatness might lie beneath my eyes. But I will not make them. I know too well what would happen next. My fingers would not rest until the smooth bleached folds were shaken loose, nor my eyes until, written in indelible ink that successive launderings have only made blacker, the following legend appeared before them:

"J. B. PRENTICE.  
Between-Maid — No. 8."

You see, when a man has fallen, suddenly, from a great height, he is not expected to record his impressions as the third, the second, the first floor windows flashed successively past his startled eyes. He wakes up, if he wakes at all, in a nice, cosy atmosphere of iodoform, neatly and securely packed in antiseptic dressing, with a fluffy, frilly angel at his side, who has been waiting for those tired, tired eyes to open, and who puts her finger to her lips, the moment they do, for fear her voice shan't reach the muffled ears, and says — you know what she says —

"Lie still! You're not to talk nor to agitate yourself."

So I don't propose to agitate myself, and though I've only just begun to talk, it shall be of something better worth while. Farewell, then, for the last time, great showy mansion among the Chislehurst hills, with your orchard and shrubberies, flower gardens and pergolas, your pineries and fineries, your two great cedars, izlaid in the pale enamel of the sky, and shaven lawns, across which and toward the pink-striped marquee a butler hurries with an armful of white napery and flashing silver. And to you, dear little fellow-worker — Polly or Molly or Betsy, as the case may be — who once wiped your honest, grimy phiz on No. 8, a quite especial grip of the hand, wherever you be to-day. Your reproach long since kissed away, I hope; suckling some good fellow's children; cooking some good fellow's meals. Life is so hard on the between-maid.

When I awoke it was in a Pimlico bed-sitting-room, writing literally for dear life, and for life that is growing dearer each year. I have a fatal facility for descriptive writing, and my speciality is the psychology of crowds. As old Winstanley of the *Panoply* would say when assigning me to anything I was to write up from the non-technical point of view, Aeroplane Meet, Palace Cup-tie, Royal Progress or what not: "Off with you, my boy! Column and a half, and a little more 'tripe' than last time. Turn 'em all loose, 'the hoarse cheer,' 'the lump in the throat,' and the 'mist over the eyes.' Don't be afraid! People have time for a little sentiment on Sundays."

I think they have. And I think I'm a witness to the price they are prepared to pay for it. Once a year, too, I write a novel whose circulation, for some occult reason, always stops short at eighteen hundred. Often when I'm reporting a football match, or anything like that, I try to count eighteen hundred, roughly, and imagine how my people would look all bunched together. A good many readers, but — what a gate!

## TO INTRODUCE PAUL INGRAM 33

Of all the pranks America has played upon us, I count not the least its having sent us an Ingram as a recruit to the cause of reform. The name is familiar over there, but it is quoted, I fancy, rather as a peg upon which would-be subverters of established anarchy hang their arguments than as authority for democratic ideals. Colonel Ingram, of Omaha, president of the Mid-West Chilling and Transportation Syndicate, is of the family; so is the Hon. Randolph Ingram, the great "Corporation Judge" of the Supreme Court. Jared Ingram, of Milburn, author of that contribution to Christian Unity, "A Rod for the Back of Dumb Devils," was one ancestor, and Elmer Ingram, the soldier-lawyer who helped to bait Arnold to his treason and damnation, was another. These names are not the fruit of any research on my part: I cull them from a little book which I saw at Ingram's rooms quite early in our acquaintance, and which, with a smile at my curiosity, he was good enough to lend me. It was one of those boastful little pamphlets "for private circulation," which are multiplying across the Atlantic, as a caste which has secured an undue share of material welfare becomes conscious of its origins and uneasy amid the obliterations of the democratic spirit. Of those we love, however, even the generations are dear to us, and I insist on recalling, with vicarious pride, that "Humph. Ingraham and Damaris his wyffe," who landed at South Bay from the brig *Steadfast* in Worcester year, and rode off, saddle and pillion, through forest paths to the clearing where their home was to be raised, were of good and gentle English stock, from Ministerley in Derbyshire. Sweet little Damaris (one almost loves her for her name) wilted and died within the year, but the task of increasing and multiplying, and getting hold of the land, was taken up by a sterner hand, let us hope, stronger, Deborah, eight months later, and thence the seed has spread through a riot of Bestgifts, Resolveds, Susannahs and Hepzibahs, broad of breast and hip, strong of limb, stout and undismayed of heart. Westward — always westward. Across

Ohio and Indiana, striking its roots north and south in farm and factory, store and workshop; halting here for twenty, there for thirty, years, but always, as a new generation grows to manhood, up and away again. Over the plains in crawling wagons, too impatient to await the harnessing of the iron horse — the riveting of the straining fetters of steel: through the lawless and auriferous canyons of Colorado and Nevada: blown along on the mad wind of the 'forties and 'fifties, until, amid the grapes and roses of the Pacific slope and upon the pearly Californian beach, a wind, warm and wasted and very old from across the great still ocean, whispered them, "Thus far!"

Paul was the last Ingram that will ever be born in the old homestead. His father he never saw; his sister died as a girl, and his mother, struck down by some obscure woman's disease, moved, within his memory, only from her bed to her chair, and from her chair to her bed again. He says he was a lazy, loafing, dreamy boy, with very little interest in anything beyond his meals; but the beautiful words in which he has enshrined that early home for us are proof how busily his brain must have been employed in those seemingly idle hours, and how keenly the spiritual significance of all that he saw came home to him from the first. Probably in the mere work of the house there was not enough to occupy strong, bony hands, such as his. Successive mortgages had nibbled the property away piecemeal, sparing only the house and yard; and even for that the last mortgage was running a race with death. He went to free school, but seems to have had few companions of his age. The village was depopulated; the house-doors opened only on old faces. He used sometimes to sit alone through a whole summer afternoon, he has told me, swinging on the garden gate and whittling wood. From the fence an old beaten track led away, through a marsh where a few ducks quacked and waddled still, up the shoulder of a little hill, and away around one of those woods of second growth that have

sprung up all over the old pilgrim clearings — right into the heart of the setting sun. Often, he assures me, on looking up quickly from his whittling, he has seen an arm and hand beckoning him westward, from the edge of the trees. Set aside the stubborn mysticism that could conceive such a vision, and can still maintain its actuality — is not the picture a sufficiently haunting one? Within, the mother, waiting for death; outside, the lad, straining to be gone. And the old wattled kitchen chimney, smoking thinly, and the red glory through the sapling wood, and the drowsy quack of the ducks!

After Mrs. Ingram's death the mortgage foreclosed upon the farm and its contents with the precision and completeness of a highly organized machine. It is proof how forced a growth the modern cult of the family in America is, that it never seems to have occurred to son or mother to appeal to any of the prosperous breed whom the old house had sent forth. The land had long been earmarked for the great weighing-scale factory that has since galvanized Milburn into strenuous life, and made it a sort of industrial model, which commissions and deputations from Europe are taken to see, presumably, says Ingram, as a warning to what devilish lengths efficiency can be carried. The old homestead was torn down to make a site for the boiler-house. Nothing is left of it now except one rafter, in the lavishly endowed Museum, with what is presumably an Indian arrow-head still embedded in the wood.

I am bound to add that my indignation upon the subject never roused Paul to a corresponding heat. To his mind, already set upon first causes, no doubt it seemed very natural, a mere incident in the exploitation that dubs itself progress. He ate his last meal in the despoiled kitchen, warmed his coffee over a few sticks on the hearth that had burned away ten forests, and set off, by the path up the hill and round the corner of the wood, to wherever the arm might be beckoning him.

The lad was only fourteen when he left home, but tall and strong for his years. He tramped to Philadelphia, "jumped"



the freight by night as it pulled out of the clattering, flaring yard, was shunted into a siding at Scranton, forgotten, and found there three days later starving and all but mad. From Scranton he beat his way to St. Louis; washed dishes and set up pins in a skittle alley; tired soon of the smoke and blood-warm water of the old French city; fed cattle in the stockyards of Kansas, wrestled a drunken brakeman for his life on the roof of the rocking, bumping cars halfway down the Missouri canyon, and wrestled him so well that the man begged a job for him at the journey's end. He was jacking wagons in the Union Pacific workshops at Rawlins when the White River expedition came through, and joined the force as teamster at a dollar a day. He smelt powder for the first time, lay trapped for ten days in the stinking *corral* at Snake River, when the water failed and the relief went wide, and "Bummer Jim" and "Flies Above," having thoughtfully strewn the carcasses of three hundred slaughtered horses to windward, serenaded the poisoned pale-faces nightly with copious obscenity, the burden of which was "come and be killed." After the relief and disbandment of the force, he stayed on in the Rockies and grew to manhood amid the silent aromatic barrenness of its *mesas* and *arroyos*. Settlers were dribbling into the old Indian reservation. He was in turn horse-jingler, range-rider, prospector, stage-driver; built fences, freighted logs, dug ditches; spotted the banks of Bear Creek and Milk Creek, with his campfires and tomato tins, and was happy, until something, indefinable as the scent that steals down wind to the hunted stag, told him that the civilization from which he had fled was hard upon his heels again. He left Colorado the year before the railroad came through, and turned his face east again.

I know I am telling the story of Ingram's early life very baldly and badly. You see, there is so little romance in it; just the instinctive repulsion that one so often notices in the

history of the world's reformers toward the thing they are to do battle with in the end. As Paul used to tell it himself, leaning forward over the fire in my stuffy little sitting-room, his strong, lean hands clasped round the bowl of his pipe and the smoke drifting lazily about his moustache and beard, it was only from an occasional gleam of the deep-set eye or quiver of the thin nostril, as he talked, that one could gather how deeply every lesson of force and fraud had sunk into his soul, to bear its fruit later in unalterable resolve. I never saw him really moved from his stoicism but once. We had been walking home together from dinner through the West End streets and had been unwilling witnesses of a sordid detail of their policing. A woman, crying and screaming, was being led away, not roughly, I think, but very determinedly, by two men in blue. Her hair had come loose, and one great curl hung to her waist. Her fur stole had tumbled in the roadway, and some careless Samaritan had thrown it over her shoulders, besmearing the velvet coat with mud. We were very silent during the rest of the walk, and when we got to my rooms Ingram unbosomed himself.

It was when he was working his way back east in the shiftless and circuitous fashion that had become habitual to him. He got off the train at a small city, the seat of a state university. He wouldn't tell me the name, but I imagine it was somewhere in the Southwest. It was eight o'clock on a fall morning, the hour at which the stores are opening and the saloons being swept out. As he left the depot, his grip in his hand, on a hunt for breakfast and work, he became aware of some unusual excitement. Men were leaving their houses, collarless and in shirt-sleeves — calling to one another and running down the street. At the end, where it joined the main business avenue, a crowd had gathered — old men, young men, even children, and a few women. "And what do you think they were watching? Well, sir, there in God's blessed morning light, three women in silk dresses, with satin shoes,

and bare heads and shoulders, were sweeping the filthy street with brooms and shovels and pitching the mud into a zinc handcart. Think of it, Prentice! Every one of them somebody's daughter — some mother's little girl. They were all good-lookers; but one, who might be my own child to-night, had a face like an angel — fallen if you like — with a slender neck such as the artist men we've been talking to to-night rave about, that's got those cute little blue shadows where it joins the shoulders. She was the one that had the snade. A man in the crowd told me what it all meant. They were sporting girls from a joint that had been pulled three times in the last month. The magistrates had got tired, and, instead of fining them, had worked in a state law two hundred years old that treats such women as tramps and vagrants and sets 'em to scavenging. 'And I guess,' my man adds, 'that's where they b'long all right.' He was a patriarchal old billy-goat, Prentice, with a nice long Pharisee beard, and, I'll be a sin for every hair. While he was pitching me his simple lay, my little girl looks up, and, either seeing I was a stranger or because mine was the only face there wasn't contempt in — or worse — gave a sort of heart-breaking smile; and just as I was trying not to see it, a lad behind me, with his hat over his eyes and a cigar sticking out of his cheek, calls out:

“Get on to Mamie, fellows, with the mud-scoop!”

“Well, Prentice,” (Paul breathes hard) “I hit him, clean and sweet, on the cheekbone, just under his damned leering swine's eye. It was very irregular: I suppose I should have given him a chance, but, by God! I couldn't wait. I've had to fight all my life, in warm blood and cold blood, but I've never hit a man as hard as that before or since. He went down like a skittle, and I thought I'd killed him; but the boy was full of gall and devil, and knew a lot besides. He fought me five minutes good before they carried him into a drug store. And how those canting woman-drivers came round! They wanted me to drink, wanted to carry my grip — asked me to

## TO INTRODUCE PAUL INGRAM 39

name the job. But I went and sat in their depot, without breakfast and with a face like a boil, for four hours until the next train pulled out. I shook their mud off my feet pretty smart. I'd have thrown away the shoes if I'd had another pair. But I couldn't shake off what I'd seen.

"No, no, Prentice," he went on, stubbornly, as I, with my cockney worldly wisdom, tried to argue him out of what I thought an unhealthy view of a vexed question; "No, sir: you can split men up into sheep and goats, bad cases and hard cases; but women stand or fall together. Everything you do to one you do to the rest. On every woman's face — good or bad, white or black — I've seen since, down to that woman to-night, I've seen the shadow of the same wrong."

He was twenty-five years old when the desire of seeing Europe took hold on him. He had no money, and, though he was strong and handy, there was nothing he could do that any other strong man could not do as well. He had his health, however, and staked that. Wages were high in one department of the smelter at Leadville, for reasons that forced themselves on the bluntest intelligence after a few months. He worked there for a year, laying money by and fighting with the nausea that grew upon him week by week. At the end of the twelve months, reeling, half-blind, and with his teeth loose in their gums, but with more money in his pockets than he had ever owned before, he turned his face to the healing desert. An old miner turned ranchman found him at sunset lying under a rock, his face pressed to the earth, and quivering, like a landed trout, in the full grip of the deadly lead-sickness. He laid him across his pony, took him to his mud-roofed hovel close by, kept him for six months in his own blankets, gave him all the milk of his one cow, drove him to the railroad as soon as he was able to travel, and — bade him God-speed with a torrent of invective that struck even Leadville dumb. Ingram had committed the capital error of offering him pay

for his hospitality, an error over which I believe he broods to-day.

By the time he was fit to work again his savings were gone. He was twenty-six, and Europe as far off as ever. This time, having damaged his health, he staked his reason, and for two years herded sheep on the Wyoming plains. Herding sheep seems at first cry a simple, pastoral task, with Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Biblical Associations. I must take Paul's word for it, then, that some special danger either to body or soul attends it, and that few men retire from it with a competence except to go into a madhouse or found a new religion. In either case, he says, they will have seen "Hell on the plains." The day before Ingram left for the sheep country he bought for a few dollars the entire stock of a misguided Englishman who was trying to sell second-hand books in Cheyenne City, loaded them into his grub-wagon and read them, slowly, one by one, in the exact order or disorder in which they were packed, and with a cold fear at his heart as the second year drew to a close, that his shepherding would outlast them. It seems absurd, but, as far as I can gather, this has been Ingram's sole literary education.

Either the wages of loneliness, or, I fancy, something else of which he has not told me, must have given Paul his heart's desire, for, two years afterward, at the recruiting office in the Rue St. Dominique, which has been many a good man's alternative to Seine water or the cold muzzle-end, he enlisted in the French Foreign Legion.

Whatever his reasons for this step (and I never was told them), I think the five years that Paul spent under the iron discipline of the Legion cured what, with all due allowance made for the strange ways by which men find themselves, was becoming an incurable unrest. Among the sad middle-aged soldiers who were his comrades, many of whom had come a longer and a stranger way than he, to find a hard bed and a bloody grave at the end, something, I believe, which he had

TO INTRODUCE PAUL INGRAM 41

roamed the world a-seeking and which had evaded him till now, was found at last. Out of that uneasy human cauldron, into which the deserter casts his broken oath, and the *roué* his disillusionment, and the unloved his loneliness, and the branded their shame, and to which, as long as it or its like shall endure, from time to time the artist will turn for inspiration, the brave man for opportunity, the coward, perhaps, for the stimulus which his own quailing heart denies him, and the saint for relief of temptation, and the hungry for bread, a vision, I believe, did arise for this lonely, unlettered American which the others missed, a knowledge was gained that all the schools and universities of the world could not have taught him: the vision and the knowledge of the human heart.

He was thirty-four years old when he left the Legion — a little gaunt and worn. He had given the world twenty years' hard service, and had a worsted stripe on one arm for his earnings.

## V

## "SAD COMPANY"

I FIRST met Ingram by chance at the old *Café à peu près* in Greek Street. The *À peu près* of those days was far from being the institution which, in the capable hands of Philippe, the sulky waiter, who took to himself Madame's moustached daughter plus Madame's economy's, it has since become — an over-lighted, *bruyant* restaurant of two stories and a basement, wherein an eighteen-penny meal of six exiguous courses, served at inhospitable speed to hurried suburban playgoers, is raised to the dignity of a *dîner français* by various red and yellow compounds which masquerade under the names of the old French provinces of the *midi*. Then it was nothing but a secluded back room, panelled and painted green, with an oval table in the centre, round which the little circle of which I was, if not an ornament, at least an accredited unit — free lances of the press, war correspondents stranded during lengthening periods of peace and ill-will among nations, obscure authors and unbought painters — met nightly to dine and to nurse our chilled ambitions, under Madame's supplemental smile and in the warmth of a roaring fire which, during nine months of the year, was burning under the heavy Jacobean mantel.

Strangers were not exactly resented at the *À peu près*, but by an elaborate unconsciousness of their presence, to which the Oxford manner of one or two of us was a great assistance, we contrived for a long time to keep the circle restricted. Thus it happened that the bronzed and bearded man who spoke French so volubly at coming and going, and who seemed

so little discountenanced by our exclusive attitude — glad, indeed, to be let alone — had been an irregular visitor for some weeks before we entered upon any conversation. One night the talk had turned, as it often did, upon the strong British preference for death as a preliminary to appreciation in matters literary or artistic, and little Capel, burrowing, as the subject drooped, into the obvious for a suitable remark, repeated that well-known legend — Milton's ten pounds for "Paradise Lost." The big man at my shoulder laughed.

"Fancy," said he, "any one getting as much as that for a poem to-day."

I turned, before the guard had descended on his eyes, and saw in them an expression that I, of all men, should recognize at the first glance: the sickness of the literary hope deferred.

We had become sufficiently intimate for me to receive a call from him, at my rooms, during an attack of the gout, which is an inheritance from Chislehurst, before he mentioned his book. I grieve to-day, remembering how often he was on the point of doing so, and waited in vain for the word from me that would have made the task less irksome than, I am sure, it was at last. By what I know now isn't a coincidence, his final appearance in Pimlico with the dreadful brown-paper parcel under his arm followed upon a period of three or four months during which he had practically disappeared from my consciousness. He looked worn, I thought, and had a new trouble in his eyes. He told me his story shamefacedly, and stammering like a schoolboy.

He had written a book, a novel, and could not get it published. None of the houses to which he had offered it advanced any reason for rejection, and in the one or two cases where he had pressed for one, seemed to think his insistence a solecism. He understood I not only wrote but published. Would it be troubling me unduly. . . . If I wasn't too busy. . . .

Well, it *was* a great worry. I was busy just then too, after



my futile fashion; but somehow it didn't seem the thing to have that man stammering and blushing before a wretched little ink-slinger like myself, and I tendered the vague service that is known as one's "best." But I was unaffectedly sorry the thing had happened. It is such happenings that, in literary circles, write FINIS to many a promising friendship. Ten men will lend you a pound for one that will lend you his countenance.

It was six o'clock the next morning when my lamp suddenly flared and went out. I stretched myself — realized that the fire was out as well, that I was cold and stiff, that dawn was coming up over the roofs of the stuccoed terrace opposite, and that the reason I had forgotten light and fire and the march of time lay in a disreputable, dog-eared typed manuscript that I had begun in weariness, gone on with in half-resentful surprise, and finished in a complete oblivion of everything save the swift rush of joys and fears, sorrows and mistakes to a doom that never befell. I remember a funny swelled feeling, as though I had been crying internally.

It is late in the day to attempt a criticism or even an appreciation of "Sad Company." Even as it stands to-day, in the close stereotype of the popular reprint, it is flawed and marred to my mind with many a *naïveté* and rawness, with here and there one of those lapses into the banal that are an evil legacy to American literature from the days of Poe and Hawthorne. Imagine what it must have been before, fearfully and reverently, for I knew I was handling a masterpiece, I helped brush off a little of the clay that still clung to it from the pit in which it had been cast

What I did, then and there, was to sit down, chilled and numbed as I was, in the raw morning light, and write to Ingram bidding him, on pain of perpetual displeasure, repair to me that evening, to be severely rebuked for his presumption in having, without previous apprenticeship or servitude, taken his livery and chair with the pastmasters and wardens

of his craft. This letter I carried downstairs through the sleeping house, tremulous with the good consciences of my fellow-lodgers, and slipped it in the pillar box at the corner of the crescent. I remember I even chuckled as I posted it, to the evident surprise of the stolid policeman who had wished me good morning. You see, I thought I was making literary history.

I am sorry to say that my enthusiasm didn't communicate itself to Paul. Six mute and incurious publishers were sitting too heavily on his self-esteem for that. He even took their part, with a perversity I have noticed before in the misunderstood of the earth. I have a theory that books like his are posthumous children, and that the state of mind which created them dies in giving them birth. What enraged him — what baffled him, because it was contrary to every lesson his strenuous life had taught him — was, that so much effort could be all in vain. I imagine he wrote the book with difficulty and without conscious exaltation of spirit.

"If I had put as much pains," I remembered his saying, "into any other thing I've set my hand to, I should be either a famous man, or a very rich one, to-day, Prentice."

And then, returning to the old grievance, that I could see had become a prepossession —

"And yet — six men can't be all wrong."

"Of course they can," I exclaimed indignantly, "and sixty."

He shrugged his shoulders wearily. "What can a man do, then?"

"One thing you can do," I answered severely, "is to sit down opposite me for a few hours a week and alter some of your modes of expression. I've made a list of some: Listen here!

"*Brightly shone the snow on the roof of the Rio Negro County Farmers' Institute.*' You mustn't say that."

"Why not?" asked Paul, simply; "it's the name."

"If you don't know why, I can't tell you. You must take it from me that such a thing, in England, will almost secure

rejection of itself. Then again: we don't talk of a man's 'white linen shirt bosom.' The word is *de mode* for a woman, but used for a man, it's offensive. And to say that Celia 'cached the mail-bags in a wash-out,' conveys no meaning at all to us."

Paul laughed out, and suddenly looked ten years younger.

"Sit down," he said, "and '*fais feu!*' Don't spare me!"

But the revision was a thankless task. Only a determination on my part that such a book shouldn't be lost supported me through it at all. Paul came to work irregularly, and in a mood that oscillated between a careless acceptance of every suggestion I made and a peremptory refusal to consider any alteration at all. But it was done at last, and I admit I waited hopefully for news from Carroll and Hugus.

After three weeks, in fact, I got a postcard asking me to call. Bonnyman was sitting in his sanctum, looking as young and as wise as on the day he came down from Balliol, and with his habitual air of finding the publishing trade a great lark.

"How's the industrious Prentice?" he cried, as soon as he saw me. "What's he been doing with himself these many moons?"

I shook hands and sat down. I profess I have never felt so jumpy when work of my own has been in question.

Bonnyman put his finger to his forehead. "What did I want to see you about, Prentice? . . . Oh, yes!" He touched an electric button on his desk.

"Byrne!" said he to the clerk who answered it, "bring me down 'Sad Company.'" I sent it up to the packing-room the day before yesterday. It ought to be ready."

My heart sank into my boots. "Aren't you going to publish it?" I faltered.

Bonnyman shook his head.

"No go, my boy! No go at all. You've brought it to the wrong shop."

"It kept me awake a whole night," I flashed out angrily.

Bonnyman smiled and yawned. "Kept me awake too, because I'd slept in the afternoon trying to read it."

"Oh! come now, Bonnyman," I protested. "You know better than that. Take the one scene alone," I went on eagerly, "where Holt is sitting with his dead wife, and the step-daughter comes to the door and he won't open because —"

But Bonnyman went on shaking his head with the impenetrable self-confidence any man acquires in time who exercises an habitual right of veto.

"Hugo and water!" he said. "Who can't write it? No, Prentice. To tell you the honest truth we're cutting out a lot of this problem stuff lately. What we're specializing in at present is the 'light touch.' The 'light touch,'" he repeated, illustrating what the world is hungering for, delicately, with an ivory paper cutter on his blotting-pad.

"Polly Prattlings!" I sneered.

"And d — d good stuff, too. Bring me some one like that, Prentice, and we'll talk.— Don't get angry, old man! Who is your little friend? American, ain't he?"

I nodded gloomily.

"Why don't he get a Rhodes scholarship and learn how to write English?"

"He's thirty-five," I said; "he's been all round the world and done everything."

Bonnyman pulled a long face that sufficiently disposed of Ingram's future. The brown-paper parcel was brought in and I slunk away with it under my arm, like a man repulsed from a pawnshop.

I didn't see Ingram for a long time, and was secretly glad of it. For I had no good news to give him. Other publishers were equally emphatic, with unimportant variations of delay and discourtesy. I don't say I lost faith in the book, but I did begin to doubt whether, in the present state of things, great work was worth while. It was too much like giving grand opera on a raft in mid-Atlantic.

At last, when I'd practically exhausted the firms I knew, and was beginning to wonder whether we couldn't have to come down to a publication "by special arrangement," or a setting up in linotype by one of the smaller provincial weeklies, an idea flashed into my head. I knew one great writer, a woman, American, too; fashionable, rich, but with a passionate reverence for all that was worthiest in letters. She had succeeded by means of a brilliance and impetuosity of style that had literally stormed the defences of dullness. In her books I had noticed an underlying mysticism that I thought might find Paul's work akin. It was a ticklish undertaking, and I hadn't done screwing up my courage to it when Ingram suddenly reappeared. His long arm pushed open the paper curtained door of the sanctum where we dined, one raw night in June. By his side was absolutely the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She wore a long purple coat, cut very smartly, and a big ribboned hat, and was swaying a little from side to side as though the lapsed rhythm of some tune she had just heard was still in her feet. She glanced round shyly but brightly and bowed with a pretty blush to Caulfield. We all gaped, and old Smeaton's pipe suddenly smelt very foul.

"Don't move!" said Ingram, as I made room for them at my side. "I haven't come for dinner. Just to ask if you've had any news, before I go away."

"No news at present," I confessed. "But I hope to have some soon."

He smiled a little grimly, and felt in his long rubber coat for a pocketbook.

"If anything turns up in the next month or so, write me here," he said, and handed me a card with an address scrawled across its face. "I'm going to France for a few weeks. Come, Nelly!" and was gone with his companion as abruptly as he had come.

"Beauty like hers is genius," Capel quoted, breaking the silence with an air of saying something apposite, for once.

"SAD COMPANY"

49

"Who's the pretty lady, Caulfield?" asked old Smeaton.  
"She bowed to you."

"She's a little person I've met at dances, and things," said  
Caulfield. "Goes round with the De Rudder woman. Does  
*gavottes* and *pavanes* and *corantos* and all that sort of thing.  
Pretty name, too,—'Fenella Barbour.'"

## VI

### A CHILD SPEAKS THE TRUTH

**F**ENELLA BARBOUR is the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England, who remained unbeneficed to the end of his life. Younger son of a noble family, Scotch in origin but long settled in the Midlands, handsome, intellectual, and much yearned upon, the Honorable Nigel let opportunities for advantageous matrimony pass him one by one, to marry, comparatively late in his life and outside of his own class, a young parishioner with whose name the gossip of a small Cornish country town had spitefully and quite unjustifiably coupled his. To the day of her death Minnie Trevail never quite got over the surprise with which she received her pastor's offer of an honorable share in board and bed, and, whether it was gratitude or an uneasy sense that principles which do not often make for a man's happiness had played her hand for her, the fact remains, that to the end of his brief married life the Reverend Nigel Barbour continued to be a sort of married bachelor, free to come or go unquestioned, with a fine gift for silence and without obvious enthusiasms, unless it were for the girl baby who would sit for hours by his study fire, as he wrote his sermons, scolding her doll in whispers, and to whose round cheek and fine dark curls his eyes strayed oftener and oftener during the last year of his life.

Similarly circumstanced, other women by study, by observation, by an endless self-correction, have lifted themselves in time to something like a mental level with the men who have perversely chosen them. Not necessarily from a sense of her

own limitations, Mrs. Barbour never tried. It is possible that she never, deliberately measuring the sacrifice which the man had made for her good name, determined the first sacrifice should be the last, but at least the unformed idea governed all her conduct. She kept the ideals, the accents—inside the house even the dress—of her class. For the spiritual companionship which she could never give she substituted the silent and tireless service of Martha. When her baby was born, she would have had the pain and peril tenfold; pain and peril so dimly comprehended by the man who smoothed her moist hair with an awkward hand, blinked his scholarly eyes at this crude and rather unseemly mystery, and, once assured the danger was past, went back to his weaving of words with a relief that even his kindness failed to conceal.

Nigel Barbour was one of the killed in the terrible Clee Level accident. He was returning from a New Year family gathering, the first he had attended since his marriage, and it is typical of their married relations that his wife never even "wondered" why she wasn't asked too. If reconciliation which should include her was on its way, his death disposed of the idea. Denied recognition during his lifetime his widow refrained, with what all her friends considered great lack of spirit, from attempting to win it after his death. He was uninsured, and, of the slender inheritance that devolved upon her, a great part consisted of house property at the "unfashionable" but expensive side of the Park. One of the houses, a great stuccoed mansion in a secluded square, happening to be empty at the time of her tragic bereavement, she assumed the tenancy, furnished it, and, reserving for herself only the basement and top floor, advertised discreetly but judiciously for lodgers.

Although the business is one that seldom shows a profit, and although in order to furnish the one house adequately she had been compelled to mortgage the freehold of the other, yet, if happiness be revenue, it is hard to see how she could



have made a better investment. For the first time in her life she tasted liberty. She had her great house, her establishment, the direction of her three maids, and the intense respect of family butchers, family bakers, and family candlestick-makers in staid contiguous streets. On spring or autumn afternoons the champing and clashing of bits and hoofs outside her door, the murmurs of joyous life that floated along the hall and up the wide stairs, sounded no less sweetly in her ears because it was Miss Rigby or Lady Anne Caslon and not the Honorable Mrs. Barbour who was at home to all the fine company. The "Honorable Mrs. Barbour!" Often, in passing through the bright rooms of the second floor, with clean pillow-cases or window blinds over her arm, she would stop and look at her homely reflection in the long cheval glasses, with a little inward smile at the incongruity. And yet in her heart, so sensitive to the duties, so blind to the rights, of her equivocal position, the obligations which the barren title involved were tacitly acknowledged. If it conferred no privileges, it at least restrained her judgment upon the caste, a corner of whose ermine rested, however grudgingly, upon her own shoulder. She grew indisposed to gossip. Such of her relatives and friends as called upon her while upon "day-trips" to London found themselves cut short in their pursuit of one special branch of knowledge. They went home to Cornwall declaring that Minnie had grown "stuck-up."

But the rights which she abdicated so whole-heartedly for herself she claimed with an added fierceness for Fenella. The child was a miracle from the first. Even while it lay, a few pounds of pink flesh, in a corner of one arm and drained her breast, she was worshipping it, humbly and afar off. It is difficult to find words that adequately convey her state of mind toward her daughter without entrenching on a parallel that is sacred and therefore forbidden; but this much is certain: had the legal quibble which can prove a child to be no blood relation to its mother been propounded to Mrs. Barbour, it

## A CHILD SPEAKS THE TRUTH 53

would have found in her a tearful and reluctant but convinced witness to its truth. For two successive nights before her baby's birth the same dream had visited her. The great house of her brother-in-law, which she had never seen, which her husband had never even thought of describing for her, had appeared to her, wrapped in flame. Pushing her way through the crowd that surrounded it and was watching it burn, after the inconsequent manner of dream people, with quiet satisfaction, she had run up tottering staircases and along choking passages, had reached a splendid room of state upon whose canopied bed a little naked infant lay, and, clasping it to her breast, had carried it out, smiling and unharmed. Fenella was no more truly her child than she was the child of the dream.

The little girl was four and still wore a black hair ribbon and a black sash over her pinafore, when one afternoon in October a big shallow barouche drove up to the door of No. 11 Suffolk Square. The springs were very high, the harness was very brightly plated, the chestnut horses, their heads held in by a torturing bearing rein, very shiny and soapy. A faded, artificial woman, with a tall osprey in her black bonnet, lolled back against the buff cloth cushions and regarded the world through a tortoise-shell lorgnette. A girl, quite young, with fair hair cut in a straight fringe across her forehead, sat up demurely at her side.

Fenella was taking tea in great state and composure on the window-seat of her nursery under the slates when the carriage drove up. A mug, on which Puss-in-Boots brushed back his bristling whiskers with one spirited paw, stood at her elbow, filled with a faintly tinted decoction of warm milk and sugar. A bun, delicately nibbled all round its lustrous circumference, was in her right hand, and a large over-dressed doll, with a vacant blue-eyed face, rested insecurely in the hollow of her left arm. From this household treasure her attention was just beginning to stray. James, the coachman, had pulled across

the roadway, and was driving his fretful over-heated charges up and down along the railings of the Square. Fenella pressed her forehead against the cold window-pane.

"Gee-gees; gee-gees!" she soliloquized.

To her enter, without cue or warning, Druce the parlor-maid — also a little the nursemaid — in great excitement, and breathless after a non-stop run from the bottom of the house. The bun was snatched from the chubby fingers, Marianne saved, timely, from a headlong course to the floor, the Marquis of Carabas pushed unconstitutionally on one side, and the napkin whisked off, all in four brisk movements.

"Company for my little lady!" the excited girl exclaimed. "She is to have her pretty hair curled, and her best frock put on, and to go downstairs to see mamma's fine friends."

Nelly took the outrage with the docility that was one of her charms.

"Gee-gees, Ducie," she said, pointing over her shoulder as she was borne away. "Gee-gees in the Thquare."

The warm-hearted maid gave her a tight and quite unauthorized hug.

"Gee-gees, indeed! Well, they may *trot! trot! trot!* until their feet drop off, before they find anything finer than we're going to show them."

The carriage folk were in the front part of the big tastelessly furnished drawing-room, which ran the whole depth of the house, and which happened to be unlet at the time. A fire, just lit, was crackling and smoking sullenly. The elder lady sat, with a transient air, as much on the edge of a little gilt chair as is compatible with a seat at all. I am not quite certain whether vinegar can be frozen at certain temperatures or not. If so, her smile recalled the experiment. The young girl sat back in a velvet rocking chair, her slender black-stockinged legs reaching the ground from time to time as it oscillated. She had a little pale round face; her lank, whitey-gold hair was cut as straight at her waist as it was at her forehead. She

had taken off her gloves, and the bony over-manicured fingers were interlocked in her lap with a sort of feeble repression. Near a table, covered with tea-things, but from which no hospitality had been dispensed, Mrs. Barbour was sitting, no less upright than her visitor. She was flushed and there was the fullness of suppressed tears round her eyelids, but there was as little sign of defeat in her face and attitude as in the other woman's unpleasant smile. The fine lady raised her lorgnette as the child was carried in. She turned languidly to her daughter.

"Your poor uncle's face. Oh, the very image!" she exclaimed, with an emphasis that extinguished any lingering idea poor Mrs. Barbour may have kept of a share in the matter.

Set upon the ground, the child beauty gravitated instantly to mother's skirts, and from this coign of vantage surveyed her visitors. Mrs. Barbour put the curls back from her forehead and stooped to her ear.

"Nelly," said she, "this is your aunt, Lady Lulford, your Aunty Hortense, come to see poor father's little girl. Won't you go and give her a kiss?"

The grasp tightened upon her skirt.

"Oh, shame!" the mother murmured, with a reproach in her voice that the glistening eyes belied. "Is this my kind little Nelly? Come over, then, with mother."

With a sidelong glance at the tea-table, Fenella was led, obliquely, across the thick new pile carpet, and received a kiss upon her forehead that was not much warmer than the window against which it had just been pressed.

"And now your cousin. Cousin ——"

"Leslie," said Lady Lulford, covering a slight yawn with her golden card-case, and glancing out of the window toward her horses.

The girl's face seemed to yearn and melt as the reluctant little feet were guided to her. She pursed her pale lips and held out her thin arms. Fenella was to remember it years after-

wards with a spasm of pity and indignation. But she was only a baby now, and struggled in the weak embrace. Once back at her mother's side, a violent reaction of shyness set in, and she buried her face in the maternal lap.

"Impressionable, too; like poor Nigel," the peeress remarked to her daughter in the same icy voice.

"Come," the mother coaxed, "hasn't Nelly a word to say? Her aunty" — Lady Lulford winched — "her aunty and cousin will think they've got a little dumb girl for a niece."

Fenella raised her face. "I weally —" she began, and, not finding encouragement to proceed, down went the black head again.

Mother lifts it gently.

" — was —" Nelly's finger went to her mouth. Her glance wavered, wandered tortuously along the floor, and finally and suddenly focussed the tea equipage.

" — in the middle of my tea." Louder and with sudden confidence as the full nature of the outrage was realized, "Weally was in the middle of my tea."

Lady Lulford smiled abstractedly. Leslie's lips moved. The mother drew her little girl closer.

"You shall have your tea presently, dear," she said, "but I want you to listen to me first. Now, tell me," she seemed to steady her voice, "how would you like to go into the country with your aunt and Cousin Leslie?"

Nelly's eyes grew big and round. "And mother?" added she, joining the palms of her hands, baby-wise, with stiff outspread fingers.

"No, dear. Mother must stay in London, because she has so much to do."

There was an agitation of the black curls, and from under them a most decided negative evolved itself.

"Oh, but my precious," the mother pleaded, as that other mother may have pleaded before the judgment seat of the

great wise king; "just for a while; to see the green trees, and the moo-cows, and the bunnies, and, and ——"

"The deer," said Lady Lulford, raising the conversation to a higher and, shall we say, ancestral level.

"Great — big — stags, baby," the cousin broke in, with her eager, unsteady voice, "great big stags with horns like this," and she made a pair with fingers that were almost as fleshless.

Fenella refused to weigh the catalogue of attractions a moment. The head shook faster and faster till the dark curls whipped first one cheek and then another.

"Not for a little while? Not for a few weeks?" Mrs. Barbour urged, almost roughly.

At this persistence in a quarter where it was so little to be looked for, two fat tears distilled themselves in Fenella's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. She opened her mouth, and I regret to say her face lost, temporarily, its attractive power. Mrs. Barbour snatched her up and sprang to her feet.

"She sha'n't be teased," she cried passionately, clasping the child to her breast. Then, turning quickly first to Lady Lulford and afterward to her daughter, "Don't you see she's too young now? She's only a baby, really. Perhaps later ——"

The Viscountess turned upon her own offspring the cold ceremonial eye that on company nights lifted the ladies at Frere's Lulford to their feet and up into the drawing-room.

"We must really go now, Leslie," she said, with a little explanatory wave of the card-case. "So many calls, you know. Well, Mrs. Barbour," turning to her hostess with an evident effort, "I suppose we mustn't expect you to decide such a matter in a hurry. For the present I think I may say our offer, Myles's and mine, stands open. I still think it is what poor Nigel would most have wished. And even if you should decide not to accept it now, remember, if at any time — at any time ——" and in this golden air of good intentions Lady Lulford's visit ended.

"That is an ordeal well over, Leslie," she said, a few moments

later, leaning back and closing her eyes slightly, as the carriage door slammed and the tall footman with a crook from the waist still in his long straight back, swung himself to his perch.

"Mother," said Leslie, nervously, pulling at her gloves, "we could hardly — could hardly —"

"Could hardly *what*, my dear? You are so disjointed at times."

"— expect her to give up *such a pet*," the girl said impulsively, with a gush of feeling that seemed to leave her colder and weaker than ever.

Her mother lifted the frozen gloved hand that seemed to blight like frost, and gave a little tinkling laugh.

"My dear, when you are my age you will not rate so highly what is a mere animal passion. *True* love would consider the child's material interests first. I still hope," with a little hostile back glance as the barouche rolled out of Suffolk Square, "that Nigel's daughter may not have to grow up in the basement of a lodging-house."

"The *basement*? Mother!"

"My dear, foolish girl, you surely don't think the room we were in to-day (atrocious taste!) is used by them. No, my dear! They live at the bottom of the area, eat and gossip with the servants; sometimes, I have no doubt, the policeman drops in to tea. The *Honorable* Mrs. Barbour!" And Lady Lulford gave her unpleasant laugh again.

"Mamma!" cried Leslie, really shocked now, "you don't suppose she uses *that*?"

"Why not, my dear? She's either very foolish or has more delicacy than I give her credit for if she doesn't. Why, she could have her house full of rich vulgar Americans all the year round. Are we at Lady Dunsmuir's already? Thank heavens, Leslie, we're not calling on the servants' hall this time."

Meanwhile, at the house they had left, an aggrieved small

person sat on a cushion and comforted the ache at her heart very much after the fashion of older and presumably wiser people, with mother's rejected dainties. Stretched on a wolf-skin rug, in an attitude that had been a common one with her in days when, the Cornish sun dappling her back and making illuminating splashes on the novelettes that were her mental food, she had dreamed away whole summer afternoons thus in her father's orchard, the farmer's daughter watched the busy, sticky mouth at work, her face wholly given up to the animal affection that Lady Lulford was at that very moment reprehending.

"Why didn't you want to kiss your Auntie Hortense?" she asked presently.

No answer, but much sucking, as the sugary bottom of the cup was reached. The mother loosened the little fingers and put it aside.

"Come, Nelly," she urged; "answer mother!" Who has not coveted a child's thought at times?

This one seemed to consider.

"*Be-tos*," she said at last, cryptically, like some little Chinese oracle.

"*Be-tos*, of what? That's not any answer. And, oh, law! child, how backward you do speak for a great girl of four!"

Hard pressed, Nelly struggled to her feet. She clenched her little hands, puckered her forehead. The mother held her breath as she waited.

"*Be-tos* — Oh! *be-tos* she didn't *smell* nice!"

And, as the woman rolled back, shaking unrestrainedly with laughter.

"— like you do, mummy; like you do, mummy," the child cried, flinging her arms round her mother's neck and burying her flushed face in the soft shoulder.



## VII

### MOSTLY LADY ANNE

**S**O THE baby hands threw their dice, and as the dice fell the game was played out. Life unfolded itself amid the fog or rain or thwarted sunlight of the staid Tyburnian square, which should have had for tutelary deity some sleepy god, yawning and stretching himself in the centre of its smoky grass plot. Before the opening consciousness, like figures in an enchanted frieze, such phenomena passed as are likely to haunt area railings: The muffin man, tinkling his bell down murky streets and terraces at the uplifting hour of tea-time; the policeman with his bull's-eye lantern, waking the rails to a good-night dance along blank stuccoed walls and shuttered windows; broad hipped Welsh milkwomen in plaid shawls, with shining pails clanking from their wooden yokes; the old blind Dalmatian dog that panted at the corner of the mews and drummed the hot pavement with his tail. Once a year for one blissful month the town baby became a sand baby, building castles, scooping moats with her wooden spade for the tide to crumble (oh, Nelly! there's a tide that knows all our castles are sand); racing with bare-legged chance companions along the purring lips of the treacherous sea. Child of suppressed love and of absolute surrender, she grew up straight, strong and ardent; fair of face, light of foot, and with a pitiful, generous heart that could not wait its time to love, but before the dimpled hands could reach or turn the stiff handle of the hall door, had made to itself friends of the world's wretchedness. The old Garibaldian accordion player, with the twisted leg, learned to look

for the little *signorina*, beautiful as the sun of Naples, which he dreamed of at night in his cellar at Saffron Hill; the ancient mariner with snow-white hair and beard (a terrible case! says the Charity Organization Society) kept a bow of quite especial condescension for Missie's penny at Number Eleven; while it was fine to see with what a sweep of his great red hand to his battered hat old Paddy Crimmin, the drunken Delhi hero, would straighten his racked body of a cold Sunday morning as the little creature, her dark face aglow with newly discovered color against the white road and snow-burdened trees, stopped at his crossing to grope with mittened fingers for the penny, nestling in her pocket next a sixpence which I am sure she begrudged the cold impersonal offertory plate later on.

She possessed her mother's life as a single flame possesses a dark room, creating its light, its color, and its motion. The slave does not always make the tyrant, and to the homely woman who tended her, kissed her limbs fragrant from the bath, twisted her curls round fingers that thrilled with love and worship — who coaxed her from forbidden ways with toys and sweets, and whose voice was never once pitched in even the gentlest accent of authority, Fenella gave her heart in return. All the fairies, it seemed, were at her christening, even to the fairy Gratitude, who, I hear, is not often asked out nowadays.

For her child's sake, and spurred on by love, Mrs. Barbour toiled and schemed incessantly. Far less mercenary of soul than the aristocratic patrons who haggled over extras, inspected cold joints with a questioning eye and wanted their rooms "kept over" while they disported themselves at Homburg or Cannes — naturally credulous in fact, and inclined to believe the best of every one, the woman effected an actual change in her nature and under all her suave manner became distrustful, peremptory, and mercenary. The terms she wrung from the butcher, baker, and grocer before mentioned, with the bait of prompt payment in one hand and the threat of the big stores

at Brompton and Bayswater in the other, were, perhaps, as unprecedented as those easy-going family purveyors one and all declared them to be. In bed at night while she should have been sleeping, in church on Sunday when she should have been harkening the sermon, her brain was busy with an endless double entry sum of receipts and outgoings, the profit of which she wrote off, variously, but always under the one heading, something after this fashion: "Fenella Account. To an amber satin eiderdown quilt, same as I saw at Hampton's on Friday; to plum-colored silk stockings such as the lady at the end of No. 6 just now is making no attempt to conceal; item, to a black fox stole and toque — the silver pointed ones are cheaper, but they say the hairs come out; item, to a silver manicure set like Miss Rigby's." And the poor woman, absorbed in her fond calculations, would scribble an imaginary total with one wrinkled, black-gloved finger across the gilt cross of her Book of Common Prayer, to the scandal of her left-hand pew-neighbor, and the no small mystification of Fenella on her right, wondering what mummy was "up to now."

She kept the girl from school until she was twelve years old, making shift with whatever deposit of a church school education stayed in her own head, eked out with the ministrations of various depressing and untrained governesses, and last but not least with lessons from Lady Anne Caslon, whose only fault was that they were necessarily irregular. Lady Anne was the first of two permanent lodgers who, about Fenella's sixth year, made their home at Number Eleven, and, for a number of years, almost lifted Mrs. Barbour's precarious venture to the dignified level of a settled income. The rooms had only just been given up, by "parties" with whom money seemed to be no object, amid indignant tears on the one side and a glow of respectable resolve on the other; but Mrs. Barbour had not yet signified the vacancy through the columns of the *Morning Post*, while we need hardly add that no window-card ever shocked the susceptibilities of Suf-

folk Square. I suspect myself that the Lulford connection were anxious to confine the collateral skeleton within limits that could be controlled by them, and kept a furtively watchful eye on the room-letting branch of the family.

Lady Anne appeared on a blustering March morning: a short, middle-aged woman, none the less active because she limped from an old hunting accident, with a long, white, bony face — the face of some great mystic abbess of old days — a distinct prognathous of the lower jaw, and a high, narrow forehead, from which her colorless fair hair was tightly drawn and twisted into an absurd little knob at the nape of the neck. On every feature, movement, and accent was stamped the indefinable *cachet* of the governing caste. She was wearing a frieze coat and skirt, a man's collar and tie, and a green Alpine hat, carried an ash stick, and was pulling against, rather than leading, a hideous and powerful white bull-terrier, bristlingly intent upon the feline possibilities of successive areas.

She stumped through the vacant floors on her low-heeled shoes, rapped the wainscot as though she rather suspected secret passages, gave a derogatory poke of her ashplant to the feather mattresses, turned on both taps in the bathroom, and concluded her tour with a sudden descent upon the kitchen, where three maids, busy upon a noontide lunch, rose and curt-sied awkwardly.

"I'll take 'em," she said abruptly, turning suddenly in the hall upon the aggrieved proprietress. "The rooms will have to be repapered of course — and a hard mattress, and I have my own pictures; oh! and you'll turn those tufty, musty armchair things with ball fringes into some other room, won't you? — like a good soul. Any children? I thought I heard — Down, Rock! Down, sir!"

The bull-terrier, tied to the hall-stand, had lain, whining unhappily, sweating, and wrinkling his pink muzzle, while his mistress roamed up and down stairs. Now he was stand-

ing, tense and rigid, growling ominously, at a tiny hand that pushed a biscuit hospitably against his clenched, bared teeth. Lady Anne struck the threatening head aside and lifted the child in her strong arms.

"So this is your little girl? This is Fenella?"

"Yes, m' lady," said Mrs. Barbour, hasty and apologetic in manner for all her secret resentment. "But she's a good, quiet little thing, and I'll see she gives no trouble."

Lady Anne did not answer. She had pushed back those rebellious curls and was brooding the flower-like face.

"Dear heart!" was all she said aloud, and the rest was murmured under her breath.

She set the child on the floor and held out the little nerveless hand, still clenched on the biscuit, toward the bull-terrier.

"You must be careful with strange dogs, baby, particularly this breed. They aren't like any other sort of dog. Take it, Rock!"

Rock crunched the biscuit wastefully between his powerful jaws.

"No crumbs, sir!"

He sniffed up about a third of the biscuit, which he had let fall on the tiled floor.

"Say 'Thank you.'"

The animal gave the small fist that was tendered him three enormous licks, and glanced at his mistress out of his savage pink eyes.

"That's right! Mustn't ever bite this one, Rock! She isn't a cat, and never going to be one either, I know."

"I hope the child will be no obstacle, m' lady," put in Mrs. Barbour, stiffly.

"Obstacle!" Lady Anne repeated. "God bless me, no. Why should she be? You must have your baby, I suppose, same as I have my dog. What's her name?"

"Fenella, m' lady."

"Very well. You be good to Rock — I'll be good to Fenella."

"I'll send a postcard when I've arranged things," she said.  
 "Come on, Rock!"

"Why was the lady c'yin', mummy?" asked Fenella, whose accent still left much to be desired.

Mrs. Barbour could not enlighten her. She was wondering herself why the woman had first called her child Fenella and then asked her name. A conversation in the corner of the dining-room at the Palmyra Club half an hour later might have carried her mystification a little further.

"I don't think I'll do a *matinée* with you this afternoon, Brenda," Lady Anne was saying to her dearest friend. "Seeing Nigel's baby has rather upset me. I think I'll go to my room and howl for a bit."

"What's *she* like, Nanno?" asked the dearest, narrowing her eyes through the smoke of her cigarette.

"Nice, comfy, child-bearing sort of person. She has no airs. That was a lie of the Lulford woman."

"I believe," said Brenda Newcombe slowly, as if the opinion were the fruit of some thought and a little disillusion, "that's the sort most men like Nigel like in their hearts."

"Men like Nigel — !"

"Philosophers — I mean. Over-educated, ultra-refined. They divorce their intellect and their instincts so thoroughly that the result is —"

Lady Anne raised her shapely white hand deprecatingly.

"I know what you're going to say quite well, Brenda. You needn't finish it."

"To give one instance," went on the irrepressible Brenda; "did you never hear that Don Hinchey's wife has to wear print dresses and, oh! everything very plain when they're alone in Northumberland."

"Pshaw! Brenda; *quel conte!*"

"Nanno, it's gospel. She told Lady Carphilly, and Lady Carphilly told me. She wore them once to a fancy dress, and

looked so well that now when Donny's bored he makes her put them on. She hates it, but he says it's the only way she can keep his love."

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

Lady Anne moved in as soon as the alterations that her austere soul demanded had been made; the walls hung with a paper that Mrs. Barbour compared scornfully but exactly to a dry mustard plaster, and various ebullient studies of still life removed to make way for old-wood engraved portraits and Alken sporting prints. She began the morning, violently, with a cold bath at seven; breakfasted — continentally — on dry bread and coffee at eight, and wrote nearly all the morning at a roll-topped Sheraton desk, whose drawers slid in and out on brass rails as smoothly as the oiled pistons of a machine. It was at this desk that Fenella stammered through her letters. Seated upon the highest chair the room afforded, made higher still by an Italian gilt leather cushion, the little girl spelled out the adventures of Tom and Dick, Nat and Ned, and other monosyllabic heroes of childhood. Nelly's attention wandered very easily. Her voice would die away to a murmur — her head fall lower and lower until the dark curls quite covered the heavy type and wood cuts, along which a very neatly pointed cedar pencil, held in a firm white hand, moved with such exasperating deliberation. Then she would begin to suck her thumb, and, finding no encouragement to relaxation of effort in the lowered lids and compressed mouth above her shoulder, would let her eyes wander round the room. Under the high white mantelpiece the fire burned cheerily, with little bubbles of gas and spurts of flame: above it, a silver clock set in a horseshoe ticked so quickly that the slow passage of the hands across its face was one mystery the more for the child brain to puzzle out. The room smelt like a man's, of morocco leather and boot cream, and the vague but piercing scent of

naked steel in between. Under a curtain to the right of the fireplace, which did not quite reach the stained floor, Lady Anne's long boots, on high wooden trees, stood, an orderly row of eight polished toes, like booted eavesdroppers behind an arras. Over the "Melton Hunt Breakfast," between crossed hunting crops, a fox's mask still wore the grin with which it was twitching one December afternoon years and years ago when the mangled pelt smoked upon the raw Leinster air and little, ugly, hard-riding Lady Anne, in long bottle-green habit and flaxen pig-tail, was held up amid the yelping red muzzled pack and blooded to the hunt; while — most interesting and distracting of all — close to the fire, with his nose between his paws, deliciously unemployed, lay Roquelaure, blinking friendly eyes which seemed to say, in the secret language that children and animals share for a few short years —

"Oh! I say, baby, ain't lessons over yet?"

Three times a week, when her correspondence was done, and a wire basket full of square, rough envelopes with scarlet seals awaited the afternoon post, Lady Anne would go riding in the Park. She stumped through the hall in a short habit and wide-brimmed billycock hat, under whose elastic band the uses of the yellow-white knot of hair became suddenly obvious, looking more than ever like an abbess: a hunting, not a praying, abbess this time. Outside a stable lad from the mews held a tall, nervous horse by the head. Lady Anne would hold the child up to pat the hairy, quivering nose, bid her have no fear of the sliding eyes; would run her fingers down the horse's flanks and legs, maybe pick up and inspect a hoof cunningly; at last, jumping into her saddle out of the groom's hand, would straighten the sidling beast with one blow of her riding crop on his buttock, and be off, her right knee almost in line with the maned neck, and holding in the caitiff head with hands that were a proverb in the shires. Fenella always watched her out of sight, her eyes shining — the palms of her hands pressed hard together.



## VIII

### THE SECOND FLOOR

**B**Y THIS time Miss Rigby might possibly have arisen and be watching the horse and its rider through her curtains. Emilie Rigby was the second of the permanent paying guests. She was tall, languid, graceful and disorderly, of uncertain age, but with a growing opacity of skin and with darkening shadows under her shortsighted eyes to tell of the ebbing life forces within: much younger in the afternoon than in the morning, and recovering her youth hour by hour as the day aged. In her rooms on the second floor she led the spoiled, sensuous life of an odalisque or a Persian cat. She breakfasted in bed, lunched in a wrapper and with her hair coiled carelessly upon her neck, had a hot bath, with elaborations, at three, and left the house an hour later, in a cab whose destinations, despite all efforts of Druce and Kendal, remain conjectural to this day. She dined from home almost nightly, but had few correspondents, and her visitors gave Mrs. Barbour no anxiety. She had a telephone installed in her room, whose sharp summons soon became one of the habitual sounds of the dark, still house. The baffled Druce, carrying up an unascetic luncheon at one, frequently found the door locked in her face and was forced to wait until a conversation, punctuated with bursts of laughter and far too disjointed to be worth listening to through the keyhole, wore itself away. Lady Anne answered for her.

"Respectable?" she exclaimed abruptly, in response to a guarded query. "Of course Jasmine Rigby's respectable. We dined at the same house last month. Only, if I were you

—” she hesitated, unwilling to spoil the perfect relief in her landlady’s face, “if I were you, I wouldn’t have Nelly in and out there too much, once she begins to grow up. Her clothes alone are enough to unsettle the girl.”

But it is hard, with four servants and three households to control, to keep an efficient eye upon inquiring youth, whose fingers are already beginning to pluck restlessly at the many hued skirt of life; and the hardship becomes greater when you are filled with pity for a loneliness that is part of your own contriving. As long as Fenella was a very little girl, beyond coaxing her in now and then to pet as one would pet a pretty kitten, Miss Rigby took scant notice of the child. But as she grew in years and stature, and a beauty that was becoming more of the earth and less of the angels was confirmed in her, I am afraid the scented, sophisticated atmosphere of the second floor began to exercise its delayed but inevitable charm. One of those foolish intimacies began which almost every pretty young girl can remember, often with shame and impatience. There was a year when the woman, nearly forty, and the girl, not yet fourteen, were “Jasmine” and “Nelly” to each other; when little cocked-hat notes (oh, how deftly folded!) were apt to lurk under the doily mats on Fenella’s dressing-table, to be answered by ignorant, misspelt letters from the blindly adoring child. The jaded woman of fashion and pleasure (no; I don’t know what place she filled in her world, nor is speculation worth while) took an early opportunity of showing the little parson’s daughter the beauty of her arms and shoulders — talked unreservedly before her, dressed her up in her gowns and *lingerie*, let her lie upon the bed and prattle while she herself sat before the mirror, waging her unwearied warfare with time—refreshed herself with the girl’s homage, laughed away as much as she dared of her innocence, and finally, in a last spasm of confidence, unlocked a drawer, hesitated, and put into the girl’s hands a bundle of letters, bidding her, with a flushed cheek and the ghost of a giggle, to read them over and to let her know

how their literary beauties affected her. "When you've read them," said she, "maybe I'll tell you who they came from."

Fenella left the room puzzled, a little frightened, but with no instinct to tell her that possibly she was holding her damnation in her hand.

What happened next? One of those happy accidents, perhaps, that good angels know how to arrange. The packet was returned, unopened, next morning, by Lady Anne, in the course of an interview which left her fellow-lodger considerable repairs to effect before she faced the world anew. An hour later the good genius, habited for her ride, knocked timidly at the door of Mrs. Barbour's sanctum in the hitherto unvisited nether regions.

Mrs. Barbour rose to her feet when she saw who her caller was, but Lady Anne signed for her to remain seated. She seemed nervous and awkward, and put her hands to her side. They say her horse kicked her there the day she broke her ankle; oh! only a touch; no notice was taken of it at the time.

"I've come to speak about our little girl," she said, sitting down and crossing her booted legs.

Mrs. Barbour bridled a little; but youthful habits are strong. She resumed her deferential manner.

"I trust she has been giving no trouble, m' lady."

"She has perhaps exposed a meddling old woman to the worst snub of her life. I'm going to be crude, Mrs. Barbour. What on earth are you going to make of that child?"

Mrs. Barbour plaited the table cover, but seemed to have no answer ready.

"She's growing lovelier every day" (the foolish mother's eyes glistened); "she dresses like a little fashion plate; she has more silver stuff and finery in her room than any of us girls had at Castle Cullen; she hasn't a friend in the world nor an idea in her head; and we've an instance," with a glance up at the ceiling, "near enough at hand, where beauty with nothing else can bring a woman."

Mrs. Barbour's eyes began to fill. Not a single harsh truth but voiced a reproach that had been nibbling her own heart for years.

"Why don't you send her to school? Do you know that if you were a poor woman you could be fined or sent to prison?"

"Schools are so dear."

"Stuff! They're cheaper and better than they ever were. There's nothing young folk can't do now. You can go from a boarding school to the 'varsity on a string. Let's send her to school, Mrs. B.," she persisted. "You've no time to look after her, and neither have I."

"Not boarding school," the mother pleaded. "I couldn't be parted from her now."

"Who said anything about boarding schools? There are plenty of day schools. None of them are perfect, I know. But it can't be put off. All the danger isn't out of doors. Let her go and get a little honest mud on the bottom of her skirts, and come home every evening to have it brushed off."

The poor woman struggled with her trouble. "It isn't that," she said brokenly, "but — but, I can't explain it. There are things that don't brush off — ever. She is so ignorant of what the world thinks of — of people like me. They'll teach her it all at school; they'll teach her to despise her m-m-mother. . . ."

She broke down and, burying her face in her hands, wept the unrestrained tears of her class.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" she moaned. "I knew it must come. She's so pretty — so pretty; such a little aristocrat. I'm only her mother by accident, really. And she'll make fine friends and be asked out, and wonder why she can't ask 'em back, and I'll have to tell her: 'Nelly, dear, it's because your mother is only a poor woman that father married to save her name, that lets lodgings to her betters for a living, and wouldn't let you go to your own people when they asked for you; and

you can never have a friend of your own class as long as you live with her.”

Lady Anne kept her arm across the broad, bowed shoulders.

“Let’s try it,” she said cheerily. “I’ll answer for Nelly, and I think I can answer for the others. You have no conception how the world is changing. I have the very school in my eye, too. I know the principal. Sunlight and science, and knowledge that’s innocent because it’s thorough, and open windows upon life that blow away all the whispers in the corners, and a proper reverence for the body that, after all, is all we’re sure of. As for the money — well, I’m a meddling old body, and you can heap coals of fire on my head by letting me be responsible. I don’t blame you for spending money on her clothes: besides — *Sharland College is dressy.*”

She wrote to her friend that night:

“DEAR LOUISA:

“I’m sending you a little girl who is the daughter of a dear, dead chum of mine. She’s extravagantly pretty, very dull, quite poor—is being brought up as though she were an heiress and has a heart that I believe will prove a greater danger to her than her face or her poverty. For God’s sake, Louisa, find out if she has any special talent that will help her to a living, and ground her and grind her until she’s taken hold. I’m fond of the child, and shouldn’t die happy if I thought there was any risk of her joining the one profession for which previous experience isn’t essential.

“The old pain in the side has come back; the Swedish massage did it no permanent good. But I can still ride, so I don’t squeal.”

## IX

### SHARLAND COLLEGE

**F**ENELLA was nearly fourteen when she went to school. After Mrs. Barbour had seen her into the green horse-omnibus which at that date still rolled sedately westward along the Park paling the poor woman went home and, regarding with a stricken eye the untidy relics of a hurried breakfast, sat down and had a good cry. She would see her daughter again in a few hours, but her instinct told her that the parting was not one to be measured by time or distance.

At school Fenella achieved an instant success. At her lessons she remained a sad dunce, but Sharland College had the modern conception of bodily beauty as a supreme merit, and for its sake and also a little for the amiability that accompanied it, Nelly's shortcomings in algebra and geometry were forgiven and so mitigated by the assistance of plainer and cleverer girls anxious for her friendship as to be scarcely noticeable. She had become a fashion in the school before the end of her second term, and a host of extravagant, flattering nicknames attested this heady popularity. She was "Astarte" and "Principessa" in the higher forms; "Flash" in the gymnasium and swimming bath — a tribute to her bodily agility; "Zenobia" for one winter term, shortened into "Nobs" during a frenzied hockey rally and forthwith abandoned; "Greuzy" in artistic circles; while, oftenest of all and most eloquent of all — for it voiced the sense of a common possession — she was "Our Nelly." I do not know whether it is to her credit or discredit that the intimacy with Miss Rigby came to a

sudden and unforced end in her first term. Poor Jasmine was forgotten or remembered only as a rather unhealthy dream. Fenella began even to refer to her flippantly as her "past"; "Ma, has my 'past' got up yet?" she would ask at midday on half-holidays when she came home to change for hockey or tennis and wanted to use the telephone.

It was upon wintry half-holidays that poor Mrs. Barbour felt her desolation most keenly. It did not seem to matter so much when she knew Nelly was working at school. There was a hungry and noisy return at half-past four to be looked forward to, and a whole golden evening during which she might knit and watch the dark head bent above the irksome home task. And in the summer she would not have had the child otherwise employed than in winning roses on lawn or river for the colorless cheeks that she was uneducated enough to think indicated a latent delicacy. But on rainy autumn afternoons, so brief and dark, with the fire burning cosily in the shabby parlor and only a prospect of forty feet of smoky grass, a leprous plaster cupid and the black wall of the mews to entertain herself with, it seemed unjust, even vaguely ominous to her peace, that her nestling preferred to beat her new-fledged wings out in the dark and cold. She never complained, but tried for a while to tempt her child to stay at home with her "favorite" books, her "favorite" armchair, a box of chocolates — poor ineffectual wiles that the short-sighted eyes of youth, set upon the quest of high-spiced pleasure abroad, passed over without seeing. There would be a hasty gobbled luncheon, taken standing, like the last meal in Egypt; a frenzied search behind old magazines that were never read and old music that was never played, for shoes and shin-guards — "Must have my new shin-guards to-day, mummy. Kilburn hack simply rotten —" a kiss, for the chocolates, given on the wing, and Fenella in red tam o' shanter and belted jacket of scarlet pilot cloth was off — through the area and up the steps.

"Expect me when you see me, mummy. I may chew with one of the girls."

She was not a religious woman, but she used to pray about this time, miserably and humbly, for her child's heart to be left to her. And, in the morning, between two mouthfuls of porridge, it was just possible that Fenella might look at her sharply, and say —

"What've you been doing to yourself, mummy? You look like a boiled owl this morning."

Who else was to notice that an old woman's eyes were red?

But there were times, also, which the mother came to look for, as sex stole inexorably upon the slangy, boyish woman-child, when the princess wearied of her kingdom, the tireless wings began to droop, and the fledgling crept under the old sheltering wing for comfort. She would come down after lunch, dressed in her house frock, sit down unexpectedly on her mother's knee, grip the broad shoulders, and held thus at arms' length, gaze at her for minutes together as though with some new knowledge in the steadfast eyes. She would cover her with tender names of disrespect — with cooing infractions of the fifth commandment. "Dear old fathead!" "Dear old stoopid!" "Silly old motherbird!" But she was strangely averse to the caresses with which her mother, always expansive, would have repaid the endearing insults.

"Don't kiss me, donkey," she would cry, breaking away. "Can't you see this is one of my touch-me-notish days? Hook me up the back and send Drucie out for some chocolates. I'm going to stop with you all the afternoon."

"Dearie," said the mother, timidly, one day, "won't the girls miss you and come looking for you?"

Fenella knit her brows, but did not look up from her book.

"Of course they know where you live, don't they, dear?"

"No — yes. Oh! I don't know. Mother, can't you see I'm reading?"



Next Saturday Fenella was "playing away." The mother, still pursuing a train of thought that had not really been interrupted during the week, was wondering whether it would not be possible, by sending Miss Rigby away (she had never cared for the woman), and by moving Lady Anne up one story, to take the whole of the first floor for herself and her child. The girl *must* have somewhere to bring her friends. She stuck her needles into her wool and sought pencil and paper. But the figures that foot it merrily enough when it is a matter of addition, limp wearily and stubbornly when subtraction is in question. She caught her breath at the result of her calculations. And yet — the situation was intolerable.

In the middle of her reverie a gate creaked and slammed. There was a clatter of feet on the steps — a rattle of sticks along the railings — Babel let loose in the area, and, before the woman could give a shape to the panic at her heart, into the big, shabby room, like an ill-trained chorus at a theatre, tumbled a rout of girls — short and tall — dark and fair — all dressed alike in red jackets and caps.

They were of all ages from twelve to sixteen. Some had the promise of beauty in a few years to come — some were only comely with the freshness of youth and health, but from one and all, in spite of strident voice, awkwardness of gesture, and self-consciousness of regard, there radiated that evanescent and mournful charm which is possessed by any bevy of girl comrades that touches childhood at its one extreme and womanhood at the other. With a comprehensive sweep of her arm Fenella introduced her rabble court.

"Ma — these are the girls! Girls — this is ma! Hurry up and get us something to eat. We've been playing at Blackheath, and they only gave us one biscuit each with tea. And, look here, girls," turning from her mother's dazed face upon the brawling team, "if you make a row and upset our lodgers, you'll" (impressively) "*never — come — here — again!*"

Fenella's popularity not only survived this shameful exposure, but followed her into the Christmas holidays. The most delightful of all missives began to lie, three and four at a time, on the breakfast table by her plate, "begging the pleasure." Mrs. Barbour, who did a considerable amount of good by stealth, had arrested a thirsty genius on a downward course from the Bond Street ateliers to Marylebone Workhouse, and, with this strange being, who wore a palpable transformation, smelt of brandy, and called her "Modder-moselle," Nelly spent many a fruitful morning, pinning, fitting, and cutting, while the machine whirred and bumped on a table near by. She tasted for the first time the delights of the waxed floor, the heavy golden air, the cadenced wind — all the witchery of dance-land. Sleek "freshers" with lacquered heads, "down for the short —" pink, alert subalterns on Christmas furlough from Chatham and Aldershot, with funny cropped moustaches like a toothbrush — delightful middies in uniform, with cracking voices, wrote her name stiffly and illegibly on their programmes or, if they were very smart, on an immaculate shirt cuff. She danced with the verve of one exercising a fine natural gift, but hated "sitting out," and acquired a distracting habit of wandering on her partner's arm, along corridors and up stairs, through palms and around screens, in search of friends similarly coupled. She called this the "visiting figure," but, oh! the despair of inflammable youth, its head full of incoherent adoration, to which darkness and solitude would have given such burning words. This little unchaperoned girl, with her perilously attractive beauty, discovered endless address and resource in keeping male fervor at a distance. The following conversation is on record, heard from palm-filled obscurity:

"Look here, Bobby! I'm sitting with you in the dark, 'cos you said the light hurt your bad eye; but if you *paw* you'll have two bad eyes to look after 'stead of one."

Toward the end of her third year at Sharland College Lady Anne received a letter from Miss Garrett, of which the following was part:

“. . . About Fenella Barbour. No. I haven't forgotten the promise I made you to let you know if the girl showed marked ability in any one direction. Strangely enough, Madame de Rudder, of Hanover Street, our dancing and calisthenic mistress, called upon me about her only yesterday. She tells me the child shows a talent for bodily movement (she calls it 'genius': poor abused word!) such as she never marked in a girl before. She is revising some old dances, *Pavanes* and *Corantos*, for private house parties, and wants Fenella to join a quartette she is making up. Remembering what you told me, I mentioned (guardedly) the expense of dresses, etc., but she would not hear of the girl's incurring any outlay. Not only this. She says that if Fenella could come, even two days a week, as assistant at Hanover Street, she could have her tuition free and, in time, be employed regularly, at very good pay: much better than we can afford our own under-mistresses, who are all graduates, as you know.

"It seems to me, dear Anne, that a *métier* offers here: not a very exalted one, it is true, but in the only line for which the girl has shown any talent at all. Will you, if you think fit, speak to the mother before I do anything further and ascertain her views. I have met Mrs. Barbour. She is a puzzling and, I should say, rather foolish woman, who evidently married far above her class.

"The idea, if followed out, will of course abridge Fenella's school career, or even terminate it; but, to tell you the truth, dear Anne, although I am fond of the child, I am only half sorry for this. Don't misunderstand me. The girl is as good as gold, and I know (who should judge better) has a soul like crystal. But her influence among us has been an unsettling one.

" . . . I picked out the much beloved 'Collywobble' in the Country-house Supplement from among the Sea grave, with dear Lady Anne 'up.' What a pretty beast it is!"

Fenella was seventeen when she left school. She thought life a great joke, she had not said a prayer for two years, and the saddest sight she had seen was a fallen sparrow (counted, but number unrecorded) on the path in Holland Walk.

X

THE WAY OF A MAID

**P**LANCHE'S "History of British Costume," 2 vols. 2500*b*, in the Library of the British Museum, is a helpful work of reference. It is replete with information, and the wood-cuts are spirited. Its size and cumbersomeness, however, are disadvantages. It is emphatically a book you would not care to read in bed. Add to this, that it is forming the summit of an unsteady pile of books with which your arms are filled — that you are handicapped further with a big black fur muff, and that your nerves are already on edge with the strangeness of the place. . . .

*Crash! ! ! . . .*

One heavy morocco-bound volume lay, open and face downward, on the floor; the other was following it fast, ringleader in a tragic glissade over the smooth black fur. Fenella bit her lip and did not quite suppress a word whose most obvious rhyme is "lamb." In a terror-struck flash she saw all the results of her carelessness: attendants bearing down upon her — expostulation — disgrace and final ejection beyond those heavy swing doors that she never, never should have passed. She was really very frightened.

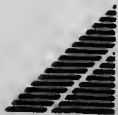
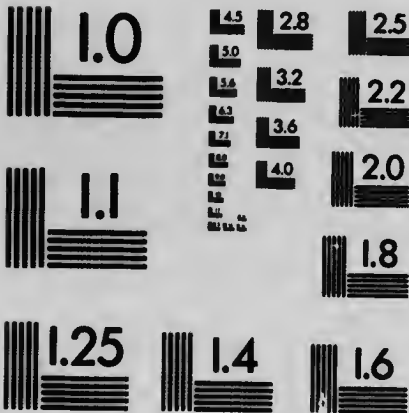
A man who had been ransacking the shelves by her side, with a long arm that reached easily from top to bottom of the bookcase, turned quickly at the smothered exclamation. With a swift movement of one hand, he stayed the avalanche, and with the other picked up the fallen volume from the floor.

"Oh! thank you — thank you!" said Fenella, almost hysteri-



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

cally. She was looking up — a good way up — into the kindest, grayest eyes she had ever seen . . . Eyes! — eyes! the little, unprotected girl encountered them everywhere. In train or 'bus, in the street, in the untempered light of the lately constructed tube railway. Hard eyes; preoccupied eyes, full of some sick trouble of their own which passed her over, unseeing; bitter, arrogant eyes that seemed to find her beauty and her pretty clothes an offence; eyes vicious and bold, the worst of all, that would not leave her, that stung her cheeks, as though the heat of the evil passions behind them were being focussed upon her through a lens, and beneath whose level, insulting conjecture her flesh crept and her hands clenched themselves in an agony of shame and helpless anger. But these eyes were different to all the others. She could look at them as steadily as at a cloudy sky: they seemed full of some tender wisdom. And of humor too. Already their twinkle mitigated what she felt to be a tragedy.

The stranger took the books from her one by one and bestowed them compactly in the hollow of his own arm.

"Have you got a seat?" he asked.

"No," said Fenella, in an agitated whisper. "Can I go anywhere I like? Are they all free?"

The man's smile broadened and showed his fine long teeth.

"We'll try and find you a free one," he said. "Come on with me." His accent was strange; not quite English, yet not foreign.

She followed her protector on tip toe, averting her eyes from the indignant glances that she was sure were being levelled at her. One lean old monk *was* scowling, but he was really thinking of something else. Then there was a dreadful fat negro, like Othello turned scholar, who rolled his eyes. Fenella could not help peeping at the leaves he was turning over, to confirm an unscientific conviction of her own, that the black *did* really come off sometimes.

Her guide stopped at an empty place, arranged her books

neatly upon the flat leather-covered desk, pulled out a cane-seated chair on casters, and, bowing slightly, sat down in the next place and began to read one of a number of manuscript leaves with which it was strewn. She divested herself of gloves and furs, and commenced turning the pages of one of her books gingerly. Occasionally, she put her finger to her mouth, and then, remembering where she was, stopped with a shudder, as at danger escaped.

The man who had helped her was writing busily on a thick paper pad. When he had reached the bottom of each page, he blotted it, numbered it in the top right-hand corner, and added it carelessly to an untidy pile at his left hand. Sometimes, before tearing it off, he read it over, apparently without enthusiasm, erased words, and sometimes whole sentences, with impatient curly "twiddles" of his quill pen, wrote words in between the lines and added various cabalistic signs and letters in the margin. He was very much occupied, and Fenella, whom no book had ever absorbed, saw that she might watch him covertly and safely.

So this was the way books were written! She wondered who he was. Not Bernard Shaw — his hair was too short. Nor Rider Haggard — his face was too narrow. She could not think of any other writer with a beard. She considered him good-looking — in a strange way. She never would have, I will not say looked, but wanted to look after him in the street, still in a way she could not define, it was nice to be sitting next him. She liked his leanness and dryness. She hated fat men whose sleek hair seemed to be soaking up superabundant moisture from their bodies. Then, his beard was trimmed so closely to his cheek it was hard to say where it began, and his moustache was brushed out of the way once and for all. He didn't keep "twiddling" *it*. Yes; it would be quite safe to sit opposite while he ate soup.

There was a man quite like him on the very page before her . . . Ah! Yes. That was what he wanted. A big



ruff showing the hairy throat, and a little cloak, swung from his shoulders, and big puffy — whatever they called them — nearly to his knees, and a long rapier sticking up in the air — how awkward on staircases though — but not a silly little *toque* like that, stuck on one side, and not — oh, not earrings in his ears. Who was it? "Duc de Guise." What a pity she had forgotten (forgotten!) all her French. Yes; that was what was the matter with him, she decided. His good looks were simply out of fashion. She looked backward and forward from the book to his face, from his face to the book, two or three times. Suddenly she became aware he was looking straight at her.

"Oh! help!"

"Anything I can do?" asked the stranger helpfully, in a low voice that was far less obtrusive than any whisper.

"C-could you translate this little bit for me, please? I'm no good at French," Fenella stammered, pushing her book toward him.

"Which little bit?"

She indicated a paragraph at random and as far from the picture as possible. She caught her breath at her audacity.

"Forward minx, I am." She hoped he wouldn't hang over her shoulder to translate, like handsome Mr. Curzon, the drawing master at Sharland, heedless, or perhaps not heedless, of the burning cheek so near his own, and the suppressed titters of "the girls."

M. de Guise drew the open book toward him, and, tearing off a slip of paper, began to write on it in a cranky but rapid hand, with an occasional glance at the foreign text.

"Here you are. I hope you will be able to read my writing."

"Thank you very much indeed," said Fenella, demurely.

"Anything else you want? Paper?"

She had dived into her muff and was splitting open various envelopes with her forefinger.

## THE WAY OF A MAID

"If you wouldn't mind. But I'm giving you so much trouble."

"No trouble at all. Here are three sheets. You have a pencil?"

"M — m."

"If it's one you stole from the catalogue desk I wouldn't suck it. Those aren't the sort you suck. See! you've made a blue smudge on your lips."

Fenella dived into her muff again, and, drawing out what I believe is termed a vanity bag, examined her lips on the little mirror. She rubbed them hard.

"Is it gone now, please?"

"Quite." How red the child's lips were. He glanced right and left and put his fingers to his own. A few fretful knowledge seekers were looking toward the chatter. Their glances were hostile.

"*A la besogne!*" said he, beneath his breath, and turned to his work again.

Fenella shook her shoulders and settled herself in the most industrious attitude she could think of. At the end of an hour she had drawn three figures and could think of no further excuse for remaining. Most of the wisdom of the world was around her and above her, but she felt no temptation to disturb it. The man at her side had apparently forgotten her existence. She put her books away, one by one, trying to prevent her shoes squeaking, but making a great bustle, really, yet he did not look round. When she came back at last to get her furs and gloves, he was gone. She left the room with a little sinking of the heart, but not more than one feels when, say, an interesting fellow-traveller whom we hoped was coming on all the way to London, gets out at Rugby. It is true that in her preoccupation she forgot to claim her umbrella.

When she reached Oxford Street she was reminded by passing an Express Dairy that it was past five and that she would reach home late for tea. Tea, as a rite, retained all its old significance

for Fenella. Some of her old school-fellows had studios or flats within easy reach, and, perhaps, six months ago she would have made for one of them. But, already, she thought she noticed a difference. The girls were growing up — acquiring individuality, and her own path was diverging more and more. They liked her to come in to tea, but preferably on a day when no men were expected. She was already learning the hard truth that life must be played with the lone hand. A good many of her triumphs lay behind her.

She turned to the dairy, and going upstairs as far as she could, took a seat in the smoking-room and ordered weak tea and a teacake. She liked muffins and crumpets and teacakes with “heaps and heaps” of butter. The tea-room, being near the Museum, was full of its *habitués*. She saw three or four she had noticed there, playing chess or talking together in high mincing tones interspersed with cackling laughter. She did not recognize the accent of the “illuminated.” Some had lined, seamed faces, with long hair, and would have looked better with a clerical collar. Those that looked strong looked rough. How different to her “courtier.” She began to think of him anew, to calculate her chances of ever running across him again. One thing was certain, she would never, never go back to that terrible place again.

The teacake was long in coming, and as she looked up impatiently she saw him standing in the middle of the room. She recognized him at once by the rather rakish felt hat that had lain on his desk. He had a long blue overcoat with a belt and a funny yellow silk handkerchief round his neck. She wanted him very much to look round, but surmised he had a favorite waitress and was looking for her. Perhaps the naïve wish reached him. He turned, and, smiling, came toward her, as straight as a partner about to claim his dance.

“Hullo! Got tired? I missed you when I came back.”

“I only came to draw three pictures.”

He hung his coat up and sat opposite her in a matter-of-fact

way that robbed the action of significance. Still, the lady who had brought the teacake waited for his order with a sub-surface smile. She had seen so many "Museum goings-on."

"You're not often here, are you? . . . Yes, tea, please. No — nothing with it."

Fenella leaned forward confidently. "It's my very first visit. Don't tell, will you? I *fudged* a ticket."

"'Fudged'?"

"Came with another girl's—Phyllis Harman's. Do you know her?"

The gray eyes twinkled. "No. You're the only lady I ever speak to in the Museum."

"Would I get into any trouble if I was found out?"

"We'd all get into trouble if we were found out. The best way is not to attract attention. Don't drop your books again."

"Is it hard to get a ticket?"

"It's criminally easy. But I shouldn't advise you to. It's a place for old fogies like me. You look pale. Do you get plenty of outdoor exercise?"

Fenella rubbed her cheek. "That's not paleness. You're fussy, like mummy. I'm a healthy brute. And I shouldn't call you an old fogy. You're — brown. Have you travelled much?"

"Oh! — round the world and back again."

"Coming back's nice, isn't it?"

"Only when it's coming home."

"Isn't your home here? I *thought* you spoke — funny. Haven't you any one who looks after you? A mother — or a sister?"

"No mother, no sister, no wife." The stranger spoke incisively. "No sweetheart, even," he added, after an appreciable pause.

Fenella blushed. Of course she hadn't meant to ask that; still, it was interesting to know. The child had a strange

pertinacity in constructing correct views of new acquaintances that deceived a good many people.

A sudden squall lashed the windows with rain. She looked round in affright.

"Oh! — help!" she said again, softly.

"Now what's the matter?"

"I've forgotten my 'brolly'."

"Your *what?*"

"My brolly: my 'mush'; ma's best gold-handled umbrella."

"I'll lend you mine."

"Oh! it isn't that. I get the 'bus at the door, and only have a step to walk at the other end. But how'm I to get it back?"

"Aren't you coming again soon?"

She shook her head. You would never have guessed the stranger felt disappointed. He felt in his pocket and pushed a card across the table.

"Write an address on that," he said, "and leave me your check. I'll have it sent to-night by a messenger boy."

Fenella considered a moment. The card lay face downward, and it was a great temptation. But her good breeding triumphed. Without turning it over she wrote her name and address, very slowly, in print letters. Meantime she soliloquized thus:

"I hate rain. It's harder on women. Your petties get wet and slop round your ankles. I wish I could always dress a boy. It's so picture-squeak — picturesque I mean. I do sometimes. Dances, you know: in a quartette, gavottes and things. I'm a boy, 'cos you can't teach men. . . . There you are. I hope you can read it. . . . I had a ripping dress at the 'Bechway' in the spring. Blue and silver, and powdered hair, and a little diamondy sword."

"Which you could use upon occasion with great spirit, I'll wager, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Oh, rather!" rejoined Fenella. (How nicely he speaks

French.) "I'm good at fencing. I was captain of the 'gym' at our school."

The man just glanced at the card and put it into his pocket absent-mindedly. He was wondering what kind the school might be that had taught this distractingly friendly child to dance and fence, but not to read French and, above all, not to be careful—with that face and figure—how she spoke to strangers.

Meantime, something in this last speech had reminded the girl of the first fine rapture of Ruritania, years ago.

"You're a novelist, aren't you?" she said.

"Of sorts," he admitted.

"I wish I was intellectual"—wistfully.

"You're better. You're cute."

"*Cute — cute —!* What does that mean? *Clever?*"

"Not exactly."

"Pretty, then?"

"Well, a kind of clever prettiness."

"You mean smart!"

"Well, smart. Let us be English at all costs."

"I don't see how you can think *me* smart," she said, with a rueful inflection in her voice.

"Why not?"

"Talking to a strange man as I've done."

At sight of the troubled young face, something that was not exactly suspicion, but which had guarded his manner till now, disappeared. He laughed quite freely, and it was wonderful how the sudden gaiety made him look at once younger and more foreign. He put his hand across and just touched the girl's arm.

"Dear child," said he, "talk to as many strange men as you like. The stranger the better. It's ordinary ones you must be careful about."

"Ordinary ones —?"

"Yes. Beware the Least Common Multiple. Therein lies danger to you. I prophesy it."

"I must go," said Nelly, rising as she spoke. "It isn't getting any drier."

He put his coat on and followed her to the door. She noticed he left threepence for the waitress. How extravagant, after just a cup of tea! He kept beside her across the street, holding his umbrella over her head.

"I should like to read your book when it comes out," she said, as her omnibus hove in sight. "Why do you laugh?"

He was laughing because he knew the book. "How are you to ask for it without knowing the talented author's name?"

She hesitated. "Well," she said, almost reluctantly, "what is his name?"

He noticed the effort and his manner stiffened. "It's one I needn't be ashamed to tell you, and you needn't be ashamed to hear. My name is Paul Ingram. Here's your 'bus. Good-bye. I don't ask you yours."

Fenella turned on the step and laughed at him over her muff. "Goosey! You've got it in your waistcoat pocket."

## XI

### AN INTERLUDE

**A**LL THIS happened on a Saturday, and Paul had a full day to think it over. He went back to his work on Monday, and, for reasons he did not stop to define, not only chose the same place, but even had the weakness to try to keep the desk next it free by depositing his hat and gloves there. It would be hard to say what he expected. He had looked at the address more carefully when he was sending back the umbrella, and it confirmed the impression he had already received from the girl's clothes and casual, assured manner. She was some daughter of a good family, he felt sure, guarded and checked, and so the more inclined to kick over the traces when away from watchful home eyes. Had he been an Englishman the very perfection of her turnout might have still further puzzled him, and he might have been inclined to speculate as to how so young a girl came by all the rings she wore; far too many, though they were only pretty baubles. But Ingram came from a country where beauty does not wait on marriage for its adornment. He was even ignorant that a set has arisen there, the most artificial and utterly contemptible, surely, in the world, which has sacrificed the healthy freedom that was its birthright, to ape the social hypocrisies and superstitions that Europe is outgrowing.

Anyway, she had made him feel very old, and for the moment out of conceit with his self-imposed tasks, just as some wild, free creature of fur or feather encountered on a holiday walk in the country might distaste any one of us with his own hum-



drum workaday life. And he had the same further impulse that the wayfarer may have had to arrest the busy, aimless errand, close his hand on the furry flank — prison the fluttering wings, and, having made the creature share his captivity a moment, to open his fingers and let the throbbing quarry go free. A desire so innocent — so purely intellectual, that it scarcely deserves the hard name of the lust of the eye, and has nothing whatever in common with the lusts of the flesh.

It must be remembered also, to account for his unusual and dangerous mood, that just about this time he had put his manuscript into my hands. No period is so demoralizing mentally as one during which we have relaxed our own efforts, and are indulging in the vague hope of some good to come to us through other people's.

Tuesday — Wednesday passed. Paul ceased to look for the girl. Why should he? Hadn't she said she was not coming back. And what a fool he was even to desire it. She was a pretty memory; he, a writer, should know the value of such impressions, the pity of disturbing them. Suppose he met her again, was it likely the glamour of the first encounter would survive? Apart from the *bizarrerie* of her quaint, childish confidences, she had said really nothing that was worth remembering. On a second meeting he would be sure to find her trivial and vulgar. Even the pretty manner was probably a trick she had tried elsewhere, and found "fetching." Toward the end of the week he happened to be reading, in the course of his work, the diary of a man some of whose blood, according to family tradition, ran in his own veins: the daily journal of Cotton Mather. Skimming through the record of that dark, tortured soul, he lit upon the curious passage wherein the middle-aged widower, with the naïve self-revelation that sweetens his persecuting memory, deploras the inroads which a handsome young pupil to whom he is teaching Latin is making in his self-respect. "The Lord," groans Mather, piously, "deliver me from this ingenious child!" Paul gave such a

sudden laugh that his neighbors looked at him in wonder. "Bravo, Cousin Cotton!" he said to himself. "I'm not proud of you, but I'll forgive you a lot for that." He felt immensely relieved. Who has not known such a foolish moment of light-heartedness, when something we have read or heard seems to set us right with ourselves? "*The Lord deliver me from this ingenious child!*"

That night after dinner he lit a cigar and strolled westward. He found Number Eleven Suffolk Square easily enough. It was a big, double-fronted house of cream-colored stucco, with wide steps and a pillared porch. It happened just then that all three floors were lit up. This illumination gave the house a festive appearance and exaggerated its opulent aspect. Against the amber colored blinds the pattern of handsome lace curtains stood out in bold silhouette. The kitchen blinds had not been lowered and Paul noted three maid-servants, two of them in black dresses and caps with long white streamers. On the other side of the area, across another lighted window, red curtains were drawn. More servants, probably — butler, coachman, and footman. He thought of his own home in far Massachusetts; the "hired help" who came to table with them; his own chapped wrists; the dining mother, rolling out pastry on the low table to which they wheeled her chair. A feeling of fierce camaraderie with the boilers, the little ones of the earth, possessed him; a hatred for luxury and the parade of wealth. He took three or four turns before the house, and went away. Before he left the square, however, he kissed his hand toward Number Eleven. "Good-bye, Fenella," he said. "You're a kind-hearted baby, but I guess the folks in that house will know how to spoil it when the time comes."

## XII

### RICHMOND PARK

**N**EXT morning, when he went to the reading-room, she was sitting in the old place. She still wore the long blue coat with all the buttons — the black fur, and the big plain French hat with a single parrot-green feather, but, seen a second time, custom tempered somewhat her formidable smartness. She had a big gauze veil, too, tied round her hat and falling in long ends over her shoulders. It subdued the hard childish brightness of her face, making it look both maturer and softer. She met his surprised look timidly, and, diving into her muff, held out a white card with a blue stripe down the centre. Her gesture was meekly disarming — hurriedly explanatory.

“I’ve joined,” she said, anxiously. “I’m a member.”

Ingram twirled the card between his fingers. It was early, the great room was half empty, and there was no need to whisper now.

“And what special line of research are you thinking of pursuing?” he asked, gravely.

Fenella made haste to disclaim any serious purpose. “But it’s a useful place, isn’t it?” she asked. “This morning I only looked in to thank you.”

“To thank me —?”

“For sending my umbrella. I couldn’t send a postcard; I didn’t know your address.”

“It was no trouble.” He was still turning the little card round and round. “And so you’re running away at once?”

Fenella cast her eyes down. "I can't stay," she said. "I've got a dog with me."

"A dog?"

"Tied to the rails outside near the little house. They'd only keep him 'cos I said I wouldn't be ten minutes. Do you like dogs? I'm taking him for a run."

Paul experienced a sudden zest for adventure. "Suppose we take him for a run together? It's such a glorious fall morning."

"Oh, *top-hole!*" said Nelly, joining her hands in the old baby fashion that had clung to her. "I mean, how nice! Where shall we ramble? The Gardens?"

"No. I hate the Gardens. Even the sparrows know they're a fraud. Let's go out to Richmond. We can walk across the Park, have lunch at Kingston, and be back in time for tea."

Outside the Museum lodge, a horrible old bull-terrier, chained to the railings, was keeping up a growling soliloquy, with occasional snaps at imaginary flies, suggested possibly by the late autumn sunshine. He was very thick and scarred and carried his head to one side.

"This is Rock," announced Fenella, as, with a bewildering smile at the liveried keeper, she began to drag the veteran to his feet and along the pavement. "He's an awful old dog; I don't know how old, but he was a puppy when I was a baby. Isn't it funny? Now he's all lumpy and stiff, and I'm still growing. Ma says it's because their hearts beat faster. Heckle — that's a medical boy I know — says he's the oldest bull-terrier he ever knew, and that what he's asking for when he growls is a dose of pussy's acid in a dog-biscuit. What's pussy's acid?\* Rock is short for Roquelaure, but some of the girls say he smells, and call him Roquefort. He's not my dog: he's Lady Anne's. She's hunting somewhere, and I promised her I'd take him out regularly. Oh, I want to telephone from here. Will you hold him — please? He won't bite. No, don't shut the doors, I shall stifle. . . . B-r-r-r!

\* Possibly Prussic acid. — Ed.

One! *B-r-r-r!* Two. I *have* put the pennies in; didn't you hear them? 2309 Pad. Yes, I mean Paddington. You say Pad yourself. Hello! Are you there? Is this Miss Rigby? Oh, good morning, Jas. Jas, be an angel and tell mummy I shan't be home to lunch. I'm going to have it at Richmond, with a man. What d'you say? Oh, fie! Oh, tut! . . . Naughty puss! Six feet one, a long tawny, silky moustache, and cold, steel-blue eyes. . . What? . . I don't know. . . I may. Good-bye, Jas. You're an angel."

In the train Ingram took the seat opposite her, and, while she kept up an incessant chatter, watched her with a kind of ache at his heart for her beauty. It was more than prettiness: he saw that now. Those long heavy lashed eyes, whose full lids she had a trick of pulling—the plaintive, tremulous mouth, too red; the two little tufts at her temples which even the draught from the closed window blew across her cheekbone, so fine and dry was her hair; the delicate and rather salient nose that bespoke impulsiveness. Like all visionaries, crusaders and other unpractical persons, he had at the same time an intense perception of bodily beauty and an intense jealousy for the coarse uses to which life puts it. To have retained one's ideals and to have lost one's illusions — is not this to be subject to all the tortures that sex can inflict?

They left the station and walked through the defaced streets of the old Royal Borough, its noble Georgian houses half hidden by plate-glass shop fronts: they climbed the long ascent to the Park, and stood for a moment on the terrace to admire the river, an isle-set loop of silver, at the bottom of a steep glen filled with rusty verdure. Once inside the wide ciphered gates, they left the gravelled path and by a soft mouldy foot-track struck into the recesses of the old hunting pleasaunce. The air was mild and balmy; not a breeze stirred the crisp, sapless trees that stood waiting to surrender their ruined pomp of summer to the first wind that required it of them. Fenella

gave her escort her muff and stole. She called Rock to her in a high, clear voice and, with shrill, chirping whistles, with cracks of her dog-whip, fluttering of her skirts, with endless enticements and provocations, lured that much-tried old pensioner on to efforts he had really outlived. Paul, as he watched her, ignorant no doubt of the exquisite old Mabino-gion simile, thought that her motions resembled nothing so much as the swooping flight of the swallow before rain. Her limbs seemed to have the pliancy of whalebone.

Rock wheezed and panted gallantly after his mistress, his paws drumming stiffly on the ground — his poor old scarred neck held more on one side than ever. But his heart was not in the chase. He was forever slinking back to heel. He looked up wistfully at this new, sober-paced friend. "Here are we," his dim old eyes, with their hardened cornea, seemed to be saying, "old fellows, both of us, who've taken sharp bites and hard knocks enough, and it's a bit late in the day to be asking us to show off our paces, isn't it? Can't we sneak away somewhere together? This girl will play the very devil with us both if we let her."

"Rock! Rock! Rock!" the clear voice would ring out. "Come here, sir! Come here *thisminnit!* Lazy — lazy dog!"

And with a despairing throe of his knotted tail, off poor Rock must pump again.

When they had nearly crossed the Park, they sat down on a worn seat, hacked nearly away with amorous knife blades, close to a pond into which some long-legged wading birds were digging their bills. Around them and behind them the noble demesne outstretched itself, in long tree vistas and seemingly illimitable glades, with nothing to scale them to insignificance. Now and then a motor car rolled softly along the road to White Lodge, only accentuating their loneliness by its speed and detachment, or a ghostly little troop of fallow deer passed slowly and securely to some favored feeding ground. Rock sniffed the air at them, growled and wrinkled his nose. "We both

remember a time we couldn't have stood this — don't we?" the decayed old sportsman was no doubt grumbling to himself.

Seeing the girl quiet at his side, Paul began to try and tell her something of his life, working back, as is the manner of men, from the things that are nearest their experience and yet are slipping from their memory, into the never forgotten far past. . . . The night marches across the silent desert, spellbound by the silver witchery of the moon, and through *mehallahs*, that are like a fruitful land smitten by an evil charm — its houses turned into boulders and brushwood made of its standing corn: the caravans one may meet with a grave bearded sheikh riding in front, and the bubbling dromedaries behind him, laden with great wicker "*D-raths*" full of squalling, naked children and silk-swathed women, who peep through the osiers and crook their fingers at the dusty legionaries tramping by in a cloud of their own dust: the sand pillars that march upon your flank, step and step, like jealous genii shepherding doomed strangers into their desert: the joy of the camp at the well, with the day's march done: the incredible lightness of the sweat-soaked body when the knapsack is lifted off.

. . . Or that other camp — so far away it is hard to believe it all one life. Crackling cedar wood and the good smell of coffee on the sharp light mountain air, and the jinglers riding in the squealing cavvy with a pother of dust about their unshod feet, all rosy and glorious like a halo in the cherry-red morning sun: and the long lariats held wedgewise, and the scamper and scurry as the bronchos are trapped: and the peering through a fog of sweat and dust for your own brand on shoulder or buttock, and the whirling ropes, and the laughter and horseplay as the ponies are blanketed and bitted for the dawn-to-dusk round-up.

I don't know whether Paul made a poor Othello, but I do know he had a very indifferent Desdemona. Fenella was forever interrupting the narrative on one frivolous pretext or

another: to throw stick or stone for poor sleepy Rock to retrieve ("Guffetchit-Rock! Guffetchit—lazy dog!"); to gather a bunch of scarlet berries afar off, whose color had taken her eye and which were hardly redder than her lips; to run down for a minute to the pond to see what "those rummy birds" were digging for so industriously. She had all the *nil admirari* of the modern mind: its heedlessness of anything that lies outside its own experience; its sedulous curiosity for all that lies within. It was better when they got to Ingram's early life. She could imagine a country road along which burdocks and hemlock and other green fleshy things grow as high as young trees, and little gray frame houses tucked away behind silver birches. She was genuinely and even tenderly interested in the crippled mother, and at the story of the sister who died, blew her nose and said she had caught cold in the train. She clapped her hands at the quilting bees and candy-pulls and sleigh rides and sugar boiling camps and wished plaintively that she had been born a little American girl, to have had her share in so rapturous an adolescence. But even this part of the story was checked with immaterial, trivial questions such as on children's lips weary the maternal patience. "What happened the gray mare in the end that wouldn't pass the new letter-box? How many boys went to the sugar camp? And how many girls? Did they ever flirt?"

They had luncheon in an upper room of an old inn at Kingston, that had a curved iron balcony looking down upon the market place. The panelling was hidden by paper of an iridescent red, covered with a sprawling pattern of tarnished leaves and flowers. To right and left of the fireplace two dark pictures of bottle-necked ladies with untidy hair, brought here from God knows what household dispersion, looked disdainfully out of the canvas in opposite directions. Some fair or market was going on in the square below; the misty afternoon air was full of the bleat of sheep, the lowing of cattle, raucous cries of costermongers, and the crack of saloon rifles.



They were waited on by a depressed Teuton, upon whose broad white face Paul raised a wintry smile by addressing him in his own guttural tongue. Fenella, the palms of her long kid gloves twisted round her bangles, fared delicately. She gave most of her meat to Rock — eschewed watery sprouts and fluffily mashed potatoes — and “filled up,” as she would and even did express it, upon plum tart with unlimited cream and sugar. She would not drink wine or coffee, but ate all the dessert and sent out for more cob-nuts. She had all sorts of pretty, restless, bad manners: crumbled bread while she chattered — scored the cloth with a pink nail while she listened — counted her plum stones three times and made it “never” — dabbled in her tumbler for lack of a finger bowl — and upon its rim made, with one wet finger-tip, the hum of innumerable blue bottles, at which poor Rock barked and snapped under her chair.

It was late when they sat down to lunch, and they had dawdled besides. The sun was gone and twilight closing in as they recrossed the Park toward Richmond. She was so silent that Paul asked her, half peering into the veiled face, whether she had felt the afternoon dull. She said not; but her negative went no further than a little shake of the head. She had a trick of looking back every now and then and of measuring the way they had come, as if to insure a clear recollection of it, and she allowed Rock—who, rested, fed, and with his head pointed, though obliquely, for home, was in spirits that contrasted with his depressed morning mood—to roam at his will. They had just reached the avenue of trees that looks over Ham House when a furious barking made them turn their heads. The dog, bristling, and with sidelong leaps that left his nose in the one direction, was pointing at something in the long grass. Fenella cracked the whip she had been trailing along the path.

“Rock! Rock! Come here, sir! Oh, Mr. Ingram, go quick and stop him!” She covered her eyes. “He’s got some poor little rabbit or bird.”

Paul ran and collared the animal. A brown mottled bird with a wide yellow beak was fluttering away clumsily, with wings half spread. Fenella caught it from him as his hand was closing on it.

"Give it to me! Oh, *darling!* are you hurt?" She looked on her gloves for blood. "Had he bitten it, Mr. Ingram? . . . There, *there* — you're quite safe now. I tink oor more f'itened dan hurt, dear! Is *he* one of the birds that fly away in the winter, Mr. Ingram? I'm going to take him home and put him in the conservatory till spring. . . . Ah! you *wicked* — *bad* — *cruel* — *fierce* dog! It's a good job I gave him so much meat, isn't it Mr. Ingram? — or you'd be gobbled up, dee-ar! . . . That's right; put him on the chain. Oh, yes he does, Mr. Ingram; he eats birds, at least he *scrunches* them," stroking the smooth brown back with her lips. "Can we get a cage in Richmond, do you think?"

Paul looked at his watch. "I think we'd better get a train in Richmond," he said. "We've been out quite a while, and you only said 'luncheon' over the 'phone. Are you going to bring the bird along?"

"Why — *of course I am.*"

"Well, put him in your muff and let us hustle."

Fenella quickened her pace resolutely, but every now and then would stop to be sure the creature was alive, breaking into a run afterward to overtake her escort.

"I'm sorry," she said at last, penitently, as she saw him waiting for her. "I tell you what I'll do. I'll put my finger in every now and then and, if he pecks, I'll know he's alive. Why does he peck me when I saved him? Birds have no brain. Cookie had a canary once that flew into a fly-paper; it took ever so long to unstick his wings. I hope this isn't one of the sort that won't sing unless its eyes are put out."

In the train the bird still absorbed her. They had a compartment to themselves, and Paul watched her curiously through his cigar smoke. He was wondering whether he had

been bored or amused. A little of both he concluded. She was a good girl, but quite immature, and utterly — oh! utterly trivial. There was probably some babbling old mother at home whom she took after, for a warning and example. She was lovely, oh, yes — lovely enough to make the most careless heart ache — the rashest “gazer wipe his eye.” But for a man like himself that was not an entire explanation. Wherein lay her charm? For charm there was; one, too, that survived the long day spent in her company. There was no use denying it; walks in Richmond Park, alone, would be sad affairs from now on. Alone, because, of course, this one must never be repeated. Butterflies are pretty things to watch, once in a way; but, since to clutch remains a human instinct, and since no man who thinks in his heart ever wants to see that sort of down upon his clumsy fingers, it would be better if — be better if — What were the clanging, ringing wheels saying now? Hark!

“Be its beauty its sole duty:  
Be its beauty its sole duty . . . . .”

Ah! yes. That was what he has been trying to think of all day. And yet people could be found to called Browning “obscure.”

“Be its beauty its sole duty!”

“Oh, Mr. Ingram! Look! It’s stopped pecking and is beginning to look round.”

He leaned across the carriage. He may have meant to do no more than touch the enfolding hands that lay so near his lips. But her own mouth was nearer still, and he kissed that.

### XIII

#### FIND SOUL — FIND SORROW

**I**N THE middle of the night that followed his whole holiday Paul woke and cursed himself, at length and with conviction. Years ago, in the good old days when punishment was punishment, with no nonsense talked about reformatory intent, among the toiling groups that tilled the earth, made the road or lightened the harbored vessel, here and there a man was noticed who dragged his left leg a little as he walked. He was not crippled, nor deformed; he was likely, indeed, to be strong and formidable beyond his fellows; he did his day's work and earned his day's wage with the best. But the leg dragged — always would drag. And the reason passed in whispers: this was an old galley slave — a man who had worked at the *bagnio*. His leg, from force of habit, still paused for the effort that once dragged ball and chain behind it.

I had not known Ingram long before I guessed that, at one period of his life or another, women had meant a great deal for him, but that they had never meant happiness. In what did the impression reside? I can't say. In a regard perhaps — an inflection of voice — an over quickness to catch sorrowful meanings — in what he did not say quite as much as in what he did. But I was as sure of it then when I knew nothing as now when I know everything. He could not always have loved in vain. Partings there had been, tearful, emotional, reluctant, but always partings. Letters reached him even now through changes and redirections, letters filled with bright, helpful gossip, of the new friends — the unimagined husband — the

children that might so easily have been his; with only here and there between the lines, for his eye to see and no other, the tenderness that women keep for the man who could win their regard but not their persons. And if Ingram felt sure of anything, I knew he felt sure of this: that the chapter of his life from which they were a legacy was closed and dead -- a great stone rolled to the door of its tomb, sealed and mortised, and guarded by a whole cohort of wise intentions. And now, in a week, he had fallen -- fallen as precipitately as the greenest of "rash and inconsiderate youth." Relying on his experience and disillusionment, he had broken the covenant of the old, wise king, and, into some unsuspected vacuum of his heart, a pretty face, a plaintive regard, a few surface tricks of dress and manner had rushed and were not to be extricated without endless pain and trouble. Again and again, as he turned from side to side in the night watches, he went over the images of his fall, for so, in all seriousness, this strange man regarded it. He felt the thrill of the young throat stretched to meet him, caught the fragrance, so faint -- so faint that he had not noticed it till then -- of the orris root in which her clothes had lain folded; heard the little fluttering sigh as his fervor stopped her breath. It had been the first kiss of passion that had ever touched her lips; he knew because -- oh! never mind how he knew. What, exactly, he wondered, and was not the first to wonder, did such a kiss signify to a good woman? Board and bed, he surmised dimly, at some future date; home and home circle, taxes and life insurance, doctor's bills, children clapping their hands round Christmas trees. And this from him! He laughed out in the darkness -- so loud that the glass shade of the lamp by which he had read himself to sleep vibrated with the sound. From him, a mere embodied intelligence, driven by loneliness and mental suffering to self-expression, doomed now, while life should last, to breed and bear the calamitous offspring of the brain.

He had given her his address because that much seemed

called for in decency, but he did not expect a letter for a while. Yet when, after a few more feverish and wakeful hours and the immense solace of a cold tub, he passed into the sitting-room in his bath robe, a letter lay on the breakfast tray that he knew could be from no one else; a square pale mauve envelope, with an ingenious flap, addressed in a straggling schoolgirl hand.

"DEAR MR. INGRAM,

"I hope you got home safe and had no *haresbreath* escapes from motors. I was nearly run over the other day, I only got on the pavement in the *knick* of time.

"I have put the bird in the *conservatory* and given him a lot of seed, he throws it about with his *beak*, but hasn't eaten any. I haven't given him a name because I don't know yet if he is going to live. Ma was crazy, but I *smouthed* her down.

"No one ever kissed me before, but some one did hold my hand once quite a long time. I couldn't *riggle* it away.

"Rock is ill, he has eaten a *plumb* stone I think and will have (to) have some *caster* oil. If it was *cue* of mine that makes it this year not never. How exciting!

"I shall be at 14, Hanover Place to-morrow till 4.15. *P'raps* you would be near there if you are not writing.

"I remain,

"Your loving friend,

"FENELLA."

Paul read the strange letter over and over again, from its prim apostrophe to the shy little breath of sentiment at its close. The ink just there was a lighter color than the rest. It was evident that she had let the letter go dry while wondering how to sign herself.

"Ho! ho!" he said aloud. "So Providence has given you a loving friend, has it? Now what's a man like yourself, Paul Ingram, to do with a loving friend and a conscience at one and the same time?"

"Scrap the conscience!" said counsellor the first. "The girl's pretty and sweet."

"Pull out before any more harm's done!" said another. "She's quite innocent."

"Give time a chance," said the third — the one that outruns the hounds but never quite catches up with the hare. "You've got to hurt either her pride or her heart by making an end of it now, and there's always a chance her whim will wear out if you wait."

"That's what I'll do," said Ingram at last. "I'll tell her bit by bit what I am, and hint at what I'm likely to become. She'll see reason. There's often a lot of hard hog-sense at the bottom of these butterfly women."

And, by way of starting well, he took her out to tea that afternoon, and was so genial and natural that the last shadow of self-reproach vanished from the poor child's heart. And before he left her he had promised to call for her at her home. He knew by now that she did not belong to his natural enemies, and the knowledge made it harder to "pull out" than ever.

I have spent a good deal of time upon this idyll, without, I am afraid, leaving a very just or a very pleasant impression of Paul Ingram upon the reader's mind. But there are many excuses to be made for him. In the first place, he was very poor — poorer than any of us guessed. He had that profuse careless way with money which is quite as often a consequence of never having had it as of having had it always. The commonest, and perhaps the safest, investment of a little money is to make present life bearable with it while it lasts. But the future is quite another matter. A great golfer told me once that for days after he had won a momentous handicap he was obsessed and haunted by the stealthy patter of the feet that had followed him from hole to hole. And I have no doubt that many a night, while the child sat upon his knee and retailed her day's gossip, sweet and unsubstantial as the sugary *étrennes* in a Paris confectioner's window, he was listening less to her than

to the stealthy wolf-feet of poverty that he knew were creeping up behind him.

And then he was, both constitutionally and through circumstances, an unhappy man. There are souls so designated and set apart for sorrow that it may be said of them, almost without paradox, that they are only at ease when bearing it. They grow to recognize in mischance the environment that suits them best. In such a mind an isolated reason for happiness cannot exist. It pines away for lack of company. Nothing convinces the heart of its sorrow so surely as a sudden discrepancy in its ill-luck — a belated and unassisted piece of good fortune. Fate has these freaks with those upon whose unhappiness she has determined. It is not so much her concern that they should have nothing as that they should always have a little less than might make them happy.

I think he would have been a better lover for what, I if may be permitted a moment's plain speaking, I would call a little sane and healthy lust. But he was of the said race of literary lovers, the race of Swift, of Shelley, of Flaubert, who are as fatal to a woman's heart as they are harmless to her virtue.

Last of all, I expect the girl, in her ignorance, was exacting, and had no notion how the smoothest curb can gall. I know for a fact that she insisted on his writing to her any evening on which he was not able to see her, and I can imagine no torture more refined for such a man than to have been forced to sit down, at the end of a long day of disappointment and mental drudgery, and answer some foolish, fond letter in language she could understand, and into which no trace of the *weltschmerz* should creep that was devouring his heart and killing hope and ambition by inches. Some of his letters which I have seen show that he took refuge in a irony and fantasy which make them something of literary curiosities. He addressed her by all sorts of strange names — "Crazy kid," "Dear



Pierrette," "Maddest of March Hares." One letter is written in Quaker dialect.

"SWEET FRIEND,

"As arranged betwixt thee and me I called for thee yestereve at the house of thy worldly acquaintance, but hearkening timely the laughter of fools from an upper chamber, which is like to thorns crackling under a pot, refrained, and did not venture. I pray thee walk soberly, and so farewell."

Some, written, I fancy, in the illiterate and misspelt jargon of the cowboy of the plains, are, to me at least, unintelligible. At last it became easier to call than to write at any time, and he appeared an ardent lover for the very reasons that made him a laggard one.

He put off the first call as long as he could, but a day came when it could be put off no longer. One foggy evening he found himself outside the railings at Number Eleven, and Fenella asked him if he was not coming in to show himself.

"I can't stay out late, you know, until you have," she said, with a little reproach in her voice. It was the first time she had spoken sadly to him.

Mrs. Barbour rose, a little flustered, as he came into the room, and thrust some family mending behind the cushion of her basket chair. Paul saw at once that she was of his own caste, and you never would have guessed how his heart went out to her. The heart was under disgrace just then, and a strict embargo laid upon its impulses.

"I am so pleased to meet you at last," said Mrs. Barbour, when the first civilities were over, "and so interested to hear you are a literary man. My husband wrote a good deal during his life."

Fenella was revolving, slowly, on the hearthrug before the mirror.

"Paul doesn't want to hear about books, mother," she said; "he's been reading stodge all day."

But Mrs. Barbour was already searching the shabby bookshelves, packed tight with tattered exercise-books, coverless magazines, broken cardboard boxes, and a host of other things for which bookshelves were never intended.

"My husband had a very fine library at one time," the widow went on, as she rummaged, "but most of the best books are upstairs."

"With our lodgers," Fenella further explained. "We're very proud of our 'paying jests'; aren't we, mummy. We've had them for years — and years — and years." She let her voice die away, and stretched out her arms slowly, indicating, indeed, a considerable time vista. "What an actress!" thought Paul, watching her.

"Here's one," said her mother at last, dusting a slim volume in a brown cloth binding. "Where *can* all your father's books have got to, Nelly?"

Ingram took the book from her hand. Its pages had never been cut, and it exhaled the forlorn odor of the presentation copy. Its strange title attracted him —

"Climatic Influences Upon the Reformation. A lecture delivered at Wells before the United Diocesan Congress, 18 —. By the Honble. and Revd. Nigel Kedo Barbour, M. A."

There was a boastful engraved book-plate inside the cover — all plumes and scrolls and quarterings.

"Has my new hat come, mummy?" asked Fenella, suddenly, in the changed voice she kept for the serious affairs of life.

"I bade Druce take it up to your room," answered mother. "Have you had tea yet, dear?"

"No," said Fenella, incisively. "Ring for some while I go upstairs," and disappeared forthwith.

Paul kept his eyes upon the mottled page, but knew he was undergoing a scrutiny at once legitimate and disquieting. Mrs. Barbour spoke at last:

"I hope you don't think my little girl forward, Mr. Ingram."

Paul raised his eyes, closing the book upon his forefinger.

"I think her entirely charming."

"I know she's impulsive," the mother went on. "Yes — she is. It makes me anxious."

"You don't expect me to quarrel with her latest impulse," Ingram said, with one of his rare smiles.

Mrs. Barbour shook her head, secure in her own worldly wisdom and code of conduct.

"But men make mistakes. Don't they? You know they do."

"Of course they do. I've made hundreds, but never the sort I think you mean."

"You see," explained the clergyman's relict, "Fenella leads a strange life. Yes" — she repeated the phrase, as though she found it vaguely comforting — "a strange life. She's very bright and talented, and receives a great deal of attention; but for reasons that — well, for *reasons*, she can't see much of her friends here. I assure you, you are the first gentleman acquaintance she has ever asked in. You ought to feel very much flattered, Mr. Ingram."

"To an extent that verges on embarrassment, Mrs. Barbour."

"And then," the mother went on, in the heedless fashion that recalled her daughter, "she has a great number of fine relations who would be glad to show her attention if she'd make the first move. But Nelly won't be 'taken up' — that's what she calls it — *taken up*, by any one."

"Bravo!" said Paul. "Let us be fellow-conspirators, Mrs. Barbour, and confine her bounty to the laborious and deserving class."

"Oh my!" exclaimed Mrs. Barbour, with sudden helplessness. "You do talk like my husband! It's quite uncanny."

Fenella interrupted them, entering with noisy suddenness. The new hat, very large, very smart, was on her head. She looked quickly from one to the other.

"What've you two been yapping about?" she asked. "Mother" — in an aggrieved voice — "this beastly hat is an inch too big all round. I told Clarice so, but you and she would talk me down. You never take my part with dressmakers and people. It'll have to be altered. Hats are getting smaller. Have you rung for tea?"

"The maids are upstairs, dear. I'll go and get it myself."

As soon as she had left the room the girl seated herself on Ingram's knee and kissed him.

"What were you and mummy talking about?" she said, rubbing her lips after the kiss. "The hat's a bit in the way isn't it? I hate things in the way, don't you?"

"Not when I perceive them in time."

"Oh, but we aren't going to have any, are we, Paul? No difficulties — no quarrels — nothing horrid."

Ingram didn't answer her. Perhaps he was listening to those feet creeping, creeping up behind his shoulder.

So the months passed. When it was too late, Ingram tried to tell her what he should have told her at first. But Nelly would admit nothing — listen to nothing. She turned all the clouds inside out and bade him confine his attention to the silver lining. Upon the subject of her dancing ambitions she entered an unaccountable and fatal reserve, but there was nothing else in her life she did not share with him. Through whatever fringe of whatever society she happened to be adorning at the moment she dragged her lover gallantly. Fenella led captive was Fenella less dangerous, and the old popularity revived at the news of her attachment. Men liked Ingram, and he was thought "distinguished," "unusual," even in circles that called him "Crabbed Age" and "The Satyr" behind his back. (Besides, when were satyrs ever unpopular?) A few mothers held up shuddering hands, but the daughters, being of the new generation, only seized the occasion to preach the

new evangel, and, generally, to cleanse and sterilize the imagination of old. Speculation, in fact, having spent itself, accepted the situation; and by the time the long-planned foreign holiday arrived, her mother thought her "improved," "more thoughtful, and more womanly."

## XIV

### ALTHEA REE'S

**O**NE airless July morning, a good many years ago, now, old Winstanley came bustling into the sporting editor's room, where I sat on a desk, swinging my legs and talking "bulldog" with Stedall. He had a typewritten slip of paper in his hand.

"Probate and Admiralty for you this morning, my boy!" he said, addressing me. "Here's the cause list. There's two cases down. M — m — m! '*Vacuum Recovery Co. v. Owners of Dacia. Assessment for Salvage.*' That's a friendly case; it shouldn't take more than a couple of hours. Here's something spicier: '*Hepworth v. Hepworth: no parties named.*' It's a defended case. Special jury. Hepworth is old Lord Hallamshire's grandson, younger son of a younger son, but that's good enough for a 'Society Divorce,' lead and about a column and a half. If the turtle doves come on to-day, keep your eyes and ears open, Prentice! There's some dashed mystery about the case; secret marriage and that sort of thing. Mrs. Hep's a Yankee. There appears to have been a separation three years ago, and now the respondent wants the kid. Blackmail, no doubt."

And off bustled Winstanley, fretting and bawling.

If secret there were, no one seemed to have winded it but Winstanley. There were not more than the average knot of idlers in the public gallery. But the body of the court was filled with a bevy of smartly dressed women, and the five seniors who were briefed were all well-known leaders. The Salvage case was called first, but the Trinity Masters

were not ready, and so the conjugal knot was attacked forthwith.

Hart-Milner, the well-known silk and wit, opened with an appeal to the press. The case, said he, raised no point of any public importance, but its detail was of the most painful nature with which that court could be called upon to deal. How far such evidence as they were about to hear should ever be reported in the public sheets was, he thought, a vexed question. The entire position of the press in such matters might, at some future date, have to be revised, and he believed that the final decision would depend a great deal upon the restraint and decency with which the privilege had previously been handled. The position of the parties, moreover — at least of the party to whom his interest was confined — made a further and personal claim for indulgence upon a body whose association with literature was growing closer each year. The name which appeared upon the cause list — the name which he could well believe had grown to be to his client the intolerable symbol of all she sought relief from to-day — was, it is true, as obscure as it was besmirched. But it was far different with the petitioner's maiden name. That name, a name which, in accordance with a line of defence he left his friend on the other side to justify if he could, it seemed was to be imported into this sordid case, it would be only necessary to mention, in order at once to strike a responsive chord in the breasts of all who had the interest of literature at heart. (A pause, and "Oh! you are *strong*," from Nicholls, leading for respondent.) In her capacity of authoress, petitioner was well known to the reading public as "Althea Rees."

My! what a buzz and hum and craning of necks! And how the people who were *in* congratulated themselves on being in, and of having refused to be frightened away by the possible technicalities of Vacuum Salvage, and how they determined that no luncheon interval should tempt them away from the precincts of the court.

"I say, 'imported into the case,'" goes on Hart-Milner, when order had been restored, "because I believe I am divulging no secret when I say that the other side intend to plead condonation, and to take the unprecedented course of deducing it, not only from letters that passed between the parties subsequent to the alleged offences, but from passages in the published work of the petitioner bearing upon the position of the sexes — passages which, I make no doubt, my learned friend will know not only how to select, but —"

Nicholls was on his feet. "M'lud! I protest most strongly against the line my learned friend is seeing fit to take. My learned friend can have no knowledge whatever of what is in my brief."

"I think, Sir Frederick, I should let it alone at the present stage," the president suggests pacifically. "If it's there, we'll come to it in time."

"Very well, m'lud! Then I'll open my case. The petitioner — Althea Clara Hepworth, born Althea Clara Rees — only daughter of Mr. Lyman Rees, president of the Anglo-Occidental Bank, an American gentleman resident in London, and who has been for years a prominent figure . . ." and so on, and so on, and so on.

I think I see the scene now. The dim court, packed with its restless, seated occupants; the long shafts of light from the Gothic window over the judge's seat, all alive with dust motes; the bearded president, with chin on hand; the intent, puzzled faces of the special jurymen; and Hart-Milner on his feet, relating, in a voice low but distinct, and vibrating with the multiplex humanity that made him the darling of Bar and Commons, the devilish tale of physical and spiritual brutality in which a man had sought revenge for the inferiority that daily self-comparison with a woman high-spirited, witty, and admired enforced upon his own base soul.

At the close of the opening speech the petitioner went into



the box. She was a pathetic figure; all the more so, I thought, because she was so beautifully gowned. I remember her dress well. It was of brown silk, with the wide velvet sleeves that no one thought hideous in eighteen hundred and — never mind. She had a flower hat covered with pale blue violets, and a bunch of the same flowers at her breast. She kept her veil down as much as possible, and answered in low monosyllables, or in little, faltering sentences that one could hardly catch, and that often had to be repeated for the benefit of the jury. The questions were frightful. Even Hart-Milner could not do much with them.

Nicholls, with his long, mottled face, and jaw as of a dishonest horse-chaunter, jumped up to cross-examine — loathing his task, but all the more truculent for that.

“Look at these letters, please!”

A bundle of letters, on a woman’s fanciful note-paper, sewn into a stiff paper cover, was taken across by the gowned usher.

“They are yours?”

“Yes.”

“Some are dated, some aren’t. May we take it the undated ones were written within two or three months of those that are?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“During your husband’s absence in Norway?”

“Yes.”

“Written two years after the court has been told that your happiness and peace of mind and health had been wrecked, your faith in human nature destroyed, and written to the man who was responsible for all these things?”

No answer.

“Come! Let’s read one or two.”

He read them one by one. Foolish, flippant, loving letters. The letters of a poor little girl-wife, hungering for love and kisses, and — yes, why not? — for cuddling (the very word was in one of them); and, in her longing, turning for it to the

dishonored, tainted source whence alone she could ask it now. The poor soul broke down and cried as the merciless, rasping voice read on and on.

"Now I ask you, and I ask the jury, is this condonation? And if it isn't, what is?"

Althea threw her arms out with a little stiff, appealing gesture that she checked immediately.

"Oh!" she sobbed, "what could I do? I was only a girl. I believed what he told me. He said all men were the same."

The case had not concluded when the court rose. I sprinted back to the office. The compositor was waiting for me, but I pushed by him and opened the door of Winstanley's sanctum.

"Hello!" said he, scarcely turning round; "you're late. What have you brought?"

"Half a column."

"Was it a dry case?"

"It's one that shouldn't be reported at all."

He spun round in his chair and regarded me savagely.

"That means it's d——d good! What's your game, Prentice?"

"Look here, Winstanley," I said nervously, "there *are* things, you know ——"

"I don't know it at all. People who go into the courts are public property. If they don't like it, they can stay outside."

"And besides ——"

"Besides what?"

"She's my Mrs. Hepworth."

"Your Mrs. Hepworth?"

"Althea Rees, the authoress."

He jumped up, and began to pace the floor savagely. "That's so like you. I suspect something; I send you down because you can gush, and, instead of sending your stuff out early and getting the scoop, you turn up late, with ten lines for the public and a lot of tripe about 'a woman's heart' for me."

Well, like Fenella, I 'smouthed' him down. He wasn't a bad little beast, when you knew him — Winstanley. It wasn't his fault if his veins were full of printer's ink. I told him the *Herald* and the *Courier* were doing the same as me. He sat grumbling.

"Turn in your stuff, then, and come back here. I'll send down Chaffers to-morrow, and you can do old Astbury at the City Carlton. You don't deserve anything better."

But Chaffers, and a good many other people, had their trouble for nothing. Next morning Nicholls arose in a packed court and announced that, after consultation, his client had decided to withdraw his defence, and would take a verdict by consent; each party to pay their own costs, and neither custody of nor access to the child of the marriage to be sought. Which decision Sir William Vieille, the president, commended in a little speech that left no doubt which way his direction would have gone. And I, hearing the result at midday, sent Althea the biggest bunch of pale violets I could find in St. Swithin's Lane. The price of violets in July, was, I admit, an eye-opener.

You will have guessed it was not on principle alone that I took all this trouble and risk. I had interviewed Althea a year before on some shop-assistants' movement or other (she was a woman of varied activities); and something in the name upon the card I had sent in seemed to strike her. When the interview was over she asked me to wait, and, having left the room for a few moments, came back with her father. Mr. Rees was a big, old-time, orating and banqueting type of American citizen, with a clean-shaven, ivory-white face and thick silver hair. He carried a great expanse of starched shirt-front, wore a narrow black tie, and I rather fancied I detected Wellington boots under his broadcloth trousers. He had my card in his hand.

"Your name is Hyacinth Prentice?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must be some relative of Hyacinth Prentice of Prentice and Morales?"

I said I was his son.

"Give me your hand, my boy!" said the old gentleman, impulsively. It was the last time I was to be called a boy; but I suppose I seemed young to him, and, indeed, a permanent immaturity of aspect is one of my disadvantages.

"I knew your father well," goes on old Lyman Rees. "He was one of the first friends I made when I came to London in sixty — sixty — ? Oh, very well, my dear," for Althea had laid her hand gently upon his mouth. "We lost sight of one another before the trouble. I wrote him, though. I said: 'Don't try to reconstruct! Don't show the bad trading! Buy off the debenture holders! Give them twice the value in ordinary shares if they insist, and raise another hundred thousand in debenture on the Chili property.' But your father was an ill man to advise. Ah, well; it's an old tale to-day. Althea, we mustn't lose sight of Hy Prentice's son. When we are dining by ourselves?"

Althea gave a date that was significantly far ahead.

"But I'm always at home on Sundays," she added, smiling a good-bye. "Come in whenever the English Sunday becomes unendurable, Mr. Prentice."

My floral offering must have been only one of many she received, for all manner of fine friends rallied to her in her trouble; but, perhaps, coming from a poor devil of a working journalist, the tribute struck her imagination. A few days afterward I got a little note chiding me for never having taken advantage of the old invitation, and bidding me to dinner at the end of the week.

I am not a sentimentalist, whatever Winstanley may pretend he believes, but I confess that in the course of a friendship which dated from this dinner Althea became a sort of a heroine

with me. Poor woman! the veil had been so roughly snatched from all the tender privacies of her life that I think I had the same satisfaction in bringing her my sympathy and consideration as a knight-errant may have felt, covering with his own cloak the naked, shamefaced captive whom his sword had cut loose in the forest. In fact, we became so far friends that one night, more than six months after her decree had been confirmed, she bade me, in saying good-night, congratulate her on a very serious step she was taking on the morrow. I thought she was going to be married, and I admit my heart sank a little. But it was nothing of the sort, as she explained hastily. She was on the eve of reception into the Roman Catholic Church.

## XV

### HISTORY OF A CONVERSION

**S**HE first came into contact with Catholicism — I mean close personal contact, for, during her residence upon the Continent, such things had passed her like a painted show — during a stay she made in late autumn with the Mawhoods (pronounce "*Maud*," please!) in Norfolk. Harberhall, Sir Cuthbert Mawhood's seat, famous for its tapestries and formal gardens, is one of the great houses of England. It was also, for nigh upon two hundred years, while the Howards were tacking and trimming, the only important stronghold of the prescribed faith in East Anglia. It has been beset for weeks together by spies and pursuivants; its gray flint Tudor walls are honeycombed with secret stairways, sliding panels and "conveyances." Father Fitzsimon or Hopwell, the seventeenth-century Abelard, lay concealed there for six months during the Oates mystification, and a strip of sea-beach almost under the park walls, called Paces to-day, is said to preserve in its name the tradition of his restless night walks. Set upon a steep hill that overlooks the fowl-haunted levels of the Wash, there is everything in the position and associations of Harberhall to arouse a romantic enthusiasm, and to turn that enthusiasm toward the great central fact which has lifted a commonplace county family to the heights of heroism and self-sacrifice.

The chapel of the Mawhoods is a modern Gothic building of the elder Pugin, whose windows are filled with stained glass from a French abbey demolished in the Revolution, and is

connected with the hall only by a long wing of palm-houses and vineries. It is also the parish church of the village below the hill. During the last hundred years a small congregation of the faith has grown up there, dependents and old servants' children's children. The Mawhoods have married much abroad, and little trace remains of the Jansenism with which so many of the old Catholic families were once tainted. On a hunt morning, which also happened to be a feast of the Church, Sir Cuthbert and his two tall sons in pink approached the sacred altar among their servants and laborers. The Con-fiteor was recited by the surpliced server — the tabernacle unveiled. Above each head the chaplain, a tall, curly haired young doctor, himself a scion of an old West of England cavalier family, and predestined to the purple, bent reverently and murmured some formula that Althea could not catch. All returned to their places with downcast eyes and clasped hands, but with the easiness of long habit as w . . . . . Mass went on with many genuflections — many salutatio . . . . . om the altar steps, with tinkling of crystal vessels against the gold chalice rim, and one ecstatic minute in which the bowed congregation seemed to hold its breath, while a bell trilled sharply six times. During the mass the pupils of a convent school outside the village, directed by a community of French refugee nuns, many of them cousins and kinsfolk to the hall, sang English hymns in sweet quavering voices — vapid, unmetrical compositions of the veiled cloister, though not without a certain sentimental charm of their own:

“O Sacred Heart: behold thy children kneeling . . . .”

or

“Oh, turn to Jesus, Mother turn!

And call Him by His tenderest names . . . .”

This blessed *eau sucré* brought tears to Althea's eyes. Harkening it, she seemed somehow to recover her own hapless, “ill-adventured youth.” The spell of the old, wise religion,

## HISTORY OF A CONVERSION 121

so guileless and yet so subtle, which never seeks to explain the inexplicable, and which is as tender to those who have lost their happiness as it is merciless to those who are seeking it, fell over her. The end was never in doubt.

I should like to have been near Althea while she was "under instruction." I don't mean on account of anything she would have said, for, like most original thinkers, she was capable of infinite docility; but just to have watched her face while the Catholic doctrine, say as to the relation between physical and moral evil, was explained for her benefit. For she was a child of revolt, if ever there was one; far more akin to Bruno than to Augustine, to Leopardi than to Newman. Innately sceptical, a scoffer in the grain, I suppose she discovered that beyond all negation a doubt persists, and decided to give God and the creed that speaks most confidently for Him the benefit of it. Even after her conversion she liked to play at heresy — to be *enfant terrible* — to have grave monsignori wag their fingers half reprovingly at her. Her religion remained intensely personal, and she was never impressed, as some worthy converts have been, by the spectacle of the Church as a "great going concern." Its dogma oppressed her: she was not strong enough physically or nervously to endure its elaborate ritual, and would often leave her seat in church, suffocating, in the very middle of high mass. What she liked best was to creep away at dusk, when the world is busied with shopping and tea, and, before some dimly lit side altar in Farm Street or Brompton, to set herself adrift upon an ocean of sentiment that, with a little more conviction and a little less self-consciousness, might almost have become ecstasy.

Her new interest was immediately made apparent in her books, for her characters henceforth began to talk theology in season and out of season. At an earlier stage of her career, I submit, this would have missed her her public. But her reputation was by now secure: her annual novel was eagerly awaited by the "passionate few" whose suffrage alone fine



writing can win. Besides, it was noticeable her asceticism never strayed far from the purlieus and issues of Mayfair. One got up from her books feeling that one had been in very fine company indeed. She had that affinity to the highly placed which is less snobbery, I believe, than a kind of perverse idealism. And, beneath all the pomp and circumstance, sorrow always worked regardless of earthly shows, and kept the balance true.

Such, as far as the world has any right to know her, was Althea Rees at the date I tried to make her Paul Ingram's earthly providence. I pleaded his cause, not perhaps as strongly as I might, because I wanted the man and his work to complete the impression for themselves. That they might do more—that in trying to work good I might be working mischief—was a thought that, I protest, never once occurred to me.

## XVI

### HOA-HAKA-NANA-IA

**I**T DOESN'T much matter how early in the autumn we come back to London; upon our return we always find the season has stolen a march upon us. Paul arrived in town on a dark, rainy afternoon. The impatient, scowling skies were already beginning the ruin of the short-lived English summer. Beyond the railway terminus the streets, with their stream of jostling umbrellas, their straining horses and shiny-coated drivers, were both bewildering and disheartening. Victoria was full of belated holiday makers setting an anxious face seaward. And on all sides, from the railway announcements with which the walls of the vestibule were placarded, from the covers of the summer magazines that still heaped the book-stalls, from advertisements of soap and jam and pickles and liquors, girl faces simpered and ogled. Boys in punts, dabbling their hands in lilyed water: sunburnt boys in orchards, carrying baskets filled with apples: languid girls in hammocks, with shapely ankles peeping discreetly from their frilled skirts: girls smiling from carriage windows, or standing with hounds in leash on windy moors — but always girls, always women. In some of these journals there might be food for thought or fruit of experience: here and there — though rarely — an author's name seemed earnest of this; but in every case, for the written word as for bottled mineral water or patent cereal, the lure was the same — some pretty, foolish face; something to excite and feed for a moment the idle desire of the eye. Paul, as he viewed these things biliously, wondered whether it were true after all, as his French captain

had declared to him once with cursing and swearing, that the Anglo-Saxon was the most woman-ridden race in the world; and, alas! remembering how he himself had been employed during the last fortnight, a spasm of self-contempt contracted and hardened his heart. He felt degraded, commonplace, banal; caught in the toils of the delusion that has deposed woman from her proper place as man's helpmeet and propounds her, tricked and adorned and set on a pedestal, as his reward.

He put his baggage in the cloak-room, and made first of all for my lodgings in Pimlico. This was particularly unfortunate, as Mrs. McNaughten, deceived by the morning's fair promise, had driven me forth betimes, bidding me, under pain of her displeasure, which is no light threat, not to return till night, the while my room should be swept and scoured, "before the murk days comes, and a body canna tell dir-rt frae darkness." Scribbling a message in the narrow hall, while his umbrella made a pool upon its shabby oilcloth and Dulcinea, with pail and broom, ascended laboriously to her attack upon matter in the wrong place, Paul had an opportunity for contemplating the rewards of literature, the sort that does get into print. It cannot have been inspiring.

His own rooms were in Cowley Street, Westminster. He approached them, through Broad Sanctuary, with the sense of expectancy that every one feels after even a short absence who nears the spot upon which the activities of his life converge. He had not left his French address — and so much can happen in a fortnight!

There was only one letter and a packet: the harvest of two weeks! The package contained his bank pass-book. He glanced at it hastily and tossed it aside. The letter was from America, from the lawyers who managed a slender inheritance that had devolved upon him some years ago, as a tardy act of justice, years after the foreclosure upon his mother's farm. As he read it, the blood left his cheeks under their superficial sunburn. He pocketed it, and made a hasty

calculation upon his fingers — counting months perhaps — or even weeks. He looked round his sitting-room with hunted eyes. They were particularly pleasant quarters, these rooms of Ingram's, in a charming old early Georgian house behind the Abbey. Their windows had deep seats and looked across the cloistral calm of Cowley Street to similar quaint windows, curtained with art fabrics and with a hint of pottery and brass beyond. Actresses of the serious sort, journalists, an artist or two, one junior Cabinet Minister, were his neighbors. He was proud and fond of the old-world parlor — of its panelled walls, the slight list of its floor, its grotesque fire-back and grate. It had been his home now for two years; even the dust and stillness that lay on it after a fortnight's absence seemed consecrated — seemed *his*. All the books and most of the furniture was his own. It is marvellous how much wandering and uprooting the instinct of a home-making race will survive. As, give a couple of beavers in an exhibition tank a few logs, and watch the poor beasts start building!

He had a hasty lunch and went to the Museum. He read hard: he was too disturbed to write. In its untroubled atmosphere little by little his agitation left him. A pleasant sense of comradeship reached him from silent neighbors, many of whom had grown gray in the same thankless task. He felt he would always be able to breathe freely here. There was a respite after all, and projects would suggest themselves once his mind was at rest. Once it was at rest! For certain distractions must be put out of his way once and for all. He was sorry, truly sorry, for the girl who used to sit quietly beside him reading "Who's Who" or turning the leaves of some illustrated book — there, in the seat where the mad poet was mowing and scribbling this afternoon, but he was sorry for her only in the same impersonal sense that he was sorry for the woes with which the musty volume before him was filled:

"Old unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago."

After all, self-preservation was the first law, and one could not accept a real responsibility for anything that was as inevitable as this. He was quite cheerful when I met him for dinner at the *A-peu-près*, and even pleasantly ironic at the expense of a white shirt-front and black tie which I was weak enough to think an evening call upon a lady in Portland Place demanded.

Althea received us in her own sanctum upon the second floor: a long, beautiful Adams room with creamy white walls hung sparsely with Carpacciesque Italian drawings in red chalk, a few water-colors of the old English school, and one great painting of the mad Venetian master, all splash and impasto, which, seen close at hand, was like a lichen stain on an old red wall, but, at a little distance, teemed with form and color. A bookcase of dark carved wood ran breast-high round the walls. Along its deep shelf were ranged bronzes, old Nankin jars, fragmental majolica figures — with an occasional faded embroidery or red morocco missal clasped with hammered silver. The carpet was of thick, dead-leaf-colored pile, and a brass railed fender with a wide leather seat ran across the low marble mantelpiece. Althea's room always struck me, personally, as the last word in that austere taste which roams the world, seeking and rejecting, in its quest of the beautiful.

She rose to meet us, and Paul had the impression of a woman, still young, in a loose pale satin gown, rather clumsy of figure but graceful of movement, with chestnut hair dressed low on her forehead, gray eyes under thick dark brows, a heavy jaw and just a hint of sensuality in the mouth. Her arms and hands were white and perfectly shaped; her ears finely modelled, and set as close to the head as though they had been carved from it in low relief.

As long as I was there we only talked commonplace, and I left them early, pleading the editorial discipline. I thought I had done my part in bringing them together, and walked

back to Pimlico "on eggshells." But no sooner was I gone, (so I have heard since,) than she recrossed the room and, seating herself upon the fender, gazed at Ingram in silence for a long while. Try to imagine what balm to the misunderstood, thwarted spirit that level, frankly admiring regard must have been.

"Tell me all about it!" she said at last, abruptly and impulsively.

Paul smiled back into the intense gray eyes.

"All about what?"

"How you ever came to write such a story."

She reached to the mantel-shelf, and, taking down a square silver cigarette-box, scrawled all over its top and sides with well-known women's names, handed it across to him. She lit one herself and arranged her satin draperies.

"You speak as though I had 'arrived!'"

"Oh! success will come," she said confidently. "It's the beginnings that are most fascinating. I want to be taken behind the scenes. Come, wizard!" she pleaded "let me be inquisitorial and curious while I'm under your spell. Tomorrow you'll be my rival. Who knows but that I may hate you then?"

Ingram considered a moment, and flicked the ashes from his cigarette.

"There's not much to tell," he said slowly. "You may have heard or guessed that I'm a poor man's son. We have our decayed families in Massachusetts, though I suppose we haven't quite so far back to decay. I didn't learn much more at free school than to read and write and figure, but you know with what care and reverence the first steps are guarded in our country. Nothing so trivial and hopeless as the average English taste in letters could leave even our primaries. I may say 'our country,' 'our primaries,' may I not?"

She flashed her sympathy.

"Afterward I led a very lonely life for years. I don't

mean comparative loneliness, or even such loneliness as a man may achieve for himself in any big city. I mean weeks, months, with never a human face. And during that time I think" — he laughed — "I think I read every book in the world."

"No writing? No early efforts?"

"I was twenty-eight before I tried. When I wrote my first essay I'd almost forgotten how to hold a pen. Please," he urged quickly, "you must try and believe it."

"I am believing every word you say."

"I was a soldier in the French army. Oh! no glory — just drudgery. Very good society though: I still believe my corporal was an Austrian bishop. We were on detachment in the desert, and of course English books weren't to be had. Besides, some of the lads from Alsace were eager to learn, and it seemed a chance before I forgot it myself. I had met all sorts of strange characters, and began to try and set them down as I remembered them. Then it was only a step to putting them in new situations and figuring out how they'd make good. And then — and then — it seemed to me I made a discovery."

He stopped, a little agitated, filled his lungs with smoke, and emptied them before he spoke again. Althea sat quite still.

"Go on, please," she said in a low voice.

"In all the stories I had read the character seemed to start, full-fledged, on the first page. All the action of the book develops it and shows it up. Now that might be literature, but it wasn't life. What was the reason? Not a mistake; because the best men do it. No. But I think unconsciously they are following the line of least resistance. They start the first chapter under a disadvantage: with the last one in their heads. And they even get praise for preserving the unities — the *unities!* — of *life!* What a lot of guessing it would save! I ended by believing there's no such thing as a consistent character at all. There's something we hang our convictions on

as we hang clothes on pegs, but all the rest is just things happening — things happening — things happening. And in the intervals"—he laughed again, "as much character as you like to indulge in: as much as you feel you can stand yourself. Am I tiring you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Take my book. You've read it through?"

"And through again."

"What's Patty Holt? Only a ranch-woman who broils, and bakes, and washes, and irons, and has wandering loves. What's her husband? An Indian trader, who holds up trains and has views on the revision of Hamilton's masterpiece, the Constitution of the United States. Neither of them know either how good or how bad they are. Conviction for him would come with the rope round his neck, and for her when the Ashplant Vigilance Committee gave her twenty-four hours to bisect the state boundary line at right angles."

"She'll be compared with Madame Bovary, you know."

"Very unfairly, then. Emma Bovary is a romantic-minded woman set amid prosaic surroundings, and Holt's wife is a commonplace woman set in romantic ones. What's wanting to romance? Her lovers ride and kill. I suppose if they rode — what's the word — *destriers* instead of cow-ponies, and carried two-handed swords instead of thirty-thirties, they'd be legitimate subjects for the most full-blooded cap and sword romance. And there was — I mean there is — violent and horrid death at hand any time the Ute bucks lift a demijohn of fifty overproof Peach Bloom Rye going up to a mining camp. No, what weighs them both down is just the sordidness of the transplanted civilization around them, and when the crash comes all they have to turn to is the little meeting-house God of their youth, which the woman has outgrown unconsciously during her emotional experiences."

"But surely — What about Mr. Ffoulkes? You don't think that he —?"



Paul jumped to his feet and thrust his hands into his pockets with an impatient movement.

"Everard Ffoulkes! The cowboy bishop! Isn't it funny how unerringly even good criticism puts his finger on the one true thing, and declares 'That couldn't happen.' Why he's 'vêti' — 'erlett,' every word and action of him. I've ridden with him, camped with him, bunked with him, and even prayed with him."

Althea regarded him awhile, through the smoke haze, with eyes narrowed to slits.

"Mr. Ingram," she said, flinging her cigarette away, "I'm going to help you publish your book, but I'm going to hurt you first. Now — are you ready?"

"Go right ahead."

"You'll have to modify it. Oh! don't bristle and scold. I know I've touched a nerve. But on your own confession you've lived away from the world a long time, and you have no conception of" — she paused for a strong enough word — "the impregnable determination of our race that certain things shall not be — I won't say discussed, but even postulated. It's too strong for the strongest of us. The Inquisition and the Index are indulgent beside it. It's begun to hurt social progress; but even social progress has to mark time and wait its pleasure. Right in the midst of our civilization, Mr. Ingram, a great, rough-hewn granite god uprears his bulk. I always imagine him something like the Easter Island deity you have to pass on your right going into the Museum — no forehead, cavernous eye-sockets, vast nostrils and mouth — HOA-HAKA-NANA-IA: the god of things as they must be supposed to be. And his thighs and stomach are simply larded with the smoke of intellectual sacrifice. There is a legend, you know, that no great literary work, once carried through, has failed to somehow or another reach the world. I fancy Hoa could throw some light on that tale. Shall we go on the balcony? It's rather warm in here."

She put her hand to her forehead as he followed her down the room. Outside the rain had ceased, and the September night was clear and fresh. Across the nobly planned street, the broadest and most effective prospect in London, the windows of the great stuccoed mansions were dark and shuttered, with only here and there a pale glow in fanlight or upper window, but the many storied Langham Hotel, filled with trans-Atlantic birds of passage, closed the vista cheerily, and a broad flare of light round the corner showed where Regent Street and the shops and restaurants began.

"Do you know French well?" she asked, presently.

"Only everyday French and a few curiosities I'm trying to forget."

"It is a pity. You could have turned your book into a French novel, and then translated it."

Paul shook his head. "I wouldn't do that. It's here or nowhere. The very houses, the very self-satisfied faces, are a challenge."

"Isn't it wonderful?" Althea mused, leaning on the rail and regarding the houses opposite. "And this is only one street. There are hundreds like it. House after house, wealth upon wealth, millions running to milliards till the brain reels. And in hardly one a single misgiving, a single suspicion that the same fate which measures can re-measure. Only pleasure, food, fine raiment, and the stealthy rapture of possession. But it can't go on forever." She shook her head. "No, here in the cradle of the race the racial revolution will come about. These sober, policed streets will be the theatre of the completest subversion the world has ever known. It's one of the charms of living in London, where things *will* happen. I have my visions. Westminster Cathedral full of little beds is one — I don't know why — and nurses and doctors with their sleeves rolled up. . . . What made you call your book 'Sad Company,' Mr. Ingram?" she asked, with a sudden inconsequence. "Did you know it was a quotation?"

"I don't think so. I may have seen it somewhere and forgotten."

"It wasn't this, was it? —

"Go from me! I am one of those that fall.  
What! has no cold wind swept your heart at all  
In my sad company? . . ."

"— Let us go in. It's not as warm as I thought. I'll ring for coffee, and introduce you to my father. I've let him dip into your manuscript. You don't mind? He's one of the proprietors of the *Parthenon*, so be very pleasant and alert. He's been in Colorado, too, and thinks a lot of your scenery passages." She turned and, smiling, held up a finger impressively. "Mind! I say your *scenery*."

## XVII

### THE CONTINENTAL EXPRESS

I HEARD nothing from Paul for days, and was beginning to think reproachfully of his conduct, when, on the morning of the third day, a note was brought by hand to the *Panoply* office. It was short and rather cryptic. He was evidently in some trouble, the exact nature of which he didn't disclose. He wanted me to come to him at once, and to keep the afternoon open.

I hurried down after lunch. Mrs. Gribble's face as she opened his hall door expressed relief. Paul has always been rather yearned upon by his landladies.

"Oh! I'm that glad you've come, Mr. Prentice," the good woman said, as she ushered me up the wide, shallow stair. "I don't think Mr. Ingram oughter be alone. He's bin talkin' to hisself dreadful all night. Me nor my 'usband couldn't get no sleep for harkening at 'im."

I entered the room with that air of boisterous incredulity which men keep for a stricken brother.

"On your back, Ingram? Nothing much wrong, I hope."

Paul was lying on the bed, half clad and in his dressing-gown. His pipe was in his mouth, and through the drift of tobacco smoke, with which the dark, oddly shaped little room was filled, I thought his face looked drawn. He motioned me to a chair with a wet pipe stem.

"Sit down and help yourself to tobacco," he said, and smoked on in silence.

"Prentice!" he broke out all of a sudden, so abruptly that

I let the match I was striking fall; "did you ever break a woman's heart?"

I gaped at him.

"Oh, I'm not joking. I really am collecting evidence on the subject. I've been studying it hard now for two days and a night. There's not much help, is there," pointing out the open window, "in three chimney-pots and a demolition? If you hadn't come, I was prepared to take Mrs. Gribble's opinion. Come, Prentice — man to man — have you ever — ?"

"No," I answered, rather shortly. "I've been too busy all my life."

"But it can be done?"

"My dear Ingram, you know 'women' is not a subject I've specialized on."

"But still, you keep your eyes open?"

"Well, then; I can't say I think it often happens: nothing like as often as the other way round; and yet —"

"And yet — I know. It may. And some people are doomed to knock their heads against exceptions all their lives."

He twisted himself to one side with the weak and peevish movement of a man seeking relief on the rack.

"Is the woman you're — er — writing about young, or only still young?"

"She's very, very young," he answered, with a curious sort of smile — bitter and yet tender at the same time.

"Good!" I commented cheerfully. "That's tremendously in her favor."

Paul smoked on. "I really didn't bring you here to talk generalities, Prentice," he said after a while. "Can you meet some people for me on the 3.45 Continental train at Charing Cross?"

I told him my afternoon was at his disposal.

"You're a sure good friend," he said simply, and I took the little phrase in full payment. Paul was seldom American in

idiom but when he was touched or excited. "There's a mother and daughter — Mrs. and Miss Barbour. Let's see now; how will you spot them?"

"Did the daughter by any chance come with you to the *A-peu-près*, three weeks ago?"

"That's so, Prentice; I had forgotten."

"I think I shall know her again," I said, smiling a little behind my cigarette. Poor, unworldly Paul! "What am I to tell them?"

"I'm just figuring it out."

"What is really the matter, old man?"

"Mental vertigo, from thinking too long in a circle, really."

"I think I understand. A sort of moral fatigue."

"That's a splendid name for it."

"But will she — will they, be satisfied with that? Shall I be asked questions?"

"Say I'm run down."

"Run down and no visitors. Have I got it right?"

"And that I'm writing. Don't forget that part. How's time?"

I went to the window and looked at my watch. "Just time to do it comfortably."

"Good-bye, then, and thank you, Prentice, from my heart. You're doing me a big favor. Oh! by the way," calling me back from the door. "About Mrs. Hepworth."

"Yes?"

"She's written, making an appointment for to-night. The book, you know. More mutilation. I can't go as I am."

"Very well — I'll 'phone her."

I paused with my finger on the doorknob. "I can say 'moral fatigue' to her, I suppose."

Ingram seemed to think a moment. I wondered whether I had sounded impertinent.

"Yes," he said, slowly. "I think you can say it to her."

I reached Charing Cross with nearly ten minutes in hand. The 3.45 Continental, having probably thrown every local and slow train on the line half an hour out of its reckoning, was signalled "on time." A long line of porters was strung out along the curved platform. Motor-cars and carriages awaited the great ones of the earth, and a score of people paced the flagstones. Among them a couple of press men nodded absently to me. Punctually to time and quietly, as the expected always happens, the Folkestone express pushed its smoky old nose into the station. Porters shouted and jumped on the step, doors flew open, and the platform was covered in a trice with a jostling crowd of veiled women and ulstered men, the awkwardness of the long journey still in their cramped limbs. My trained eye searched the crowd rapidly but thoroughly for the girl I was to meet, and presently I saw her, beautiful, happily anxious, becomingly disordered from travel, and with perhaps a warmer pallor in her cheeks than when I had seen her last. She did not know me, of course, and it was the strangest, saddest thing in the world to feel myself scanned unconcernedly and passed over by the expectant eyes I had come to cloud, and maybe fill with tears. I reached her side and lifted my hat.

"Miss Barbour, I think."

She looked at me with a slight stiffening of the figure.

"My name is Prentice. I am a friend of Paul Ingram's."

"Of Paul's? Is he here?"

"Miss Barbour, pray do not be alarmed or anxious. Ingram is not quite well enough to meet the train and has asked me ——"

Her eyes filled with terror. "Where is he? At his rooms? Oh! we will go at once, mother!"

I had never thought it would be easy; I saw now that it was not going to be as easy even as I had thought.

"Miss Barbour," I said, venturing to lay a hand on her coat-sleeve. "Pray attend to me for one moment. Ingram

## THE CONTINENTAL EXPRESS 137

is to see no one to-night. There is no need for alarm, but ——”

“—— Mother, mother!”

A stout, comely old lady was making her way toward us. By her side a gnarled and grizzled railway servant walked, soothing her agitation with a patiently reassuring manner that, had he been a doctor and not a porter, concerned with chests, in fact, instead of with trunks, might have won him riches and a title.

“Yes, marm, I understand you puffedly. Two gladstings, you said — large tin trunk, and a 'at-box. No, marm, I aint a-leavin' you. I'm agoin' to git you a four-w'eeler. You stand 'ere until I comes back. Your two gladstings, your large tin trunk, and your 'at-box is all numbered the same, and will be put together on this 'ere counter. 'Ave your keys in your 'and in case they wants one opened. As soon as that there man 'as marked them with work I shall come back and put 'em on my barrer; then I shall take 'em to your four-w'eeler. No marm; I'm your porter, and no one else sha'n't 'ire me. No marm; nor no one else sha'n't take your four-w'eeler.”

“Mother, Paul is ill, and I'm not to see him. This is Mr. Prentice, a friend of his.”

“There,” said Mrs. Barbour, jingling her keys sharply. “What did I say, Nelly. Those drains at Palèze. Is it something infectious, mister — mister —— ? Is there any temperature yet?”

I caught at the “infection” and lied, as I had foreseen I would. People were jostling and bumping against us. The girl had to catch my arm once.

“Please, *please* set your minds at rest,” I said. “I am confident it is nothing but a little overwork and worry that will be all right to-morrow. But, in the meantime Paul is, as no doubt you know, rather nervous and scrupulous. To-morrow we shall know for certain what it is. He is writing, and you may take my word for it, it will be good news. And now,



madam, please let me pass your luggage through the customs, see you safely into a cab, and take a good report back before Paul settles for the night." I had not been asked to do this, but nothing fits so easily and naturally into one lie as another lie.

The mother was tractable and not greatly concerned. I could see she was one of those ministering women upon whom sickness acts as a challenge, and who can look forward to a long spell of nursing, untroubled by misgivings as to the ultimate result. But the girl's white face and questioning eyes tortured me. I could feel the question in them even when my back was turned to her. I would not judge Paul hardly: would not judge him at all. I knew enough of life to know that a man may without a moment's warning find himself faced by some terrifying, insoluble problem, out of which there is no gentle, no easy, no honorable way. But his strange manner — his phrase, stranger still, about the "exceptions" it had been his lot to encounter, filled me with misgiving. I even wondered if mayhap I was the last man that should ever see perfect happiness in that perfect face.

I had put them into their cab, and was leaving the terminus, when, passing before a telephone box, I remembered my other message. I rang through to Portland Place, and, for the first time since I had known her, heard Althea's level voice along the wire, not only without pleasurable emotion, but even with a sudden inexplicable distaste. I was surprised, too, at the concern in it when I had delivered my message. She pressed me for a true account, and, tired of mystification, I gave her Paul's own words. At her next sentence I nearly dropped the receiver.

"My dear lady — think! Oh! you *can't*."

"I'll risk it," Althea said, with a stubborn little laugh that I could fancy a flushed cheek accompanied. "I'm not conventional, as you know. Besides, you say the creature isn't in bed. Oh! you clever male duffers, with your insight and

## THE CONTINENTAL EXPRESS 139

analysis, and not enough wit to know after months what a woman sees in the first five minutes — that a fellow-creature is perishing before your eyes of sheer intellectual starvation.”

What could I do? Ring off. Sigh and make a further mental note as to the insane quality in a woman's courage. For what Althea proposed was nothing more nor less than to call at Ingram's rooms the next day in her car, if fine, and discuss alterations and revisions with him in the course of a long motor ride. As for me, with that child's white face and panic-stricken eyes before me, and a pleasant sense of being responsible for more than I could control, it was only left to pray for foul weather. Which, believe me or not, I heartily did.

## XVIII

### AMENDE HONORABLE

**M**EANTIME, with many jolts and halts, and to the accompaniment of a good deal of mercifully muffled blasphemy from the box, the cab drew out of the station yard and rolled heavily toward Suffolk Square. The blighting autumn rain drummed pitilessly on its roof and lashed the closed window-panes. So dark had the afternoon turned that Mrs. Barbour could only see her daughter's face as a white blur against the black velvet cushion, and was forced to guess at its expression. A good deal of new-born hope mingled with her own concern. I am a poor actor, and know now that after the first Mrs. Barbour had been undeceived by my message. She had suspected a "quarrel" on the last day at La Palèze, and though she had not been a witness to any further manifestations of it, did not believe, perhaps because she did not wish to believe, that it had even been made up. She had never approved her daughter's choice in her heart — had thought it but a poor fulfilment of so many fond imaginings. She had the relish for change often to be found in easy-going, hospitable natures. She was not callous nor indifferent to the girl's probable suffering, but she had lived through a good deal herself and had the robust scepticism of middle age in affairs of the heart. Beyond inevitable storms and fevers, beyond a few tearful days and sleepless nights, what rosy vistas might not be opening! With Ingram out of the way, she became seized again of all her old air-castles. It is a strange fact that the dark homeward drive, which was one long torture for the daughter, should have been invested for

the being who loved her best with the subdued cheerfulness of an executor returning from a funeral.

A year ago she would have been profuse of tenderness and sympathy; but during that year her child's heart had grown away from her, exhausted by a passion it was too immature to bear, and shrank too perceptibly from the ministrations of any other love. For the present she judged an elaborate heedlessness to be at once the easiest and the safest course.

The promise of better days, of a clearer horizon, persisted in the clean, stately house that welcomed the wanderers home, in its high-ceiled rooms, so strangely wide and light after the dark, cramped little cottage in which she had been living under protest, and in the open kindly English faces of Druce and Kendal, who had not so much grown gray as they had toughened and flattened in faithful service. Her lodgers would not be back for a couple of weeks, and she could roam from room to room and indulge her sense of proprietorship undisturbed, finding everything brighter, fresher, better for her absence. One would have said that Number Eleven, too, had taken a trip to the seaside for change of air. She unpacked her trunk, found her knitting, and was humming a little brisk air when she returned to the sitting-room.

What she saw struck the song from her lips and the happiness from her heart. Fenella sat forward in an armchair over the cold, empty grate. Her poor face seemed tense, strangely unyouthful and set like a stone. She returned her mother's startled gaze with stricken, inexpressive eyes. Mrs. Barbour was on her knees at her side in a moment.

"Nelly, darling! Are you ill, child?"

The girl shook her head slowly, and looked away again at the black-leaded grate.

"Have you been sitting here ever since we came in? Oh, my pet! And I roaming over the house and never thinking." She drew the gloves off her daughter's limp hands. "Dear!

your poor hands are like ice. Shall I have a fire lit while tea's making ready?"

Nelly shivered. "I'm chilled," she said, "and — and a little dizzy. It's the crossing, perhaps. And the house does seem cold and strange, doesn't it, mummy, after our little *chalet*?"

Mrs. Barbour rang for tea and ordered a fire to be lit. Her fingers trembled as she cut thin bread and butter.

"It's her eyes," she kept saying to herself, in that frightened soliloquy we use to temper a vague dread. "It's her eyes that frighten me. If I could only get them to look natural, I shouldn't mind so greatly. She knows something I don't. What did that devil say to her before he left?"

She wheeled the sofa before the fire — that was an inspiring thing in itself on this rainy September evening — tucked a shawl over the child's shoulders and put furred slippers on the numbed, slender feet. Nelly sipped her tea, nibbled her toast with the docility of the broken in spirit. Later she pretended to read, but, happily ignorant how much of real sorrow may be entombed in the printed page, found no comfort there in time of present trouble. She was one of those for whom reading is a last resource, literature the thinnest of veils that can be interposed between them and the withering breath of reality. The book is yet to write that will not be laid down at a postman's knock or an infant's cry.

It was at a postman's knock now that the novel whose pages she had been listlessly turning slipped from her lap and fell, face downward, on the hearth-rug. She could not rise, so great was her agitation, and the fulness of time seemed to gather in every second that *tick-tocked* from the clock in the corner before her mother was in the room again. She was holding a letter before her spectacles, a letter with a deep black border, at whose superscription her brows were knitted. Back from failing limbs and reeling brain the blood flowed to Fenella's heart. But she did not faint. There is always enough life left us to learn the extent of our sorrow.

"The letter's for you, dear!"

"Read it, mummy," she said, simply. "I can't."

Mrs. Barbour ripped open the envelope. As she glanced over the unfamiliar writing, her face glowed with pleased excitement.

"What is it? Oh! *what* is it?" the puzzled and tortured girl asked her, seeing her lips move.

Mrs. Barbour looked up. "Darling, what's the matter? It's good news. I mean — God forgive me! — not very bad. Only your Aunt Hortense dead. You never knew her."

Fenella, as she took her suspense back into her breast, knew its name was Hope. Her eyes filled as from some inward sweat of anguish—some wound felt only when the sword is withdrawn.

"Why do they write to me?"

"It's from your cousin Leslie. Listen! Shall I read to you?" She did not wait for an answer, but read on breathlessly:

"DEAR COUSIN FENELLA,

"Do you remember — have you ever been told, of the girl who came to see you fifteen years ago, and whom you would not kiss? Fifteen years ago! and now she is bringing herself to your notice again. Do you feel it an insult after so long? You should not, dear cousin. For there are things that are so hard to write, but that sound so natural when they are spoken. And even though you resent it, be patient for the sake of the sad reason that occasions her writing now. Poor mother was buried on Friday. One can remain loyal and still admit that she was a woman hard to understand — impossible to divert from a prejudice once conceived. Even now, although I have thought of you unnumbered times, sought news of you, even kissed the picture we have of you as a child, that seemed to me to hold the promise of a sweet friendship to come in its baby face, I could not write to you as I am doing did I think that my impulse still crossed the will of the dead. You will not understand this until you have seen one you love die by inches under your eyes, while you stood by, powerless to save, and all but powerless to soothe. But toward the end of her illness mother spoke of you. Her heart was changed, and in what I am doing now I am carrying out the wishes of the dead no less than gratifying what has always been a secret desire."

Mrs. Barbour paused for breath. "Doesn't she write beautifully, dear?"

"I think it's gush," said Fenella. "Is there much more?"  
"Oh! fie, dear. Listen!"

"Dear Cousin, we are to come to town for the autumn. May I call upon you — see you often — make amends for all the wasted years that might have made us friends? You are our kin, and, in trouble, blood calls to blood. We will return to Freres Lulford for Christmas, and we want you to spend it with us, among your own people. It will be a sad and quiet one for all, but by then I trust you will have grown so near to us that we need not grudge you a share in our grief. Write me when you get this. The earlier your answer reaches me the easier I shall forgive myself for what, by one cold word, you can turn to the deepest humiliation I have ever suffered. Think me impulsive, think me indiscreet, think me even impertinent; but, believe me, oh! so ready to write myself

."Your loving cousin,

."LESLIE BARBOUR."

Mrs. Barbour wiped her spectacles. They were so dim that she did not notice her daughter's vacant gaze.

"Mother, are people often taken ill so suddenly?"

"My dear, your cousin says it was a long illness."

Fenella gave the low moan of the misunderstood. "Mother! I don't mean — that. I mean Paul!"

The woman could not check a movement of almost passionate impatience.

"Mr. Ingram? I don't believe he's ill at all. Men who write are always up or down. They're worse than women. It's the unhealthy life they lead."

"I wonder — I wonder!" said Nelly under her breath. She was realizing, with a sick dismay, that this was the last evening delivery and that to-morrow would be Sunday, a day during which, for those at least who live in London and wait upon the post for comfort, the operations of Providence are

entirely suspended. Two nights and a day to be lived through — somehow!

Her mother took out the letter again, and fingered it caressingly.

"It's what I've been longing for all my life," she said. "When are you going to answer it, dear?"

"To-morrow, mummy, to-morrow," wailed poor Fenella, and fled from the room.

She climbed the stairs weakly, feeling the empty house's atmosphere no longer chill, but stifling and oppressive. By the time she had reached her room the impulse to fling herself upon her knees, to bury her face in the coverlet and weep and weep, had passed. Instead she lit both candles of her dressing-table and, sitting down, gazed long and earnestly at her reflection in the tilted mirror. To study herself thus was rather a habit of hers. The woman who has beauty and does not know it is a graceful conception, but lacks reality. All the world is a conspiracy, pleasant or otherwise, to convince her. Fenella was not vain, but, with all encountered comeliness compared to it, her body had not ceased to be a rapture to a curiously impersonal love of beauty, innate in her as in all sorts of people, but which, in her case, by a bounteous accident of nature, could be fed most delicately upon its own outward substance. Nor was she ignorant that, in the quarter to which she had devoted it, she was, to use the world's chosen language, and in a sense far beyond its choice meaning, "throwing her good looks away." She knew it — she gloried in it. No whisper that reached her from jealous or puzzled friends could add to her own conviction of it — no secret recess of her being but responded and thrilled to the call of self-sacrifice. At a certain height of passion woman becomes strangely sufficient to herself — is priestess and host in one, with an ecstasy in the immolation that men can only guess at. For all the lack of curiosity as to her lover's past life which was so unaccountable a thing to her mother, the girl guessed that



it had been hard and sad, so sad and hard that the full strangeness of the destiny that brought him to lips and arms like hers could only be dimly comprehended by him. His blindness forced self-valuation upon her. She flung her beauty, the freshness of her youth, the tribute of other men's burning eyes and stammering tongues, into the scale against it. She asked only love. Let him but love, she would teach him appreciation in time. She had her own white conscience in such matters, too, even though the obtuseness of her lover's senses tempted her to lengths that innocence does not often venture. It was not three weeks ago since, sitting upon the dunes, at the end of an afternoon during which the grizzled head had been her plaything, she had asked Paul abruptly whether he did not in his heart sometimes think her a shameless woman. And the undisguised astonishment of the gray eyes at her question had been at once a reproach and the sweetest, completest assurance that it was possible to have. And then and there, drawing from his arms, and while the loose sand trickled through her fingers, she had made the poor little apologia of her love, haltingly and timidly, and told him that should it ever happen — inconceivable surely on this day of sunshine and sweet airs as that sky and sea should change places — that he should go one way in life, she another, she had such a store of shameful memories as would press her to the earth all the rest of her days.

Yet it was this possibility, scarce to be imagined a fortnight ago, which she was facing to-night; now, as she combed and plaited her black hair, so fine and loose that the comb ran through its length at a single stroke; now as, unfastening the corset that had chafed and rayed the tender flesh at her waist, she put on her long white robe and stood before the mirror, a trembling penitent, about to make amends through a whole racked night for the follies of her undisciplined heart. Buoyant and hopeful by nature, and really knowing nothing yet for certain, she was aghast at the urgency with which defeat

claimed acceptance, and at the weakness and intermittence that her imagination, pressed into loyalty's service, showed in working toward her lover's justification. She felt herself sentenced, a culprit, a prey to the illogical anger of some power which she had failed to propitiate only because she had not known of its existence. The chill of abandonment was already at her heart. As for the letter which she had just heard read to her, she hardly gave it a thought, although a wish of her own heart, unavowed, but very intimate, was realized in it. To-night any comfort save the one for which her whole being ached was a traitor — an accomplice in the conspiracy of silence, of shrugged shoulders, of amused wonder that had surrounded her poor little love-story from the first. No one had meddled, she remembered; no one had interfered or seemed anxious. With smarting eyes as she laid her head on her pillow she paid her tribute to the wisdom of the world.

The morrow with its suspended bustle — its clanging church bells and the awkward voices of milkwomen and paper-boys ringing upon the silence of the streets and squares, was a torture not to be borne. As soon as her mother had gone to church she dressed herself and left the house. The morning was fine but close. In the park the moisture of a whole week's rain, sucked out of the stale earth by the sun, surcharged the air almost to the level of the tree-tops with a palm-house atmosphere that weighed alike upon flesh and spirit. Although it was September, the parks as she crossed them were full of smartly dressed people — mothers and young daughters — sturdy children with dawdling lawn-clad nurses — ivory-faced old ladies in ample creased robes of silk — an occasional earnest young man, professionally silk-hatted, striding along with a chattering girl at his side, who bravely but jerkily maintained the pace of his long legs. They all seemed to be coming in opposite direction. She was on one of those unhappy

errands when we feel we are making head alone against a contrary current of joyous contentment.

The bell from the great Parliament tower was tolling twelve as she passed into Dean's Yard. The old gravelly square was deserted, except for a statuesque policeman and one little blue-coated messenger boy, with his round cap cocked over his ear, who from pure lightness of heart was wakening its staid echoes with a shrill medley of popular airs. She had set out with no precise intention, drawn as by a magnet to the spot where the treasure of her heart was kept from her, but, though she did not reason, with every step her insensate impulse hardened. She would test the tottering fabric of her happiness now, though, at a touch, it should topple into ruins about her head.

Cowley Street was empty, and pigeons were feeding in the roadway. She was leaning against the railings — fighting, reasoning with a heart that the mere sight of his windows had driven into tumult, when the stillness was invaded by the blast of a motor-horn. The doves took flight above the sunlit roofs. A big touring car, coming from the river, swept into the street, and drew up, with a creaking of its brakes, outside the door that she was praying for strength to approach. A woman alighted, glanced at the number upon the red door, and plied the knocker briskly. Her hat was veiled and a light dust-cloak covered her dress, but one moment's application of that intuitive knowledge which women possess told the girl that she was probably handsome and undeniably rich. The whirr and clutter of the cylinders ceased unaccountably just as the door was opened. Cowley Street on Sunday is more than still. She heard his name clearly, the very accent in which it was uttered somehow confirming her first impression; then the door closed. With a single jaunty glance the remaining feminine interest, the green-coated chauffeur swung himself out of his seat and busied himself with some recalcitrant machinery or other under the bonnet of the car.

Have you ever, on a railway journey, or in a packed public

meeting, from which there was no escape without unwelcome comment, fought against deadly faintness? How the landscape crawled past the spinning, flashing, wheels! How the sermon, the address pelted on, a meaningless torrent of vocables, against the brain that was tense and taut for one thing only — that thing deliverance! In such a mood Fenella hurried through the streets and parks toward her home. She had forgotten her purse at setting out, and the cheapest, slowest amelioration of her journey was denied her. Another woman! Another woman! No defeat could have been more complete. Everything had been imaginable but this. Against every aspect that the annihilation of her suspense could have shown her she would have done battle — save only this. Women are taught by their whole life's training to seek concrete motives for action and, when found, to respect them. To principle they concede little, and they expect as little from it. If they fight selfishly, at least they fight bravely, naked and unambushed — warrior, weapon and reward in one. Auguring nothing from past treacheries, so the treachery be not to them, betrayal always finds them unprepared, as, once shattered, nothing really rebuilds their faith. Could it be otherwise? What value to them in a love or a devotion whose incentive lies outside of them and beyond them?

She reached home at last. Her mother had been watching for her from the window and ran to open the door. She had a letter in her hand. Where had the girl been? How ill she looked! There was news for her, brought by a boy messenger half an hour ago. The poor child could only shake her head and, taking her letter, seek refuge once more in her own room. During her absence her trunk had been unpacked; all the silver vanities were ranged, with snowy doilies beneath them, on the woman's altar of her dressing-table. The bed on which she had tossed and moaned all night was spread white and cool and smooth. A little breeze was rising, and fluttered the curtains at the open windows.

After what she had seen no letter could matter much; but she read it through dutifully, with a little sigh as each page fluttered from her hands to the floor. It was long and kind and tender; the letter of a man who would select his language at the very judgment seat of God; a fair copy, without blot or erasure, product of a night no less sleepless than her own. If the balance lay all at one side of the account, at least he had ruled the ledger straight. The old arguments were reiterated, the old impossibilities pressed home. The dilemma, evaded once before, had confronted Ingram again, harder, crueller for the delay, as is the manner of evaded dilemmas. He had had to choose again between wounding her pride or wounding her heart — to death this time — and with the anxiety such a man will always have to preserve a woman's good opinion at all costs, which is half fine feeling and half vanity, he had chosen the second. Wisely? Who shall say? At least his end was gained. He was loved at the last. She pressed the sheet which bore his signature madly, unrestrainedly against her mouth, blurring the ink with her moist lips. She would have kissed his hand so — holding the knife at her throat.

And with the kiss her childhood ended. Then and there the thorn-plaited crown of her womanhood was proffered her. She put it on bravely and unflinchingly. She did not despair of life nor of life's end. Flowers, laurels, she felt might crown her yet, but under blossom or bay leaf she would always know where to look for the old scars. And, finding them, she would bless them for his sake.

An hour later Mrs. Barbour, trembling a little at her own temerity, knocked at the door, and, getting no answer, opened it. Nelly was sitting on the bed, dry-eyed, sucking her thumb. The pages of her lover's last letter were littered over the quilt and on the floor.

The mother asked no question. She closed the sash softly,

drew down the blind, and, going to her daughter without a word, held her close — held her for two long hours, while the Sabbath baked meats went to grease and the gong roared unheeded below; held her through a tempest so deep at life's sources that she trembled and prayed as the frail body shook against her breast. But the green tree bears the hurricane because it is green. The storm was passing away in sobs that grew fainter and fainter, the stained cheek was beginning to move restlessly upon her drenched shoulder, when she spoke:

"Was it bad news? — from him?" she asked, and compressed her lips.

"Mother," said the girl, with a fresh outburst of tears that was only the leaves shaking off the rain, "don't blame him! It's not quite his fault. He's so unhappy. We shall never see Paul again. And oh, mummy, I've been a bad, undutiful, careless child to you — but I'll be better now."

"You've been my dearest child, always," Mrs. Barbour answered. "It will be the old times over again for both of us. I ask nothing more."

Fenella was calm enough now to smile wanly at her mother's words. But even she could not guess how unlike any old times the new ones were to be.



**PART II**





## I

### FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE

**F**OUR years ago — no very long time, even to those who must count it by the ruins and ghosts it has made — the light-hearted wayfarer amid financial pitfalls — *vacuus coram latrone viator* — not more a snob than an antiquary with a wistful regard for survivals need confess himself, spared a glance, as he passed along Throgmorton Avenue, for a big brass plate on the door of the corner building which overlooks the crouched statue and smoky fig-trees of the “Draper’s Garden.” For him the legend it bore called up a vision, unique amid the alien and masqueradingly Semitic names with which the dreary canyon is plastered, of other and very different days, fiercer perhaps but at least less meanly cruel; of hard knocks given and taken in a selfless quarrel; of blows upon helmet and corselet, thrusts that the buff coat haply turned; of a fight that raged one whole September afternoon through the streets of the “ever faithful city.”\*

“BRYAN LUMSDEN, CALVERT & Co.,  
Stock and Share Brokers.”

A stranger to the ephemeral record of London society — if such a one can be imagined in this day of “open letters” and the ubiquitous lens — who met the genial head of the firm upon the lawn at Cowes, or among his yearlings at Stanmore, at the pigeon butts of Pau and Cannes, or in the thrice-guarded sanctuary of the Turf Club writing-room, or who, as is likelier

\* Worcester

far, merely passed him in Austin Friars, silk hat cocked rakishly, one hand holding the lapel of his coat and the other laid lightly and characteristically upon the shoulder of some olive-skinned lord of the market, would probably have carried away a totally false impression of the man and of his history. Official textbooks — the one, for instance, in which poor Fenella discovered a romance so enthralling, would not greatly have helped him. He would have learned from them that Sir Bryan Lumsden was twelfth baronet of either a very old or a very short-lived dynasty; that he was the son of Denzil Lumsden, of Coffers Castle, Kincardineshire; that he had served his country in the Scots Guards, been an aide-de-camp during the Tirah Campaign (medal and clasps), and had left the service at twenty-five. No less than three residences housed all this greatness: the castle aforesaid, "The Chase," Stanmore, and 369 Mount Street. "Clubs: the Turf, Marlboro, and Royal Yacht. Unmarried." And from the silence concerning the sphere in which three parts of his life were spent, and upon whose harvest, presumably, these glories were supported, he would have conjectured that here was a case common enough in latter-day life: the scion of an old house, bought in to finance by family money and connection, gradually acquiring sufficient zest for the game to justify a predominant interest, and, with position assured, returning blithely to the life of his younger days, while, under the griffin wings that hatch so many a clutch of golden eggs, Calvert, imaginable as a rather vulgar but discreet person, buttoning a black coat high on his chest and redressing the senior partner's ebullience by Apollinaris and bulb-culture at Sutton, watched the processes that, by a law of growth as simple as that which sows the pollen on the wind, make the rich man daily and hourly richer.

They would have been quite wrong. The titled food-adulterer or gutter journalist — no drab figure in all the broadclothed gallery with which Dr. Smiles seeks to fire the imagination of youth — was more literally the architect of his own fortunes.

Twelve years ago, when he was an attaché at Vienna, with a long night of ruinous play behind him and a scented but heartless letter under his elbow, Bryan Lumsden had spun a coin to decide whether he should continue the battle elsewhere and under less tangled conditions or pass to the completer simplification which was all his pagan soul conceived of death. He had tossed the double thaler into the air simply, with no consciousness of pose, and since it fell for life, had played the game out that way. Returning to London, he had sent in his papers, paid his debts with what was left of an attenuated property, and asked for "desk-room" in the office of the broker through whom the final transactions were conducted — a dark, secretive man, little susceptible to the appeal of the incongruous or to the glamour of a barren title.

At the end of a year, upon the quarter per cent. margin allowed to those outside the house for business they introduce, he was earning an income in excess of many sworn members of repute, who struggle on from settlement to settlement with the hammer suspended over their heads like a sword of Damocles. In three years he was a member of the house and a partner. Business flowed to him. His gay, casual manners, his cheery voice, melted the senile heart of Mammon. The baffling blue eye, behind which a purpose quick and strong as steel was kept bright, pierced its pompous parade from the outset, and, holding his adversary at a deflated value, he was never tempted to take himself any the more seriously for his success. To the last the moves for which the market watched would be made between a chat with his trainer and a chaffing and recondite conversation over the telephone with the Tower mess. History is always repeating itself in unlooked for fashions. A hundred and sixty years ago the great Marshal Saxe, forming his squadrons for the charge that was to give Lauffeld to the French, ordered aside their black-avised brigadier and picked on a subaltern, careless and rosy, whom he espied laughing in his saddle, to lead the human avalanche. And in the meaner struggle

that seems to have displaced war indefinitely, it will still happen that a light heart with a constitutional cheerfulness in taking risks finds all manner of blind forces following headlong at its heels.

His great chance came when he was just over thirty. For two hours of a sunny afternoon, and to the clouding of a fair brow at Ranelagh, a gaunt, hungry-eyed Western American, referred to him in despair by a friend whose time the stranger had daily and pertinaciously returned to waste, sat in his private office. The man's story was a fantastic one. Of a tunnel which he had been excavating under subvention, for years, and timbering furlong by furlong, sometimes more, sometimes less, as the rusty ore with which the mountain teemed assayed well or ill; of a suspicion, dawning on him little by little as he proceeded, that a wild miner's tale of the district — the legend of the lost lode of Troublesome Gulch — might not, after all, be a myth; the sudden discovery of free gold in the rarest and most precious of ores, "running up through the rock, sir, like a fern"; the theft of the samples that would have justified him; the sudden withdrawal of his subvention, and the decision of the railroad to build its connecting line at a lower level and at an easier gradient; the offers that had been made him for his property, in all of which his fevered mind saw only a threat and evidence of conspiracy. The man was no smooth-tongued exploiter: he spoke roughly, uncouthly, chewing to rags the first dry cigar he had ever smoked, in an evident sweat of fear lest somehow or other his secret should be torn from him — straining to be back and on guard again. His eyes blazed as he talked and his hand shook. He had been nursing his dreams on aerated bread and coffee.

Lumsden kept his visitor by him — wired to Ranelagh — telephoned to various quarters. That night in a private room at the Carlton the company was (unofficially) formed. Within a week from their issue "Gulches" were the sensation of the market. They started well at parity, dropped to fifteen shill-

ings and twelve and a half on an attack of nerves and a truculent attitude on the part of the railroad; recovered, rose to thirty, soared to forty, to four, to six pounds. Fresh shares were issued; the public, almost kept out of the first issue, responded greedily, and the opportunity was seized to unload more of the old debentures than certain cool heads approved. It might be another Camp Bird; it might be the most colossal swindle since Kaffir days; in either case, its proportions inspired respect. There was a shuffle on the financial checker-board. West Hampstead moved to Mayfair, Porchester Gate to Park Lane, and was, so to speak, *crowned* there, with power to move either way for the future, in a bull or bear direction, capturing meaner uncrowned pieces *en route*. Stanwood went back to Sleepy Cat Mountain with the light of victory in his eye.

Before the snow had melted round the feet of the burros which were bringing down his six-dollar quartz to the smelter he was a ruined man. It was everybody's fault and nobody's fault. The necessary delays had not been discounted; holders were pressed in other directions; finally a discovery that Lumsden, to fill an order for a thousand shares, was buying outside and privately at three-fifteen, stampeded the market. The collapse was complete enough to become a joke. Clerks asked one another: "Will you take it in half-crowns or in Gulch debentures?"

In the summer Lumsden went out to the States. He found Stanwood, a baffled but not a beaten man, and his son, a strong silent lad with steady eyes, "batching" in a log shanty with an earthen roof. Tin kettles and saucepans were hung on pegs all around the outside walls. Behind the hut, among whortle bushes, an ice-cold spring bubbled out of the ground, and all manner of wild mountain flowers — rabbit-ears, puccoons, and thimble-berries — grew to the threshold. They were seven thousand feet above sea-level; all around was space and silence — an air like sparkling wine: his feet, as he ascended the track, crushed sweet harsh odors out of the barren earth.

In long but not aimless rambles over the boulder-strewn slopes; in elk hunts up in the timber reserve; in naked male talk by the cedar fire under the star-bewildered dome of night, the two men grew to learn, to esteem, and to trust one another. There was cheering news, even before Lumsden returned East, for the worn woman who was keeping an Omaha boarding-house for brawling Swedish clerks. He travelled slowly, by way of Denver, New York, Washington, and Paris, seeing a good many people in business hours, and, it must be admitted, amusing himself pretty strenuously out of them. He was back in London by October, and the rest is financial history. People said: "Oh! but what about the original shareholders?" Yet it was amazing how few ever came forward. Lumsden and Lumsden's friends seemed to have gobbled them all up.

There is only one thing more which, in this place, it becomes necessary to record of Bryan Lumsden. Once a month or so, sometimes oftener, sometimes less, at the busiest hour of the afternoon, a big closed motor-car made its way, with many grunts and turns, to the big corner building in Throgmorton Avenue. Sir Bryan would issue from the swing doors, throwing instructions over his shoulder as he passed through the office, sometimes would even dictate a letter to the clerk at his elbow, with one foot on the step of the coupé. After a single word to the chauffeur, which the man acknowledged by touching his peaked cap, he would fling himself back against the cushions of the limousine and busy himself with a pile of papers which he had brought under his arm. Occasionally, at some stoppage or temporary eclipse of light, he would look up from them. It was noticeable then that his face had lost its pleasant quality, was even hard and cruel.

The car rolled on, slowly and softly, through the congested city streets, noisily insistent amid heavy van traffic in Clerkenwell, quickened its speed as it turned into Bloomsbury's drab squares. Presently Regents Park flashed green or ghostly gray outside the windows; long brown garden walls and shabby

stucco of St. John's Wood reeled past; the car breasted the hill to Frognal, along a steep avenue of widely spaced, fantastic red-brick houses, set amid shrubs and old timber, and with an occasional glimpse, in lichened roof or clustered chimneys, of an older suburb.

It stopped outside a low wide house which overlooked the heath and was separated from the road by a clipped hedge. Generally, warned by the tumult of the car's approach, the door would fly open before he could reach it from the garden gate; if not, he pulled the wrought iron bell-handle. If the summons remained unanswered beyond a few seconds, he felt impatiently in his pocket for a key and admitted himself. Inside, he looked round the low, wide hall, with the hard air of proprietorship which a man keeps for the place that is his house but not his home. He summoned the laggard servants, spoke sharply to them (in French), pushed open the door of the drawing-room, and waited, biting his moustache restlessly, and looking out of the window over the wide heath. A novel, face downward, or a wisp of embroidery generally decorated the cushions of the window seat.

Presently the door would open behind his back, and a soft rustle of silk and chink of jewelled ornaments cease of a sudden as a woman stood at gaze, watching the broad back or clear profile, silhouetted against the diamond panes of the bow window. With the same undisguised air of ownership, unutterably hideous now when a human creature endured it, Lumsden turned and looked — looked at a slave whom his money had bought and of whom he had tired.

Either one of two things might happen then: She might be peevish, perverse, and bitter, answering his perfunctory questions as shortly, with many shrugs of her shoulders and deprecatory motions of her bare arms; striving with all the advantage her native tongue, the language of cruel inflection and bitter meanings, could give her, to plant her own chagrins, like poisoned arrows, in his breast. Or else, abandoning her-



self upon his shoulder in an attitude for which everything about her — her dress, the very fashion of her hair — seemed calculated, she would force him to a seat, fling her arms around his neck, recall old tendernesses, never forgetting to mingle her kisses with complaints of her servants — so insolent; her tradesmen — so pressing; the view over the heath — so *triste* in winter. Her eyes would be dilated, their pupils at a point. Looking down, Lumsden could see little black dots all over the large white arms. He bore kisses and reproaches with exactly the same stoicism, still waiting, still keeping his eyes upon the door.

Suddenly their expression changed. There would be a shrill chatter of women in the hall — every one in this house seemed to speak and scold in French — cries of "*Prenez garde! M. Cyrille!*" "*Une marche de plus!*" "*Voilà!*" — a child's voice asking for "papa! papa!" Led by a French *bonne*, though he appeared full five years old, and struggling in her grasp, a little boy would enter the room with eager precipitancy. He walked sturdily but somehow clumsily too, holding his free arm out before him and tossing the fair curls from his forehead with a curious baffled gesture. Reaching Lumsden's knee or outstretched hand, he would give a shrill, glad cry, break once for all from the woman who had guided him, and next moment be clasped and gathered into his father's long powerful arms.

Fate has a fine unseemliness, now and then, in her dispensations. It was in a house leased for the service of shame, among brazen foreign women whose hard black eyes belied the respect of their voices, that Lumsden was forced from time to time to plumb the depth of tenderness that lurked in his own heart. He loved his little son as he loved nothing else in the world. And the boy was stone blind from birth.

## II

### TWO TELEGRAMS

**S**IR BRYAN sat in his study at Mount Street one dark Saturday afternoon late in December, sucking happily upon a calcined briar, but with a watchful eye on the clock, for it was nearly time he began to dress. He was by now a man of thirty-seven or thirty-eight, with a beautiful but rather battered face, strikingly like certain portraits of Marshal Blucher. He had heavy shoulders, straight legs, and lean flanks. His enemies and men who boxed with him said his arms were disproportionate even to his height. His hair was fair and longer than most men wear it to-day: it was thinning over his forehead, and his wavy moustache was streaked with gray. There are people, like buildings, who, for all their size and show, we suspect of being hurriedly and cheaply put together. The paucity or poverty of material shows somewhere: in a mouth that doesn't quite shut, in ears that protrude — hair badly planted on the scalp. No better description of Lumsden could be ventured than that he seemed to have been built slowly and with a good deal of thought. He was expensive in grain, like the pipe he was smoking or the tie he was wearing.

He had been golfing all the afternoon, and was dressed, with happy slouchiness, in a brown flannel suit and a limp shirt-collar. His soft white waistcoat was a little soiled and lacked a button. The room he sat in was clear and light, but simply furnished, a refuge in fact from other splendors. *Estampes galantes* of Fragonard and the younger Moreau decorated its walls sparsely. There was only one photograph, of a

woman, which stood by itself in a narrow gilt frame on a side table. It was a large modern chiaroscuro affair. One noted frail emergent shoulders, a head turned aside, delicate lines of neck and chin, and a cloud of hair.

A dark, discreet man-servant knocked and showed his face in the doorway.

"Gentleman to see you, sir."

"Who is it, Becket?"

"Mr. Dollfus, sir."

"Oh! show him up!" But with the precipitancy of his race Mr. Dollfus had shown himself up, and entered hard upon the man's heels.

The baronet hailed him after his cheery wont.

"Hello, Dolly! Another five minutes and I'd have been shaving. Sit down and make yourself a whiskey and soda. Cigars are over there. How are the girls kicking?"

"They're kicking too much," said Mr. Dollfus; "on the stage and off too."

"Rotten notices the *Motor Girl* got," said Lumsden, reaching for a crumpled paper.

"That's all right," answered Dollfus with easy confidence. "We'll pull it rount. Got a new College Song from America. Came too late to put in. With a chorus, my boy, a chorus! 'Cher want to hear it?"

"Go ahead!"

"Back oar — back roar — back waller — back nigger and bantabaloo."

"Sounds useful."

"Eh! ah! Cantcher hear it on the organs? And — I say, Lumsden?"

"What is it?"

"Remember a little girl we saw at La Palèze in the summer?" Lumsden's face altered ever so little.

"Can't say I do very clearly. We saw so many."

"Went rount wit' a kind of fisherman. Artist feller. Eh? ah? Danced, too. Remember now?"

"Oh yes! I do, now. You were professional on the subject of her legs."

"That's the one. Well, she's come to me, my boy."

"Come to you? What the deuce for?"

"What do they all come for?" the Jew asked with subacidity. "Money. A lead. A 'shance.'"

"And what did you say, Dolly? Took her on your knee — played uncle — told her that if she was good to her mother you might give her a place in the back row some day if you thought of it."

Dollfus looked at him keenly for a moment. He had a theory that Lumsden remembered the girl better than he pretended; that he had, in fact, spoken to her at La Palèze and been rebuffed.

"Yer on the wrong track, Lumpsden," he said; "she's quite respectable. Madame de Rudder brought her — voman that useter teach the princesses. She's vell connected, too."

"What's her name?"

"Fenella Barbour."

Sir Bryan started a little at the name, and his sudden movement did not escape the Dominion manager.

"I say, Lumpsden," he went on casually; "aintcher a relation of the Lady Lulford that died this year?"

"A little. Why do you ask?"

"That's who she is, my boy. They were talking about all being together at Christmas."

"Who were talking?"

"Voman she called her cousin Leslie, that came wit' 'em too. At their country house. The name's gone outer my head."

Sir Bryan yawned, stretched himself, and gave a meaning look at the clock.

"Sorry I can't keep you any longer, Dolly. I'm dining out. What is it exactly you want?"

"Vell, I believe the girl's a find, Lumpsden. And natcherally I can't do anything at the Dominion — wit'out — wit'out — You understand?"

"I understand. You've seen her dance, I suppose? Is it any good? You know how much of this humbug there's been lately. Is hers something quite special?"

"Quite," said Mr. Dollfus, briefly. He seemed to weigh his opinion once more. "Oh quite!" he said again.

"You see a furore, in fact?"

"Maybe a riot," said Joe.

The financial support smiled. "You've made it such a family matter, Joe, that you won't mind my telling you I don't particularly want riots about relations of mine."

The manager shrugged his shoulders, but did not revise his opinion. Lumsden held out his hand.

"I'll telephone you to-morrow, and fix a night after Christmas when we can talk this over. Meantime, of course, you'll be discreet. Ta-ta, Dolly. I like your song."

An hour later he re-entered the room and flung a fur coat and crush hat on a lounge. He was dressed for dinner, was polishing his nails and appeared thoughtful. Sitting down before a big knee-hole desk, that was tucked away in a corner underneath a telephone, he switched on a light, drew a letter-pad toward him and wrote:

"DEAR LESLIE:

"May I usurp your sex's privilege and change my mind about coming to Freres Lulford for Christmas. I was going to Ponty's, as you know, but somehow, this year, don't feel keyed up to the light-hearted crowd they get together at Capelant. I want somewhere to hide my unrevered head until the Spirit of Christmas is gone out of the land, and I should like a look at Saleratus. The alternative is to go to Scotland and turn myself into a sort of Dana Gibson picture of the sorrows of the rich. You know the sort of thing: 'Where Get-there Lumsden' really got to.'

"To tell you the truth, dear Leslie, I should never have refused your invitation if you hadn't frightened me with our mysterious

newly discovered relative. Even, now, when I've decided to take the risk, I'll feel nervous. You say 'brilliant.' Suppose it turns out to be some dreadful little artist or writer person who'll want to paint me, or use me as 'a type.' . . ."

When he had got so far he re-read the letter, tore it up, and wrote out two telegrams. One was addressed to Lady Pontardawe, Capelant, Flintshire, and its contents are no affair of ours. The other said —

"Changed my mind. Motoring down, if fine, Wednesday."

His tickled sense of expectancy supported him through a dull dinner — possessed him, in fact, to the extent of making him rather a *distract* companion. Once he laughed out unaccountably. Expectation was as rare with him as regret. He probably regarded them as equivalent weaknesses, but there was no doubt which was the pleasanter to indulge. Not quite a satyr, he was still less a saint. Men who knew him well, contented themselves by saying that Bryan "stayed it well," and the secret of his power to last was probably that, for him, the life that began when he was called in the morning ended when he switched the light off from above his pillow. He was not an imaginative man, but if he had been, his morning bath might justly have been conceived by him as a wide cool river, reflecting a gray morning sky, that flowed between him and all follies and fevers of the night. He took no heed what phantoms waved to him from the other shore, nor what urgency and significance might be in their gestures.

He got back before twelve, changed his coat for a wadded Indian silk smoking-jacket, and finished a long black cigar before he turned in. He felt tranquil, and, for reasons possibly connected with his telegram to Wales, even virtuous. Lulford, with its cloister terrace, its gray walled fruit-gardens beneath the "Prior's oriel," and its liliated carp-wood, girt with bastion and towers of clipped yew, had always been a favorite house with him, far beyond the wind-tortured barrack in Scot-

land that was the cradle of his own grim race, and which all his money could not make bloom afresh. The glamour of his youth still invested it. He had spent many a long holiday there, the while his mother, widowed but no ways desolate, was seeking her own distractions at Wiesbaden or Lausanne, and to the end of his school days (not particularly pleasant ones, for he had been in an unfashionable house and perpetually short of pocket-money) whatever sentiment of eekgugue or pastoral survived the drudgery of construe, always had for its stage and background the remembered pleasantness of Lulford. Wonderful, not how little had survived, but how much!

And to-night something else haunted it, something that was real, that rather appealed to imagination than was evoked by it. Youth, flushed, timorously daring, beckoned and eluded him down those alleys and groves. (Eternal illusion, making your own summer wherever your feet choose to pass!) He was of the age when a man is looking for the heralds of middle life, and his *empressement* struck him as one rather ominous sign. The growing simplification of life was another. The match-makers were giving Bryan up at last. He remembered a time when it would not have been so easy to sneak away for two weeks in the hunting season.

Dollfus had, after all, not been so far astray in his surmise. There had been an encounter at La Palèze — one of those secrets which the most transparent of women never seem to feel the need of telling. She had not appeared frightened nor very much surprised — had let him walk by her side across the dunes and through the pine woods, even chatted a little, lightly. But then neither had she made any attempt to keep the appointment he had so subtly forced upon her for the morrow. He had never seen her alone again.

Ill at ease among abstractions, his mind turned with relief to the case in point. Condensed slightly, his reflections ran something after this fashion:

"I wonder what Leslie's game is. Of course she's stark mad, but it's funny the others making a mystery about it too. Are they just giving a hard-worked little relation a holiday, or do they mean to take her up and bring her out next year. If they do, I'll wager she marries a title or is ruined inside the year. I know what I'm talking about. All my sweethearts do well. Things ain't like what they used to be. There's a sight too much young blood about, and the cubs will be in everywhere. A girl that can play 'em can land 'em. Good lord! Look at Bewdley! look at the Colfax good boy! With the Nampore rubies round her blasted neck! This one's clever, but I don't think she's that kind. But if she isn't, what the devil was she doing at Palèze? Funny, Dollfus coming to me! And I believe I'd rather see her on the stage after all, as long as it's decent. What did he mean by 'a riot'?"

He got up, yawned, and threw his cigar butt into the fire. As he did so his reflection confronted him, a little flattered by the red-shaded globe. He pushed his face closer.

"Not much youth there, old man!" he said, referring to the eyes; "but how many of the young 'uns will be where you are in fifteen years' time? Money! Money! Gad! I can't spend it if I try."

He frowned at the fire and turned impatiently away. "I'm a fool," he said. "None of 'em live up to their faces. Besides, you can never corner that market. A lot is not knowing when to pull out, and idleness and over-feeding, and seeing too many new faces. Heigho! I wonder what Stanwood will be doing in the spring."

He yawned again, and, an hour later, was fast asleep.



### III

#### IN THE FIRELIGHT

**S**NOW had been drifting again, softly, thickly, and persistently, since dawn. The angles of the window sills were filled with it, every square and diamond in the leaded gallery windows was rimmed with the crystalline fur. The coats of the deer in the home park glowed a rich rusty red against its intense and sparkling purity; half of every trunk and branch at the edge of the wood was erased by it like a crayon drawing by the india rubber of some impatient drawing-room master. Fenella had spent the short winter afternoon roaming through galleries and chambers of state, or watching the flakes that tumbled giddily from the shrouded sky turn blue and green and red as they passed the painted blazons in the great oriel window — coats fessed and barrellled and ermined, of Alford's, and Corbet's, and Dansey's, and Maddock's, whose hale and temperate blood ran in her own veins.

She was alone for the first time in the home of her forefathers. Her uncle was away in the old capital of Powysland on some political business or another; her cousins had driven down to the church an hour ago, in a governess-cart heaped with ropes and garlands of holly and fir. There were wreaths and crosses, too, for the woman who was spending her first Christmas beneath the frozen earth, and Fenella had shrunk from sharing the pious duty in which her heart could have so little part. She was glad to be alone, and to muse undisturbed in the ghostly protracted twilight. After the tempest of her grief something of weakness and passivity lingered still; her

heart felt the languor of convalescence. Her movements were slower, her poises more consciously graceful; with the restlessness of childhood the last of its angles had gone. So imperative is nature, that she can make even a broken heart subsidiary to her purpose. She had prayed to die, and was three pounds heavier.

When the twilight glimmer in the long gallery was too ghostly to be borne she descended to the dining-hall. Under its hooded fireplace the roaring grate was heaped with blocks of ligneous coal almost as large as boulders. Freres Lulford is in that borderland 'twixt the old England and the new where, for a ten-mile walk, one may make choice between coal-shafts and rolling mills, or ancient timbered hamlets and the "forest fleece" of Wenlock Edge. She called Perseus, the house-dog, to her, an eerie, feathery creature with a mouth like a shark, and, holding his head in her lap with one hand, rested her round cheek, dusky red from the fire into which she gazed, upon the other. The flames, as they rose and fell, tossed a distorted shadow of her head and shoulders, now low along the faded Persian carpets that covered the polished oak boards, now high up on the diapered wall, across helmet and cuirass, fringed silken banner, or antlered head, until, reaching the straddled legs or flowered petticoat of some high-hung ancestor, it sank again to the carpeted floor. She was dressed in a high-waisted frock of some soft white material, with short sleeves that left most of her arms bare, and with a high net collar kept pointed to the ears with little whalebones, after a senseless momentary fashion that forced her to carry her chin in the air. It was a very pretty chin, however; and wherefore does fashion change at all if not to call attention, through successive exaggerations, to the varied prettinesses of woman.

Was she beginning to taste content again? Was she even resigned? She could not tell. A broken heart is such a relative term, one so justly discredited by those who have not the patience or the knowledge to follow its deadly sequelae that,

except as the loocest of illustration, it is grown to be a useless one as well. But without flattering her own constancy in the least, Fenella could well perceive that, but for a providence so despised at the time, it might have gone very hard with her. Never, she owned it humbly and thankfully, could power to endure so timely have followed the blow, ministering angels the draining of the chalice. The worth or tenacity of a love that death or something else violently disrupts is not to be measured in an instant. At first, while the soul is nothing save a shocked protesting mass of severed nerve and impulse, all comfort is welcome, no matter whence it comes. It is not until the pain has abated that a perverse relish for it becomes possible, and that its ameliorations can seem a treachery done to love. So she had judged her own once, with the indignation of youth for wise restraining laws that will let no passion, by taking thought, grow beyond a certain stature. She was wiser now as well as humbler — could bless the diversion even for the poor perished love's sake. It had saved her from the meaner vexations that, for the woman, follow the breaking of an engagement, the unwelcome sympathy and the meaning glance, the loneliness of the long empty hours, and the perpetual challenge to memory of familiar scenes and faces. New skies, as the poet sings, may not change the heart, but this much is certain — nowhere is disappointment borne so hardly as among those who have been witness to the illusion. She went from her lover's arms discredited, soiled even, but, at least, to those who were ignorant of her history, and could not compare her with the Fenella of old. Meantime, her sorrow lurked somewhere, to wake, she felt instinctively, the day another man should ask her for love.

Her cousins were kind and natural, so natural that, after three months, she seemed to have known them all her life. Leslie Barbour was tall, thin and melancholy, mildly mad, and with the good looks that were the only untailed heritage in the Barbour family marred in her case by ill-health and ema-

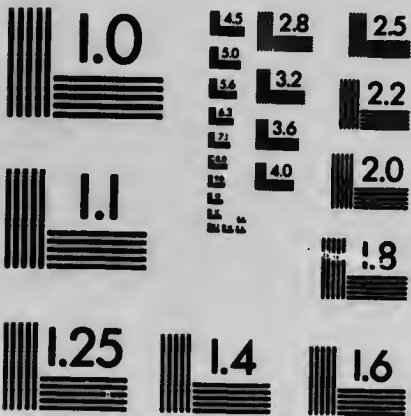
ciation. She spoke little, and regarded her new-found cousin with a purblind stare that it took Fenella a long time to get used to, but which she was content now to accept as a tribute of adoring affection. She loved white, waxy flowers with heavy odors, and was psychically inquisitive.

Nelly was rather afraid of her uncle, a *bruyant* peer with a past of which the late Lady Lulford had been a very small part. He had a fine head and heavy, fleshy face, opulently bearded, that Holbein would have loved to paint, the face of one of the terrible new lords of the English Renaissance who hung the abbots and gobbled up the abbeys. In the country he affected knickerbockers and velvet coats, and was sophisticated rather than intellectual, with a sophistication that he had placed a whole life long at the service of his pleasures. His pursuits being apt to clash with his eldest son's, Basil was at present in Damaraland shooting big game; but Jack Barbour, the younger son, a cheery and casual young lancer, fell unreservedly in love with his pretty cousin, with a fine quality of hopeless adoration in his homage (he has since married money and freckles) that the girl was used to by now, and could deal with competently. The two became great chums. Jack liked to have his well-turned-out little kinswoman for brisk walks across the Park, or for a saunter down Bond Street at the hours of resort. He did not mind how many of his comrades-in-arms caught him in company that did him so much credit. "Where did you find the pretty lady you were with in Burlington Street, Suds?" "Don't be an ass, Bogey," Suds would make reply. "She's a little cousin of ours. I'll introduce you in the spring when we start goin' round again." Fenella, wearing her own sad colors in her heart, looked forward to the promised gaities almost with dismay. Life had become such a serious thing. She worked hard at her dancing, teaching, and learning while she taught, and making strides that carried her rapidly beyond Mme. de Rudder's power to appreciate justly. On the morning of her interview with



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
(716) 288 - 3989 - Fax

Joe Dollfus she thought it well to take her eccentric cousin into her confidence. The look of hopeless adoration only intensified in the vacant, troubled face. Leslie put out her hand and touched the girl's black hair timidly.

"Blame you, child?" she repeated. "Does one blame the butterfly for seeking the sun? Will you forget me, darling, in your success — for I see success written on your brow? Will you be only one other sad memory in my breast — one pearl white head the more along the long rosary of my regrets?" She sighed luxuriously. "I shall recall you best," she decided after a moment's consideration, "when I see a creamy-white rose, half-blown."

Fenella wriggled uneasily. She did not want to be any one else's regret. Brows and breasts, moreover, had a mortuary flavor. Foreheads and chests were much cheerfuller everyday matters. They were at lunch, and she caught her cousin's hand under the table-cloth.

"Don't be gloomy, Les," she pleaded; "you make me feel all *squiggly* when you talk that way. Of course I sha'n't forget you. I want you to come with me and madame this afternoon."

We know now what Mr. Dollfus thought; but his outward recognition of his opportunity had been temperate, and the three women discussed his attitude rather ruefully over their tea. Leslie looked at the girl's flushed, chagrined face a long while in silence.

"Don't be afraid, Cousin Nelly," she said at last. "It's going to be all right. That man is wild to have you."

Fenella turned on her breathlessly. "Oh, Les! do you mean it? How can you know?"

Leslie narrowed her pale eyes and shook her head slowly.

"Never mind how I know," she said cryptically. "These things aren't withheld from me. They wouldn't be from *you* if you could empty your mind of *self* for even a moment."

No reinforcement to hope is really insignificant. Nelly had glowed at the eerie assurance. She was recalling it now,

and smiling over poor Les's unearthly manner, when the hairy head under her hand moved convulsively. Perseus uttered a wild, strangling bark. A man was standing on the opposite side of the fireplace, looking at the pretty group of girl and animal — the dog asleep, the girl dreaming.

"Hello!" he said cheerfully.



## IV

### AN AFFAIR OF OUTPOSTS

**H**E was a big man, and in his long hairy coat he looked a giant. After the first glance the girl's first wild fear vanished. Burglars and murderers don't wear fur coats in business hours, nor hold goggles in their hand. Perseus, too, having given the alarm, had gone over to the stranger, and was sniffing at him in a way that suggested recognition. The unknown slapped his lean flank.

"Hello, Perse! You don't get any fatter, old man."

As he unwound a great wcolen scarf from his neck, a fair, pleasant face, rather damp and weather beaten, emerged. She recognized her chatty friend of La Palèze immediately.

"I'm sorry if I startled you," he said, "but they told me Miss Barhour was in the hall, so I walked in. Were they pleasant dreams?"

Even in the red firelight the color on the girl's cheeks deepened perceptibly. "How can I slip past him?" she said to herself and then aloud: "If you don't mind waiting, I'll go and see whether my cousins are back. My uncle is at Shrewsbury."

"Please don't move," the man answered. "I asked. They're all out still. But perhaps I'd better introduce myself. I'm Bryan Lumsden. I think I'm expected."

"Sir Bryan Lumsden," she repeated. "Oh! we thought you'd come this morning. Leslie waited luncheon."

"I burst a tire at Welshpool," Bryan explained. "Often do in snow, you know."

"Shall I ring for tea?"

"Yes, please. And meantime, let's talk." He took off his coat and flung it over a high-railed chair. "Shall we?"

She sat back, further into the shadow as she hoped, but the vicious flame chose that moment to spurt out — a spurt of peculiar brilliance.

"Now, what can we talk about?" he asked pleasantly, when the footman had gone, carrying the great coat with him.

"The weather?" poor Fenella suggested, with a hollow laugh.

"Or foreign travel, eh? That's even more interesting."

Nelly abandoned her treacherous ambush.

"I couldn't help it," she protested, rubbing the arms of her chair nervously with open palms. "You *would* talk to me. And it's — it's so hard to be rude."

"—— in return, eh?"

"Yes. You know you shouldn't have done it."

"You had your revenge next day, remember!" he said, and stopped abruptly, as another absurdly big footman, who should have been breaking the glebe in Canada, entered with the tea-tray.

"Shall I turn on the light, miss?" the man asked, disposing various silver-covered dishes on the wide hearth.

"No! — oh yes — if you please, Philip. Why do you say 'revenge'?" she asked, when they were alone again. "I'm not a revengeful person."

"We shall see," he said, taking a cup from her hands.

"Power's a great temptation."

Under his steady gaze, which never left her face, except to scan her figure, the ministry of the tea-table was a sad ordeal. In the intervals of discharging her duties she called the hound to her and fondled him anew. That hid one arm, anyway.

"I waited for you a whole morning."

"Oh! I don't believe that!" Said without any coquetry.

"It's the simple fact. And I've heard about you since."

"From Leslie? Of course you would."

"No; she only said, unaccountably: 'A cousin,' leaving me

to guess whether it was he, she, or it. I'm thinking of Joe Dollfus."

Suddenly he held his hand up. He had fine senses. "I can hear wheels in the snow. You haven't told me your name."

"Fenella."

"Well, Cousin Fenella! Are we going to be friends?"

"Why not?" faintly.

"I shall be discreet, you know, about — *things* at La Palèze."

The girl's eyes brimmed. Instead of this face, blonde, confident, and animal, another one — lean, spiritualized, with far-seeking, visionary eyes, swam through her tears. "Paul! Paul!" Like any poor maid, beset, at bay in a robber-haunted forest, her heart called to her true love.

"In return, will you keep a secret for me?"

No answer.

"Don't mention Welshpool. I'm supposed to have come straight from London."

"Why should I say anything at all?"

"Oh! one never knows. Give me your hand on it."

What could she do? He was in no hurry to release her, and had hardly dropped it when, chilled and dazed but boisterously light-hearted after their mournful errand, her cousins entered the hall.

## V

## CICISPEO

**T**HE next morning was stirless but bracing. Snow covered the park in soft mounds and waves, with a little black pit round the roots of each tree, as though some hibernating animal were breathing beneath. The laden branches balanced their fairy load daintily, against a sky, low, buff-colored and heavy with the promise of a further fall toward afternoon. The atmosphere was so still that the shouts of children snowballing in the village half a mile beyond the lodge gates, the rattling of antlers round the feeding-trough, reached the terrace, swept and sand-strewn already, where Fenella walked before breakfast, her arms folded under a warm golfing cape that she had found hanging in the hall. In the morning light, austere, temperate and shadowless, a good many of the misgivings that had robbed her of sleep were re-examined and found ludicrously unworthy of the sacrifice. There was no mistake about it. She had had her hour of unreasoning panic — had even mediated excuses that should cover a precipitate homeward flight. But that mood was over now. Women have their own code of bravery in the only warfare they know — their own perception of the ignominy of flight. If they act oftener upon their fears than upon the braver impulse, it is only because, in this warfare, it is their adversary himself who has set the rules and poisoned the weapons, decreeing that the slightest wound as well as the mortal shall be held matter for shame.

“I’ve heard of you — from Dollfus.” What did that mean?

What could be said of her yet? Of course, afterward, she was prepared for far worse. She was going on the stage with her eyes remarkably wide open. But that women — girls like herself, living at home, protected and obscure — should be made subject of men's conversation, she felt was an injustice — a treacherous thrust before the battle was joined. What was its motive? To rob her of self-respect before her character could be assailed? To cheapen, degrade her in her own eyes at the outset?

All at once a light dawned upon her — a light that beamed softly through her eyes, that wreathed her lips with the faintest, saddest little smile that ever was near neighbor to tears.

"It's all your fault, darling," she murmured. "It's all through you. You've been and lost me my character, Paul. Oh, my dear, my dear! What a joke! If the beasts only knew you?"

A foot grated upon the sand behind her. She turned and saw Sir Bryan, very fresh and smart and youthful in his tweeds and breeches.

"Good-morning, Miss Barbour. I'm sent to call you in to breakfast."

"I never heard the gong."

"You don't hear it from this side." He coughed over and drew in great breaths of the cold, pure air. "Lumsden's a bore, isn't it, a morning like this? I like houses where everything's kept hot and you eat any time; don't you?"

"I don't know. I haven't visited very much."

She tried to meet his new impersonal tone with perfunctory brightness; but Bryan knew how a woman looks who hasn't slept.

"You look tired," he said. "I'm afraid I worried you a bit last night."

"I did think you a little — a little ——"

"Disrespectful, eh?" Lumsden hazarded. He had that use-

ful sort of tact in conversation which consists in supplying the word that suits one's own purpose best.

"We were such strangers, you see," urged Fenella, with gentle reproof. "That time in France shouldn't have counted at all."

"If it did, the score was on your side," the baronet said quickly. "But I'm content so long as you don't mark it against me."

"Then you hinted people were talking about me," Nelly went on, reddening, but gaining confidence. "It was that worried me. It was so vague."

"We were interrupted just then," Lumsden reminded her. "A word or two would have explained, but you wouldn't let me get near you the whole evening."

"Why should I? When women are talked about it's never well."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Lumsden. "I'm not a philanthropist, but I assure you I've done my part bravely in holding lots of shaky reputations together."

She raised her head now, and looked him quite proudly in the eyes.

"Thank you. I'm not conscious mine's in bad repair."

It was a different voice and another woman. Lumsden leaned over the parapet and gathered a handful of snow.

"Snow's packing," he said. "We'll have sleighing after lunch. Ever been on a bob-sleigh?"

"No," said Fenella. Maidenly dignity relented a little. It sounded "fun."

Sir Bryan gave a boyish laugh.

"You've missed half your life," said he, making use of one of a collection of phrases he had brought from over the Atlantic. "Look here!" He touched her ever so lightly on the shoulder and pointed across the park. "From the Belvedere down to the 'ha-ha' there's two hundred and fifty yards if you know how. We laid it out years ago, and marked it with stones. It's known all round. Lots of people, probably, will turn up here

this afternoon. You'll let me take you down, won't you, Miss Barbour? I say; do I have to go on calling you 'Miss Barbour'?"

"Yes," demurely; "I think it's best."

"For how long?"

She faced him with her hand upon the sash of the long French window. If it was "just flirting," Fenella was "all there."

"Until you've told me truthfully what Mr. Dollfus said."

"I'll do it while we're sleighing. It won't take ten minutes."

The conversation, however, lasted more than ten minutes, and it was one Fenella was never to forget. As Bryan had prophesied, the news that the slide was being banked and made spread rapidly, and a host of people turned up in the afternoon, in country carts with sledges trailing and bumping behind, or in motor-cars, with an occasional pair of skis sticking up in the air. The run had been laid out years ago under Lumsden's own direction, when "crooked run" tobogganing was a newly discovered rapture. More than one future hero of the Kloster or Cresta had taken his first powdery tumble, amid ecstatic laughter from friends and relations, on the snowy slopes of Freres Lulford, and even now, after the sophistication had set in that so quickly reduces any English pastime to a science, with its canting vocabulary and inner circle of the expert, whenever snow fell thickly enough to stop shooting and l...-ing, two or three days' sleighing in Lulford Park was thought rather "sport" by a society watchfully anxious never to be thrown upon its intellectual resources by any trick of wind or weather.

Game-keepers and gardeners had been at work all the morning, and after lunch people began to arrive. Fenella had met a good many of them before — Lord Warrener, with his fiery whiskered cheeks and grave little Philadelphia wife; Bill Arkcoll, whose gray face, seamed with a million tiny wrinkles, was twisted into a permanent grin round a black-rimmed eyeglass,

which he had, moreover, a disconcerting habit in the evening of letting fall with a sudden crash on his shirt front; "Snip" Hanford, the gentleman jockey, who had sacrificed his chest to the sport of kings: finally Lady Wills-Pechell, alone condescendingly literary on the strength of half a dozen pottering little garden books: "Among my Syringas," "The Chatelaine's Year," "Shadow and Sun on Spurlock Edge." Lady Warrener was of the latest type of trans-Atlantic heiress, devoted to the peerage from the nursery, and "very carefully brought up" by an ambitious and circumspect mother. Her opinions were pre-digested and all her life nothing really unforeseen had ever happened her, except twins. She adored her husband and babies, thought Bryan's occasional Americanisms vulgar, and her favorite comment was, "*Oh, fahncy!*"

As a class they had for some time ceased to force comparisons upon Fenella; but this afternoon their low, clear voices, frank, unimpressed greetings, absence of anxiety, and general air of being all afloat together upon a stream that might be trusted never to carry them too far out of one another's reach struck pleasantly upon her senses. A great coke stove had been lighted in the Belvedere and the curved stone benches covered with carriage-rugs and cushions. The trampled snow outside was littered with an assortment of bob-sleighs, "Cheshires" and frail steel clipper-sleds. The run started practically at the door, with a nearly sheer fall of twenty feet; ran out a hundred yards into the straight, turned — at first gently, then more sharply — on a heaped embankment around the shoulder of the hill, and finished close to the old carp pond, whose black rampart and pointed turrets of yew were roofed and spired to-day with a white thatch of snow. From the gardens a sort of rough stairway, made of faggots and bundles of brush-wood, had been made to the top of the hill. A few belated guests were straggling up it, pulling up their sleds to one side through the snow. Round the stove the vocabulary of the sport was being briskly interchanged.



"Sprawl on Battledore, and use your right foot, not your left." "Never got beyond the duffer's handicap myself." "You'll 'yaw' all over, Aricoll, if you use rakes on the straight." "Hand: are best." "No, they're not: 'gouties,' when they get a bit worn, are just as good." "He was killed because he held on, Warrener. Let go and bunch yourself, and you can't be more than bruised even there." "Who's going to start?" "That thing's no good on a snow-run, Barbour."

Jack Barbour was standing on the edge of the descent, a light steel frame with a cushion held against his chest. He put it down and glanced at his pretty cousin.

"Shall we show 'em how?"

Fenella caught her breath, but nodded.

"Oh, Jack, take care of her!" reproachfully, from his sister, while Warrener, in the background, already a little *épris*, expressed an opinion that it was "damned dangerous."

"Dangerous? Down that thing?" cried Barbour scornfully, pushing the nose of what is technically known as a "tin-bottom" over the slope.

"What am I to do?" asked Nelly.

"Just sit still and hang on to my knees. Now, are you ready?"

Fenella bit her lip and suppressed a vulgar inclination to scream. The toboggan seemed to fall headlong — to rebound — to shoot out with the evident intention of either burying itself in the embankment or of leaping it altogether. When its nose was not more than ten yards away she felt the speed suddenly slacken, the toboggan slewed round with a twist that nearly overset it, and, steadying, slipped swiftly and cleanly round a wide curve. Almost before the rapture of the unaccustomed motion had been realized, it came to a stop, for want of snow, in the shadow of the prior's garden.

"How do you like it?" asked cousin Jack, brushing the snow off his sleeve.

"Oh, Jack!" — Fenella pressed her mittened hands together — "it's — it's *glorious!*"

Barbour smiled at her glowing face. "Fooh! You should see the real thing. Ask Lumsden. He did the *Wester* in five-fifteen once."

"Is he very good at it?"

"He's good at everything he takes up," said Jack, unreservedly. "How do you like him, Flash? I forgot to ask."

Jack Barbour had heard of this old school nickname from a brother officer who had had a sister at Sharland College and seldom called her by any other.

"M — m — pretty well. Is he really a cousin of — of — ours?"

"Not really, I think. It's a kind of old joke."

"Why is he so much at home here, then, Jack?"

Barbour had evidently found the situation ready made, and had never thought of questioning it.

"I think he and the governor were racing partners once. There are some of his horses here now: I don't mean hunters. *Saleratus* is his, the big bay. We all hope he's going to win some races next year. *Snip Hannaford's* going to ride him."

"Is he married, Jack?"

Barbour laughed sarcastically. "Bryan married! No fear! He knows too much."

"Jack!"

"Oh! I'm sorry, coz. It wasn't a very pretty speech to a lady. I mean he's a bit spoilt. Shall we go up?"

"No; let us sit here awhile. It's so warm. Why is he spoilt?"

"'Cos he's awful rich."

"Heaps of people are rich."

"Well, then, he's got a good deal to do with theatres, and knows that kind of people. The *Dominion* really belongs to him. Why, your teeth are chattering, Flash. Are you cold?"

"No. It's nothing. I thought Mr. *Dollfus* was the manager of the *Dominion*."

"He is in a way. I don't quite understand these things, but I suppose Bryan puts up the money."

"I see," said Fenella, with the accent of full comprehension. "Jack," she said, after a moment, "do you think it's quite right to have a man like that meeting — proper women?"

Barbour jerked his head. He was a rather nice lad, singularly susceptible to the influence of the moment.

"I suppose it isn't, when one thinks of it. We've thrashed this out before, haven't we, Flash? Same law for both, eh?"

"I think men, and women too, ought to choose what kind of people they're going to know, and be made *stick* to that sort. I don't like *mixings*. Come, let's go up. Here come some others. Oh, Jack! aren't you glad you're young? I *hate* men after twenty-five."

The sport was over, together with the short-lived day, before she stood in the same place with the older man. Servants carrying tea-baskets and kettles had made their way up the slope. Lanterns twinkled in the pergola, and gay chat floated down to them. She had kept out of his way all the afternoon without difficulty. It was not until she had made the tantalizingly short descent with one man after another, and finally, amid much vain dissuasion and subsequent applause, headforemost by herself on Jack's steel clipper, that he came to her side and asked her, without a trace of the manner she resented, to take the last run with him. It was growing dark, and meaning glances were not wanting, but she had consented without any hesitation. She felt the glances, but she felt also a strange elation and a consciousness of strength that made her a very different creature to the nervous tongue-tied little girl of the night before. She did not quite know why, but, as she stood, a little breathless from her upward climb, with the first flakes of the new fall melting on her glowing cheek, life, even shadowed life such as was hers, seemed something intensely interesting, and something that, given courage, might

be mastered as easily as the sport she was essaying now. He was the first to speak when they reached the sheltered gloom below.

"Don't you think our explanation's about due?"

He saw her smile. "I'm not a bit anxious for it now, Sir Bryan."

"I can believe that. You've even seemed to me to be keeping out of its way, or out of mine, which comes to the same thing, all the afternoon."

"It's not really worth worrying over. When you've given it there won't be much gained."

"You mean calling you — your name. It was your own idea to wait, you know."

"You can call me it now without any conditions. Jack has told me we're kind of cousins."

"Is that all he's told you?"

"A little more."

"Oh! Enough to make you hesitate about a certain step you had thought of taking?"

"Enough to make me think I'd better take it in some other place."

"Don't take it anywhere else" — earnestly.

She was startled at his intensity, and looked uneasily up the hill.

"Cousin Fenella, does history bore you?"

"It must be a very short lesson, please."

"A few minutes is enough. Years ago, then, cousin, in certain parts of Italy, when a bride was starting her new life, besides the usual stuff about pin-money, settlements, etcetera, the marriage contract contained another clause that seems to our insular minds intensely shocking. You'd never guess what it provided for."

"If it's shocking, I'd best not try."

His mouth twitched. "Baldly, then, one friend — neither more nor less. A third partner in the terrestrial paradise. Seems rather a scandalous person, doesn't he?"

"I think so."

Lumsden lit a cigar. "And yet" — *puff! puff!* — "the more one thinks of him the more reasonable he becomes. Men were so busy in those days, cousin. Fighting, don't you know — treaty making — in prison for indefinite periods. Don't you see with how much easier mind the soldier or diplomatic or captive husband must have laid his head on his lonely pillow for knowing there was a stout arm, ready blade, keen wit at home, authorized to keep marauders off. Do you wonder why I'm telling you all this?"

"To frighten me, perhaps."

"Pshaw! I know better than that. Come! put prejudice aside. Remember, too, that his name was probably the worst thing about him. Some poor relative, unrewarded soldier, I always imagine him — generally a cousin, by the way. Still wondering?"

No answer.

"Cousin Fenella, listen to me! Under ordinary conditions, for a girl like yourself to dance on the stage would be to risk more unhappiness and humiliation and treachery than you'd believe if I told you. There's one place in which a word from me can secure you your peace of mind. That's the Dominion. Don't turn away from luck."

"You mean that I — that you —"

"That the mere hint, in quarters where it's most wanted, that you're a *protégée* of mine will rid you once for all of unwelcome attentions."

Fenella considered. "In fact, in order to keep my peace of mind, I must lose my reputation."

"Do you care very much what the world says? Do you have to — still?"

The last word was pitched so low that she hardly caught it. But, whisper as it was, it decided her.

"No. I don't care. Not — *that.*" She snapped her fingers.

"That's right," said the sporting baronet encouragingly. "It's a bargain then? Dominion or nothing?"

"Yes."

"I'm writing Joe to-night. Shall I tell him we go into training after Christmas?"

"Yes."

He put his hands in his pockets and puffed his cigar to a glow.

"Quite ready to fight the world, ain't you, cousin?"

"The *world*."

"— but not me, eh? Oh! I keep my word. I'm Cicispeo."

"Who?"

"The man who's history I've just been telling you."

"Why are you taking all this trouble then?"

"Good! I like a 'facer' sometimes. Well, it's because I admire pluck. Because I saw you swim a mile out at Palèze. Oh! I often watched you. Because you took a header down that slide just now. What'll you be at next. Shall we go back to the house or will you go up with me and face the Wills-Pechell eye? It's celebrated, I warn you — got enough pluck left for that?"

And as she climbed the brushwood path — her hand in this new friend's — Fenella, all her elation gone, was wondering how much share after all her will had had in the choice just made, and whether this dazzling dream-vista of success and applause, out of which, as earnest of her right to all it promised, a rush of warm-scented air seemed to meet her through the snow-filled dusk, were not really a decree of fate, hostile and inexorable to her heart's desire as death would have seemed three months ago — peace, salty suffocation on the dark, lonely, foreign beach, clasped in her lover's arms.

And Lumsden, quite possibly, was measuring the moral distance between the cad who shoots a pheasant on the ground and the sportsman who flushes it and gives it a fly for its life. Or for better sport — which is it? — and to take a surer aim.

## VI

### THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

**A**MONG the minor penalties with which fate, presumably solicitous for a true balance, hampers excellence in this world, not alone the acquired excellence, which, being achieved in its teeth, explicable earns its maleficence, but even the natural advantages which were its own unsolicited gift, one, we think, has escaped the attention it deserves. We refer to a certain isolation and lack of touch with their immediate *extourage* which those who are marked for the world's prizes never quite succeed in overcoming, however modestly they wear or anticipate their honors. They are interesting, and for a correct view a certain distance, respectful, (though not necessarily so to them), is judged advisable. Society opens its ranks to receive them, but never quite closes on them again. None who have studied the lives of the giants but will have noticed how rarely a friendship disinterestedly worthy of them came their way, and is not the fatality of beauty, encountering the spoiler where the friend was imagined, a proverb? Fenella had not lived her new life a month before she was aware of a subtle atmosphere which was not treachery and which could not, without begging the question, have been called disrespect, but which partook a little of both. One does not feel a thing less keenly for being unable to exactly define it. Instincts are given women to be acted on, not to be explored. Its manifestations as yet had been only vaguely disquieting. Among the men it was apparent rather as a half jocular reservation of judgment — a determination, in view of possible developments, not to be

## THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT 191

committed to any one view of her character now, and, above all, never to be in the position of having more knowing brothers administer a rebuke to worldly wisdom. And among the women it took the shape of a coldness in meeting her advances which contrasted puzzlingly with the outspoken admiration that invited them. Poor, warm-hearted, ignorant Fenella! experiencing for the first time the full benefits of the benefit of the doubt.

It might be inevitable, or it might not, that, as day followed day of a visit so rapidly losing its charm, the broad-shouldered figure of the sporting baronet should begin to stand out more and more sympathetically against this background of veiled disrespect and thwarting reserve. It is true that the openness of his first advances had been the thing nearest approaching insult that she could remember, but, such as it was, it was forgiven now and, womanlike, the fault, frankly owned, brought him nearer. More womanlike still, perhaps, she liked him the better because he had been a witness to the old lost love of the summer. He at least saw her in no half light. She did not care greatly if he believed the worst — took a perverse joy, indeed, in believing it was possible he did. She was on her way now to a life where such things were no handicap, to which, indeed, she half suspected they were sometimes the initiation. She was content the knowledge of her own integrity should remain — a secret satisfaction to herself — content to feel it as a dancer of the fervid south, beneath her languorous draperies, may feel the chill of the dagger that she carries thrust through her garter.

He was kind and helpful too, not with the troublesome insistence of a man anxious to make amends for a former mistake, but as though, the ground having been cleared once for all of false conceptions, misunderstanding was no longer likely between them. Mourning and seclusion, she discovered, were comparative terms among country neighbors, and amid the men with whom the house intermittently abounded he



showed both a finer creature and a finer gentleman. Once, in the billiard-room, when Warrener the full-blooded hinted that her cheeks lacked roses, and made as if to pour out whiskey for her, Lumsden took the decanter from his hand without a word, and put it back on the wooden ledge that ran round the room. She had come on a message to him from Leslie.

"I'd send one of the maids, Flash, when it's as late as this," he said, simply, as soon as they were in the corridor.

He had adoped Jack's favorite nickname for her when they were alone once and for all, but it was noticeable he never used it in the hearing of a third person. The thing had no importance, but it is a type of the assumptions she was finding it so difficult to resist.

It was he who, after all, taught her to ride. Jack Barbour, to do him justice, was prepared to redeem an old promise so soon as, to use his own words, "the bone was gone out of the ground," but frost followed the snow and held for days after tobogganing had been voted flat, stale and unprofitable. It wasn't Bryan's way to wait. He had more tan and straw laid down over the path, bordered with evergreens, that led from the stable-yard to poor Lady Lulford's steam laundry, and along which the horses were exercised every day. Fenella's heart fluttered and there was no lack in her cheeks of the roses whose absence Warrener deplored as, dressed in a borrowed habit of Leslie's that pinched her unconfined waist sorely, and with her hair in a pigtail again, she put her foot in her master's looped hand. Maids and stable-boys were peeping round the outbuildings.

He flicked the gray mare with his whip, and for more than an hour, letting the rope he held run out to its full length, pulled the animal backward and forward in a kind of "eight" figure. He threw away his cigar, and his voice rang out crisp and decisive as on a barrack square.

"Straight between his ears! Now look down. Can you see the feet? That's right! Now, then, press down in the

## THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT 193

stirrup as her fore-leg goes out, then lift. *Hup! hup!* Oh, fine! Coz! you're a fraud. You've learnt before."

"Have I really done so very well?" she asked, when the lesson was over and they were on their way to the stables. She looked up in his face; her own tingling with pleasure at his appreciation.

"I've never seen 'em trol so well the first time." He looked her over critically. "I suppose it's all balance. When we're back in town, I'll mount you and show you lots of things. We'll have a turn in Richmond Park."

She caught her breath at the last two words, as at a positive physical pang. This must be the future, she supposed. Stray ends of pleasure, caught at and let go, an uneasy sense of something missing that could have woven them all into happiness, and now and then, when the nerve was touched, just such a spasm of pain as made her wince now. Lumsden did not notice her. He was looking at a large bay horse with a bandaged ankle that a stableman was leading across the paved yard.

"How's his hock this morning, Collett?"

Collett touched his cap twice. "Walks a bit lame still, I fancy, Sir Bryan."

"What does Brodribb say about him?"

"Well, ye know what Mr. Brodribb be, Sir Bryan. 'E wunt 'ave the harse slung. 'Get the condition right fust,' 'e says."

"Lift up his cloths."

Lumsden rubbed his hand over the lean-barrelled flank and regarded the animal gloomily.

"Bit hide-bound still. Still cooking his food, Collett?"

"Yes, Sir Bryan."

"Feed him on corn a day or two, and let him have the boiled water warm. I'll come down this afternoon and have another look at him. Well, Flash, what do you think of him? Pretty horse, isn't he?"

"He's rather — *thin*, isn't he, Sir Bryan?"

"Thin?" Bryan looked down banteringly at his little cockney friend in her borrowed riding-habit. "That's a race-horse. That's Saleratus."

On New Year's Eve the Lulford party dined at Chubley, Lady Wills-Pechell's new but much photographed and be-paragraphed castle high up on Spurlock Edge. Despite the roaring log fire, there was quite a baronial rawness in the air of the dining-room, and most of the women came to dinner with lace shawls or spangled Egyptian scarves over their bare shoulders. Toward the end of dinner Lady Wills-Pechell leaned from her chair for a whispered conversation with her right-hand neighbor.

"Miss Barbour," she said. "Oh! I beg your pardon, Leslie; I meant your cousin."

Fenella, who was genuinely absorbed in the technicalities of Snip Hannaford, turned to meet her hostess's unconvincing smile.

"Miss Barbour, a little bird has been very busy lately twittering that you dance. Aren't we to be shown anything before you go back to town?"

"There are too many little birds in S—shire," Bill Arkcoll remarked in a penetrating undertone. "Pity the cold hasn't killed some of them."

Fenella reddened and turned pale by turns.

"Oh, I can't!" she said quickly. She flashed a quick appeal across the table for her cousin's sympathy, but Leslie kept her eyes on her plate. Leslie's manner had been strange lately.

"Oh, but you *must* — you really must! Talents oughtn't to be hid. Ought they, Lord Lulford?"

The bearded widower, who had been engaged in demolishing the private reputation of a Liberal leader, turned from the horrified face of the great lady he had taken in to dinner.

"What is it?"

"We're asking your niece to dance here some night before

she goes back. She thinks it wouldn't be quite — quite, you know — ”

Lulford tugged at his thick beard. “I don't know why you shouldn't, Fenella. We're almost a family party.”

“Don't worry the child,” Lady Warrener put in, noticing her distress. She had forgotten much that was American, but not the tradition that kindness and consideration are budding womanhood's due.

“Be a sport, Flash,” said Jack Barbour, cheerily but unhelpfully.

“We'll persuade her when we've got her in the drawing-room,” said Lady Warrener.

“I think,” said the chatelaine, “that there's more chance of her being persuaded here. Won't *you* try, Sir Bryan?” in her sweetest tone.

“It may be a serious matter,” said Lumsden, without looking at any one in particular. “Perhaps Miss Barbour's in training.”

“Yes,” said the lady of the Syringas. “But who's the trainer? That's what we all want to know.”

“I've — I've got no clothes.”

A smothered laugh, not only from the men.

“My dear child, we've got boxes and boxes of them upstairs — five generations.”

There was a crash on a shirt-front, at which every one jumped but Arkcoll. He would have very much liked to see the box belonging to, say, generation three.

“And I've no music. Oh!” moving impatiently, “it's absurd.”

Lady Warrener thought she detected a suppressed ambition in the restless movement.

“If you really don't mind, I've got volumes of old dance music over at Captoft. I was going to ask Jack to motor you and Leslie over to-morrow. Couldn't you rummage then?”

Fenella, hard pressed, looked over to Lumsden, as nearly every one had intended she should look. There was the strangest, quizzical expression on his face. It seemed to say:

"Now then! Who said they weren't afraid? First fence, and we're funkng already."

"I'll dance," she said abruptly, amid general applause, headed rather shrilly from the top of the table; "but please don't trouble about dresses, Lady Pechell. I'll write to mother to send me my own."

Lumsden came to her side soon after the men entered the drawing-room with such undisguised intention that Lady Warrener, who had been trying to interest her in the dawning intelligence of the miraculous twins, drew away, puzzled and a little shaken in her advocacy.

"Bravo!" Bryan said encouragingly; but the girl did not respond, and he thought he saw a tear roll down one bare arm. Nelly's tears were still larger than ordinary.

"You looked across the table to me just now," he said. "I hope you saw nothing in my face except a wish you should do the best for your own interests."

"It's settled now," said Fenella coldly, after a gulp which she hoped he didn't notice. "Lady Warrener had the *Chaconne* from *Iphigénie* and I can do my *Rosetta* dance to any six-four time. I'll write for the dresses as soon as we get back to Lulford."

Saying which, she got up, grown stately somehow for all her girlish short frock, and crossed the room to where the joyful mother of twins was sitting silently, an expression of diffused and impartial sweetness on her face. She touched her elbow.

"Lady Warrener, won't you go on and tell me some more about your babies? I was really interested?"

The woman looked up, noted the mute appeal in voice and eyes, and, drawing the girl down next her on the couch, took her hand and held it as she chatted.

"Where had I got to? Oh, yes — Bunter said: 'Mother,

THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT 197

there's something tickling my red lane.' 'Your red lane, Bunter?' 'Oh, mother,' said Patch, 'he's such a baby. He means his *froat*.' Now wasn't that *sweet*, Miss Barbour? *Fahncy!* And only three years old, both of them. I'm so proud, I simply *bore* all my friends. But you love children, don't you, Miss Barbour? How can any one *not?*'"

## VII

### A DRESS REHEARSAL

**H**ER own interests? Not many days had passed before she had a chance to value them anew. The evening of the dance came and went. She was a little surprised at the size of the gathering it called together. There must have been eighty people in the hall, neighbors mostly, jovial, temperately enthusiastic, in after-dinner mood, and with the additional prospect of a first meet to hounds next day after the long frost. She noticed, however, that Bryan seemed to be introducing a good many strangers. She had danced amid a buzz of whispers, exclamations, and frequently a loud "Bravo!" taken up and echoed wherever a white shirt-front glimmered in the darkened hall. None of them knew how well it was done, but every one could appreciate a graceful child in a white satin Watteau dress with a great pointed frill, black sausage curls falling upon her shoulders under a quaint glazed hat, whose bones seemed to be of whalebone, whose feet never were still, and whose face, through all her changing gestures of appeal, hesitancy, curiosity, disdain, cunning, and weariness never altered from the grave set expression with which she faced the first round of applause. Or an odalisque, in a long striped tunic of the thinnest, softest silk and baggy Turkish trousers that sagged in great wide folds over her bare slippered feet, who swayed in time to sleepy *traumerei* music almost like a top — rousing every now and then with a braying jar of the little cymbals that were fastened on her hands, to straighten and poise and twirl herself anew — sinking on the floor with

the last faint chords, a soft limp heap of silk and dishevelled black hair.

Already, as she sat by her bedroom fire in night-dress and wrapper, her hair plaited on each side of her head, and cuddling her knee, she was paying for her brief hour of triumph. She had the indefinable feeling of having "gone too far" that makes one dread the coming day like the face of an enemy. She thought people had looked strangely at her when she returned dressed, collected, and a little paler, to the hall. It was not because here and there she had caught a false note in the tempest of congratulation that overwhelmed her. It seemed set altogether in a key that was strange and new; she could judge, for, after all, it was not the first time she had danced in public. Even the impulse which had made her at the end of her second dance run forward and kiss Lady Warrenner (at the piano) seemed to be misunderstood. The gentle peeress, so kind before, had shrunk from her palpably. And yet it was so natural; for she had never danced to music played like that before. How she longed for her public, her real public, obtuse and leather-lunged if you will, but whom a smile can conquer and whose loyalty, once gained, is gained forever!

Then she had her own private motives for misgiving. Her cousin's manner had been strange for days. Leslie avoided her plainly, but followed her with her eyes. When forced to speak she seemed, not harsh, but confused, shocked, and anxious for escape. Jack had gone back to his regiment in Ireland the day after the dinner, grumbling, and feeling the iron of disinheritance in his soul as only the younger son of a great house can. He would have told her everything. But she must have an explanation from Leslie to-morrow. On no other prospect could she face the night.

The fire was burning low. The little Sheraton clock on the mantelpiece shrilled *two*. She threw off her slippers and wrapper, opened the window, and, drawing a screen across the sinking fire, crept between the smooth linen sheets. But, once



in bed, her excitement returned on her. Three o'clock — four o'clock — struck, and she was awake, the pulse of the music still in her relaxed body, listening to the fire shifting in the grate, watching the red dusk turn slowly to black.

Suddenly she heard the handle of the door move, very gently and very steadily. The bed-curtains hid it from view; but she remembered that she had forgotten to lock it, and when it closed again as gently she knew that some one was in the room. But there was something else she had not forgotten. She felt under her pillow and closed her hand upon it. The very day she saw him last her lover had given her a little steel repeating pistol. She remembered his words: "I've never had occasion to use it, Nelly, but I should be giving you a false impression of the world, as I know it, if I didn't tell you there's ten times as much chance you'll have to defend your honor some day as there is I'll ever have to defend my property."

She lay still, her heart beating to suffocation, but she did not quite close her eyes, and the next moment a fear that was never to be named went out of her heart. It was only her cousin Leslie. She recognized her plainly — long and emaciated, with tawny, lifeless hair about her shoulders. She was carrying a night-light in a cone-shaped glass.

Now that fear was gone she had time to be puzzled. Up to a week ago a visit from her cousin at the hour of "combing and confidences" had been a regular affair, but one of the changes noticeable in her attitude had been the abandonment of the nightly habit. It was a great opportunity for the clear understanding on which she meant to insist, but it was very late, she was tired, and, as often happens, felt a sudden disinclination to put her resolution to the test. She decided to simulate sleep. She breathed a little heavier and closed her eyes.

Leslie set down her lamp — she heard it distinctly on the little marble-topped table beside the bed — and bent over her. She felt her cousin's breath on her cheek. The thin, weak hand began to stroke her forehead and hair. Nelly was proof

against a good many things, but not against tickling. She laughed and opened her eyes.

Next moment, with a leap as lithe as a panther's, she had jumped out of bed and, gripping her cousin's wrists, bore her backward on to the floor. She was strong as well as active, and upon the thick carpet the struggle was as brief as it was noiseless. Something fell from the older woman's hand. She tossed it back on the bed and, switching on the electric current, flooded the room with light. Leslie picked herself up, crawled to the wall and crouched there, her knees drawn up to her chin, looking at her cousin through her tawny mane, with eyes wide and distraught in her white, quivering face.

Fenella gave one look at the little stiletto on the bed, and covered her face with her hands in a reaction of terror.

"Oh, Leslie! Wicked — wicked woman! What had I done to you? Oh, what a horror! And under your own roof! Oh, you must be mad!"

"Go on!" said Leslie, thickly. "Ring the bell — wake the house! Have me put in a mad-house. Father wouldn't care, nor any one else. He's cursed me and called me a wet blanket heaps of times before people. I'm in every one's way now mother's gone."

Fenella still looked at her incredulously. She was expecting every moment to wake from her nightmare. A thing like this couldn't be real — couldn't be life! Suddenly the wretched woman flung herself at her feet, weeping and kissing them.

"Oh! my darling, don't look at me like that, as though I were some poisonous reptile. Oh, my God! what have I done? Do you think I really meant to harm you? Do you think I'm jealous? But if I am, it's only for your own good name. It's their fault. Of course you're nothing to them; they didn't know you when you were a little baby girl. I only wanted to be sure. And then something said to me that if — that if — Why do you shrink that way? Do you loathe to have me touch you?"

Fenella bent forward and laid her hand across the hysterical woman's mouth.

"Leslie, be quiet this instant, or I won't answer for what I'll do. And throw this over you or you'll get a chill. Now, are you quieter? I'm not going to make a fuss, or even tell a living soul what's happened to-night. But it's on a condition."

"I know what you mean."

"Yes. You must tell me what's being said about me?"

"They say that he — that you ——"

"Yes. Go on!"

"That you were Bryan Lumsden's mistress in France, and that he's spending money on bringing you out and paying for your dresses and lessons, and that he ——" She hesitated.

"What? Is there more?"

"Yes. That — oh! that he wasn't the first. That when he — found you, you were posing as a model to some French artist."

"What a picturesque past I've got! And have you believed it all?"

Leslie made a despondent and penitent gesture.

"Not now I've seen you. Not now I've told you to your face. But you can't live in a house like Lulford all your life and not hear — things. Well, are you going to loathe me forever?"

Fenella seemed thoughtful. "I don't loathe you," she said, "not more than any one else. Go back to bed now. I'm tired after last night."

"You won't refer to this to-morrow, will you? I shall be hunting all day, but you won't throw it in my face when we meet at night."

"No. Here, take this thing back to where you got it. No, I'm not afraid to let you have it. Yes, I'll kiss you good-night. Oh, Leslie, *go!*" She stamped her bare foot desperately.

As soon as her cousin was out of the room she locked the door and began to pack her trunks, turning keys and opening drawers as stealthily as a thief in the night. Her teeth chat-

tered and her heart was filled with the wild panic instinct of flight. She only cried once, as she folded the clothes in which she had danced. "They said — his money!" How well she remembered the day they had been made, the whirring and bumping of the machine, her mother's perplexed face over the paper patterns, the very smell of Paul's pipe. "Theatricals," she had told him, and he had not asked a single question. The poor wounded heart ached for home. When her trunks were packed she lay down and watched for the dawn.

The house was astir early. There was shouting from room to room, ruaning hither and thither of ladies' maids and gentlemen's gentlemen, brushing of habits and knocking out of wooden boot-trees. She breakfasted in her room, and sent down word that she was getting up late — that she was overtir.d. She had to endure cheerful proposals to come in and pull her out, cries of "Tally-ho!" and "Gone to earth!" — even try to answer them in kind. When they had all ridden away, she got up and dressed herself to her hat and coat and furs, her hands numb and clumsy from haste and agitation. There was a Bradshaw in the library, through whose mazes she ran with a finger in which she could feel the very beat of her disordered pulse, but she could make little or nothing of it. The house seemed to be empty of men-servants, but in the stable yard she ran across one of the helpers. He eyed her strangely and rasped a stubbly chin with a broken finger nail at her question.

"Lunnon train? Noa, miss, baint no Lunnon train through Lulford 'fore two-twenty, an' that doant stop fur to lake up nor fur to set down, 'cept ye tellygraff down the line. There's a slow to Wolv'r'ampton at three-thritty, but ye'll have to wait forty minutes f'r yewr connexshuns. Two trunks, ye say, miss? Now, let me think —"

Fenella slid ten shillings in silver into a hand that seemed to be in the way.

"Thank'ee kindly, miss. 'Tis a bad marnen, miss, ye see:

bein' a huntin' marnen all oor men be haff th' place. Come twelve o'clock, I'm taken 'nother harse to Wrogwarden Wood m'self, but if ye don't mind the bit of a walk to stash'n, I can harness Marvine to th' bailiff's cart, and tak' yewr trunks to stashun now in a casulty way like, and bid 'em wait till ye come. Thank'ee, miss."

After a wretched pretence of eating a cold lunch, served in the solitude of the morning room by maid-servants who whispered together outside and even peeped through the crack of the door, Fenella took her muff and dressing-case and set off to walk to the station. Snow lay still in recesses and hollows of the trees beneath the drive, and there were dirty lumps and patches on the slope of the hill where the slide had been made. She breathed freer when a corner of the drive hid the gray walls and turrets of the old priory, and more freely still when she had passed the round white lodge with its one smoking chimney and was out on the public road. Often, upon her summer holidays, passing such a lodge with its escutcheoned pillars and long dove-haunted avenue curving away into a dim and baffling perspective, she had wondered what sort of life was led beyond its swinging gates. Her lip curled at the thought that now she knew.

The road she was walking along was sheltered and lonely, but sunken between high banks. The thawing uplands on either side had drained into it, and she was forced to pick her way very carefully, her heavy skirts held up with one hand and the baize-covered dressing-case, which seemed to grow heavier and which she hated more each moment (it had been one of mummy's ridiculous ideas), knocking against her knees on the other side. She had only gone some few hundred yards when, beyond a turn in the narrow road, she heard the splash of a hard-ridden horse, and clambered up the clayey bank to be out of its way. At sight of her the rider pulled up so hard as almost to bring his steed upon its haunches. She had not time to pull her veil down.

"You of all the world!" exclaimed Lumsden. "What's up, Flash? Playing lady bountiful on the sly?"

"I'm going home."

Bryan whistled softly. He was wearing a black coat with wide skirts, a low-crowned silk hat and the palest of pale blue stocks. His white breeches and boots were covered with mud and his horse's miry flanks heaved like a bellows.

"Going home?" he repeated, in open-mouthed surprise. "What on earth has happened?"

"Please let me go on! I've had bad news from home this morning, that's all."

"That's a fib, Flash. You've been awake again all night. The second time. Oh, fie!"

No remark from Fenella.

"Any one been rude to you?"

The girl shook her head.

"You won't tell me, eh?"

"Sir Bryan, I can't. I've promised — Oh, you've *no right!*"

Lumsden swung himself out of the saddle.

At any rate, you're not going to walk any further in those thin shoes and sit four hours in a train with wet feet. Come! up you get. The lane gets worse the farther you go."

With sudden docility she put her dressing-case down on the wet grass.

"That's right! Put your foot here. Steady — Greaser! Don't be afraid. He's quite blown; going's far too heavy to-day. Now take the bag in your lap. What's in it, Flash? Diamonds?"

He looked at her quizzically as he laid the reins over his shoulder.

"For two two's I'd come up with you to London. Oh, don't look so frightened. It's only an impulse. I've been fighting impulses every day for the last fortnight. "I don't want to worry you," he went on, as the horse began to pick

his way downhill with stiff, tired legs; "but you'll have to give some reason for all this. Did you leave any message behind?"

She shook her head.

"Then we'll have to fake a telegram. You simply can't leave like this, and that's all there is about it. Hullo! who's this?"

A small boy in corduroys and with a red badge on his arm was drifting up the lane toward them, examining the hedge-rows first on one side, then on another, in search of diversion. At Lumsden's call he started and adopted a more official gait.

"Come here, boy! Can you take a telegram?"

"Ahve got one," said the leaden-footed herald unfastening his satchel. "Miss Fen — Fen —"

Bryan snatched it from his hand.

"Open it, please," said Fenella in the ghost of a voice.

"By George!" said the baronet, looking up, "this is Providence. This lets us all out."

"Read it, please."

"*Lady Anne very ill. Asks for you. Think you had better come. Wire.*"

"I don't think that's good news at all."

"Well, it suits us, doesn't it?" with a quick look at the troubled, indignant face. "You mustn't feel things too much, you know. Fancy Anne Caslon dying in her bed at last! 'Tattering Annie' they used to call her in the West Meath. Fate! fate! there's nothing else. Here, boy," he said, putting his hand in his breeches pocket, "take this, and cut away to the station and tell 'em to stop the two-twenty. Shocked at me, ain't you?" he said, as the boy trotted off after a backward gape at the strange couple.

"I think it's horrid to talk about fate as if it was meant to do our little odd lying jobs for us. I'm very much upset at the news."

"No, but isn't it true — I mean my meeting you this way? Confess, now. You were on your way back to town wounded

and indignantly, with a firm resolve never to see any one you'd met at Lulford again, weren't you?"

"Yes, I think so."

"But you're not now?"

"I don't know. I must have time to think."

He seemed quite satisfied with the answer, being used possibly to oblique affirmations from women.

A culvert and signal-box appeared suddenly above the hedge to their right.

"You'd better get down here. There's a foot-path at the side of the main road." He flushed deeply as he held her in his arms. Another checked impulse, no doubt.

In the waiting-room they sat, one on each side of a sullen fire in a black stove. He smoked a cigar, and steam rose from the drenched skirts of his coat.

"I'm going to Biarritz almost immediately," he said; "but Dollfus knows what to do. Call on him as soon as you possibly can. I don't see myself there's much more training wanted, but you must be fitted in somewhere, and that takes time."

He might have added that it takes money too — some one's money — but it was not the moment to enlarge on this. Fenella listened to his advice respectfully and gave him her address when he asked for it. She liked him no better, but, at the point they had reached, she felt it necessary, for her own satisfaction, that she should take the least complicated view of his helpfulness that was possible. To take a great deal and to give a little is a prerogative that the nicest of women think it no shame to use. She bought her own ticket, but let him order foot-warmers and even literature — *The Tattler*, *Photo Bits*, and a novel by Charles Garvice, to be brought her at Wolverhampton. He was back at her side as the train, chafing fussily at the check to its course, began to move out of the little country station.

"Don't worry over whatever's happened you down there," he said at the last, jerking back his head at the hospitable



mansion she had just left. "They're a dull crowd. We'll meet a very different lot later on. Good-bye! Keep fit and don't grizzle. I'll wire your mother that you're on your way."

He stood gazing after the tail of the train as the gray distance sucked it in to a point.

"Yon were a pretty wench, Bill," he heard a voice say behind him in the porters' room. The homely comment jarred him, but it also readjusted a view that had been inclining dangerously toward the romantic. Is there, I often wonder, some inbred memory of old disaster that makes Englishmen afraid of romance? Bryan, as he plodded homeward on his stiff hunter, almost laughed to remember that he had suddenly sickened of the chase, sickened of everything, and ridden back eight muddy miles on a beaten horse to see this girl, and —who knows?— perhaps to ask her to be his wife — if she had insisted upon it.

Shawled and pillowed at Wolverhampton by the guard's care, and quite tired out, Fenella slept, as warm as a dormouse under the snow, nearly all the way to Euston. A new ring from the clanging permanent way, more metallic, more menacing, as the train, sighting its goal afar off, made up its schedule time, roused her from a dream — ah! how deadly sweet of sun-steeped dunes, of outspread skies and seas, her poor little "land of lost content." The carriage pitched and rocked, lights twinkled together behind the bare trees, suburban pavements, and broadways blazing in blue-white light flashed past the windows. She put out her head against the cold, gritty rush of wind, and looked toward a red glare in the sky. Somewhere in that man-made wilderness of stone and brick, from whose smouldering discontents reddened smoke seemed to be ascending to heaven, he lived and moved and had his being who but now, in the lilled meadows of her dream, had held her against his breast and kissed away the desolate ache at her heart. Back to him, and he could not hinder — straight,

straight as a homing-bird she was flying. With every moment that passed the distance that sundered the n was being annihilated. Intense unreasoning joys! triumph almost lyrical of spirit over matter! God's crowning mercy in affliction! —manna from Heaven, and portion of the outcast!

## VIII

### LADY ANNE'S DEPOSITION

**WE** WONDER if it has ever happened any of our readers — being a common human experience, it probably has — on the very morrow of some change which they had assayed, light-heartedly, experimentally, and with all provision made for honorable retreat in case of failure, to find the retreat, as it were, cut off, the old life put out of their reach once and for all, and success in the new becomes the condition not of a pleasanter manner of existence, but of very existence itself.

We know that Fenella's independence of the career she had chosen was never as complete as appearances seemed to warrant. Even if it had been so, hers was not the temperament to discover comfort in any such ignoble security. She had the bright confidence of her youth. Eager for the contest, she was not afraid of any of the rules. And if the comfortable thought that, after all, the worst that could happen her would be a return to domestic conditions with her one ambition quenched, visited her at all in despondent moods, it was rather owing to Madame de Rudder's insistence upon the fact, as the great strategic advantage in a campaign which about this time that lady began to conduct with Mr. Joseph Dollfus — a campaign carried on so pertinaciously and with such utter disregard for the Dominion manager's feelings, that he often wondered whether any inkling of the secret clause, the Lumsden clause, of the treaty could have reached her. If it hadn't, her bluff was a masterpiece.

"I'm afraid Joe Dollfus was rather rude to you to-day,

dear," Fenella said to her old mistress one afternoon over the teacups. Madame's irruption into the affair upon the strength of an old "understanding" which her pupil could neither remember nor would deny, had, in fact, at last proved too much for Mr. Dollfus's manners.

"Pooh!" said madame, airily. "I'm not hurt. I don't care what the little bouncer says. It's rather a good sign, in fact, that he *should* lose his temper. That type always does when they see you've the whip hand."

"How have we the whip hand?" Fenella never questioned the implied association of interest.

"My dear, because we're not dependent on Joe's say-so for a living. We're not a bankrupt solicitor's daughter with a mother and young sisters to support. We're not poor."

This was about the time that doubts were beginning to assail Fenella.

"Oh, but I am *really*," she persisted, rather ruefully.

"Well, you're not to all appearance, and it's appearances that count. Look at where you live! look at your relations! Oh, I've rubbed that all in; trust me."

Fenella sighed. A home in which strangers gave orders; relations under whose roof she would never be tempted again — for that chapter in her life was closed definitely. She had answered one incoherent, penitent letter, and sent back two more unopened.

"My dear Nellikins," said the kind-hearted dame, "have some more tea and don't look so worried. I know we're rather a sham, but try to *feel* the part. Be a winner!" She patted the slim hand held out for the teacup. "You do *look* one so, my dear. Once you admit," she went on, in a voice slightly veiled by buttered toast, "once you admit, even to yourself, that you're not doing a thing for fun and because you like it, the game's up. Because it's this sort of people who are coming to the front everywhere now — in books, and pictures, and music, and the stage — and everything."

"I've always heard that dabblers never did anything!"

"My dear, who said 'dabblers'? And besides" — impatiently — "a lot of that musty, fusty old wisdom wants tearing up and writing over again. How can any one who has to worry do the work that *pays*. Clever! Oh, yes, they may be very clever, but all they succeed in doing with their cleverness is in making the people who matter — the rich, important people — uncomfortable. And they *will* — *not* — *be* — *made* — *uncomfortable*, my dear. Besides, they never last long. *Worry* kills them off like the cold kills the flies."

Fenella did not pursue the subject. She felt all the vulgarity of her old mistress, but she felt also an unaccountable sense of protection in her company. Brazen, alert, competent, grasping, utterly disillusioned, mature; with good looks that seem to have settled down for fifteen years' hard service; smartly dressed, opaque of eye, unrestrained of laugh and anecdote with condescending patrons; living in discreet little houses, in discreet little streets off fashionable thoroughfares, with open-work lace blinds at their windows — Berthe, Clarice, Suzanne, Estelle, as the case may be — latterly even, Elizabeth and Kate: polishing nails, crimping hair, ironing out wrinkles, reducing flesh, breading and anointing the pampered body; teaching dancing, selling fans and lace; "advising" decoration, dabbling in magic, undertaking "confidential" commissions; with a range of service that touches impropriety at one extreme and heroism at the other, and often with a past of their own behind them in which the finer feelings have perished, but not a good heart, the De Rudders of the world play their part in the parasitical life of the rich bravely enough — play it often, too, with a secret hatred and contempt for the class whose follies they fatten on that would be a revelation to the mere reformer.

The trouble began with an interview that poor Lady Anne was "accorded" early in November. The place, a sober

## LADY ANNE'S DEPOSITION 213

"Adams" parlor, distempered in green, furnished in the old oak of commerce, and hung with Romney engravings in black carved wood frames. Between the two gaunt windows a writing-desk, littered with memorandum blocks, supports a large silver inkstand bearing the legend: "To JAF. PEMMER-LLOYD, Esq., M. R. C. S., from a grateful patient." To right, a low couch covered with a white linen cloth and with some mysterious mechanism or other at its head. At its foot, a glass table on rubber wheels, its two tiers loaded with multi-form electro-plated apparatus. Carpet obtrusively thick.

"But are you quite sure?" she was saying.

Her companion, a dark, keen-faced man of few words, seems to consider awhile. Conversation in Harley and Weymouth Streets is expensive: even so, it was felt that Pemmer-Lloyd gave short weight.

"Personally," he answered, "I have no doubt whatever. Of course, if you wish, I can arrange a consultation or meet your own doctor. It was quite irregular you're not bringing him."

"Never ride again! Never—ride—again!" Poor Lady Anne kept repeating the dreadful sentence over and over to herself.

"Doctor!" she said aloud. "I have no doctor. Never been ill in my life. And what's the use of paying more money to a lot of men who'll only dot your i's and cross your t's for you? You're the top of the tree, ain't you?"

Pemmer-Lloyd, who was writing at his desk, did not deny the soft impeachment.

"I've written two names," he said, "on the back of your prescription. The apparatus can be obtained at either. The massage should be done in the evening — at your own house, if possible. You will find it a little exhausting at first. Thank you."

Lady Anne laid down two golden coins and a florin near the grateful patient's inkstand, stuffed the prescription into the pocket of her tweed coat, and stumped out to her cab.

"Druce," she said, when the door was opened for her at Suffolk Square, "I shall want you and Twyford to come up and help me pack after lunch. I am going to Market Harborough to-morrow."

She returned unexpectedly after the Christmas holidays, walking a thought more lamely than before, and with a new absorbed gentleness in her manner. She kept her room for three days, writing busily. Many callers, some of them strangers to the servants who admitted them, drove up in cabs and carriages. For the first time since she had taken the rooms her brother, Lord Windybank, spent two nights in the house. Fenella's empty bed was made up for him. On the evening of the second day, after dinner, the two maid-servants were called up to Lady Anne's sitting-room. The earl, a little horsey-legged man, with the face, hair, chin, and voice of his sister, was standing on the hearth. His eyes were inflamed, and he blew his nose violently time to time on an Indian silk handkerchief, an assortment of which he seemed to keep in the various pockets of his frieze suit. Old Mr. Attneave, the solicitor, stood by the writing-desk, wrapped in the grave professional manner that covers all human contingencies. The girls curtsied, signed a document, laboriously, in a space indicated by the lawyer's chalky finger, curtsied again, and turned to leave the room. Lady Anne called them back, handed each of them a couple of bank-notes from a little pile beneath an enamelled paper-weight, and kissed the dazed hand-maidens on the cheek.

"Be good women," she said, gravely. "Do your duty by your mistress. If I have given cause of offence to either of you, or made your work hard and ungrateful, by word or deed, remember I asked your pardon for it. And now bid your mistress come and see me as soon as is convenient."

Mrs. Barbour entered the room five minutes later with a white, scared face.

"Mrs. Barbour, this is Lord Windybank, my brother. Mr.

Attneave I think you have met before. Stop snivelling, Windy; — please do. Won't you sit down? I'm going away tomorrow, Mrs. Barbour, for a short stay in another neighborhood, and whether I shall come back is rather doubtful. No, it isn't nonsense, Windy; I caught the red-headed one's eye when he didn't know I was looking. The other was too old to let anything out. Mrs. Barbour, I want to see your little girl before I go away."

"I'll telegraph for her at once, m'lady."

Lady Anne pursed her lip. "Telegraph for her in the morning," she said. "It's late, and I don't want the child to come up at night. Besides, it will spoil her rest."

"Are you ill, m'lady?" Mrs. Barbour asked, much mystified. There seemed to be so little change in the long white, fretful face.

"Oh, dear, yes; quite seriously, ceremoniously ill, I assure you. Please don't look at me that way. You can't see anything. I don't believe any of them can, though they pretend to. And now about Fenella. Mr. Attneave, will you please explain?"

As the lawyer, in dry calculated sentences, explained the details and conditions of the little legacy, Mrs. Barbour broke down and wept after the fashion of her class, with great whoops, and holding her housekeeping apron to her eyes. All her little world seemed to be crumbling. She was not, by nature, an impressionable woman, but had it been her lot, as it is the lot of so many of her kind, to hear, month by month, new footsteps echo on her stairs; to see, month by month, strange faces people her rooms, the dignity of proprietorship, the sense of being mistress of a home, which had done so much to soften and sweeten her, must have missed her altogether, and the wear and tear upon her perceptions vulgarized her heart far quicker than feet or hands shabbied her house. During fifteen years, as far as Lady Anne was concerned, without the slightest temptation to anything that could be construed as a "liberty,"



or a single soul-searching as regards her own equivocal social status, the service of love had, little by little, been substituting itself for the service of gain. Custom and habit are strong with all who have attained middle life, but with women, after a certain age is reached, they are tyrants. Nor was it in its monetary aspect chiefly, though that might well have given her pause, that the sense of bereavement reached her. Simple words are most convincing. She was wondering how, "if anything should happen," poor Lady Anne in the nursing home, to which she was evidently bound, she could ever find the heart to wait upon strangers in her rooms.

"— five hundred pounds, until the age of twenty-one, unless upon an occasion of urgent necessity, the nature of which shall be determined by said trustees, appointed on the one part by the said Honorable Mrs. Nigel Kedo Barbour —"

"Boo-hoo!" wept the honorable lady.

The invalid patted her upon the shoulder. "My dear, good friend, do control yourself!"

"Oh, I can't, I can't! Oh! I never shall stop in this house. It won't be the same to me."

The broken phrases struggled through her tears like bubbles through water. The lawyer had to stop.

"I suppose," Lady Anne said, after the faithful Druce had led her weeping mistress away, "that class doesn't really know what their ideas are until they've put them into words. They say a lot over, and then pick out the ones they want to keep. Oh, I shall be glad when it's over one way or another, Windy. I think I know now how poor Uncle Eustace must have felt the day before Major Hartnett shot him. There's not much difference between a duel and an operation."

Thus it was to a house cold and dark with the shadow change and worse that Fenella came home. Mercifully she was spared questioning on her own pale cheeks and dull eyes. Mrs. Barbour was in no mood to be entertained with a descrip-

tion of her doings among the fine folk. Lady Anne was dozing when she arrived, and might not be disturbed. The poor lady was already invested with something of her perilous state. A nurse in a blue linen dress and goffered cap, whose lightest word was law, moved softly up and down stairs in felt ward slippers, carrying various mysterious burdens. She called Fenella at about midnight. The girl had taken off her outer garments and put on a fleecy dressing-gown.

"You must be very quiet," Nurse Adelaide said, "and not stay more than half an hour. I want her to settle for the night while she is out of pain."

Inside a fire burnt cheerily, and a kettle sung its happy and heartless song. A tilted lamp plunged half the room into shadow and the air was sickly with the smell of some anodyne.

"Is that Nelly?" said a voice from the shadow.

The girl bent over the bed and put her lips to the high bony forehead.

"You mustn't cry so, child. You always had such fat tears, Nelly. There's one running in my eye now. Are you dressed?"

"Only ha-half."

"Get under the quilt, then. Be careful, child. I'm 'this side up; fragile; with care.'"

"Dear Lady Anne, is it true what they say? Are you very ill?"

"My dear, I have about one chance in a thousand of ever walking the streets again. It's all my own fault. I had an awful spill, child; none of them know how bad it was. But what could I do? There was the gate with some patent latch or other and I didn't dare get down. I'd never have got up again. Pepper knew it was no use. He tried to roll his dear old eyes back to tell me, bless his heart. And the off-hoof was just a little lazy. Ugh! I'm very wicked, I suppose. Often, after lying awake all night, I've had to bite my lip not to scream when some clumsy lout put me up wrong. Once

I was up, I didn't mind. But it was worth it. Oh, Lord! it was worth it. One only has one life. I'd do it again. I'd have been a poor creature, Nelly, without horses and dogs. They've always understood me better than people. If there's a God for them, He's good enough for me, and if there isn't I don't want one either. Windy was shocked because I wanted to call a vet in consultation. . . . What did I want to tell you, child? Oh! I've been hearing tales about you in the last week. Of course they're all lies. What's become of your pirate friend? — don't pretend you don't know who I mean — Paul Ingram. Wasn't that the creature's name. All over, is it? So much the better. He was no good, Nelly. I saw that the night we talked together. A man can't play beggary-neighbor with the world and win, and that's what he wanted. Bryan's better, but I'm afraid he's spoilt another way. But don't let a lot of old-woman talk frighten you away from him. There's a lot of nonsense talked about girls' 'characters.' Every poor girl has to take risks, and every poor girl's mother knows it. There's only two rules. Never do what would lose you your own self-respect, and never love a poor man for his handsome face. You won't, will you, child? You know, when a person's dying they're allowed to make a deposition; so here's mine: There's nothing matters on this earth but just — money. You think every one knows that? Oh! they don't. It wouldn't do if they did. So all sorts of other things — art and high ideals, and, yes — even religion, are given 'em to amuse themselves with until it's too late. Then, of course, they have to pretend they're satisfied. But give 'em their chance over again; you'd see. And for a girl with a face like yours it ought to be so easy. Oh, Nelly, what does your love matter if *his* buys you health and beauty fifteen years longer, and angel children, and a house with lovely gracious rooms, and cool green lawns in summer, and the winter in the sun, and motor-cars and horses, while poorer women are scrambling and pushing and taking their turns for 'buses and

trams in the rain, and a strong arm to help you whenever you need it, and honor and peace in your gray hairs. My own life hasn't been much, but think what it would have been for little ugly Anne Caslon if great-grandfather hadn't dipped his fingers in the Irish Exchequer. And yet — what am I saying? — if Nigel Barbour would have held up his finger, Nelly, I'd have gone with him and cooked his meals and washed his clothes in a garret — ”

The nurse tapped Fenella on the shoulder.

“I think you'd best go now. She's been talking some time. I want to settle her for the night.”

She shook a bottle as she spoke and poured out a cloudy mixture into a glass.

“Good-night, my pet! Do you remember when I taught you to read — ‘Ned had a gad —’ and you wanted to know what a ‘gad’ was, and I forgot to find out. I'm afraid we shall never know now.”

“I'll see you in the morning,” murmured Fenella, as she kissed her. Miss Rigby was on the landing outside, dishevelled, round-eyed, and in a wrapper, asking news of her dear friend in a tragic whisper.

Perhaps it was because she cried herself to sleep that Nelly slept so late. The house was all topsy-turvy, and by the time they remembered to call her Lady Anne had been taken away. Her bedroom windows were wide open and Twyford was strewing tea-leaves on the carpet as Fenella passed the door. She had taken very little luggage — just a portmanteau full of linen and a dressing-case, and two days later she went a longer journey and took no luggage at all.

## IX

### THE MAN AT THE WHEEL

**J**UST as we are used to hearing from time to time that the lives of certain great ones of the earth are insured for many thousands of pounds in quarters which their demise will unsettle but certainly not move to grief, so there are lives dismissed at their close with scant obituary notice, the shadow of whose eclipse reaches far beyond the covenanted few who wear mourning for their sakes.

The house in Suffolk Square never really recovered the shock of poor Lady Anne's taking off. Her rooms, stripped of their household gods, repapered and repainted, stood empty for weeks before Mrs. Barbour could even be prevailed upon to notify their vacancy, and when she did move, the paying guests whom they attracted were not of a sort to efface the hard-riding lady's wholesome memory or to make her the less keenly regretted. London is changing daily, and in nothing so much as in the accommodation it offers the stranger within its gates. Cheap hotels, the diseased craving for a veneered luxury, rapid transit from outskirts to centre — all combine to render what was always a precarious living well-nigh a hopeless one. In vain do old-fashioned people, unable or unwilling to read the signs of the times, advertise the family atmosphere to a public anxious to escape from it — quiet and seclusion to a generation that droops unless it feels its spirits uplifted by the wind and whirl of life. Between the tragic end of the old dispensation and the final dispersion there was a squalid interlude which Fenella never could recall in after years without a sinking of

the heart as at the memory of a ravaged sanctuary. A dreadful Anglo-Indian *ménage*, which washed the dirty linen of ten stations with doors and windows open; a grumbling *ayah* whose gaudy rags clung to her, like wet cloths to a clay model, and whose depredations upon kitchen and larder on behalf of her screaming charges drove cook to revolt. A prim flax-tailed family who practised upon the piano all day by turns, and whose high-nosed parent did not think Miss Rigby "respectable." Was she, indeed, respectable? Mrs. Barbour had had her doubts from the first, and in spite of Lady Anne's breezy assurances, or perhaps on account of them, had long suspected a secret treaty of oblivion and protection between the two women. It had seemed, however, to include a tacit clause against direct communication, and with the new order the weaker woman appeared to see her way to break through this restriction upon her social aptitudes. She contracted a distressing habit of rapping at the doors of the first-floor rooms, to borrow, to return, to remonstrate, to apologize for remonstrating. Her friendship with little Mrs. Lovelace of Mian Meer, especially was, until its stormy close, over a disputed bargain at a "White Sale," of a suddenness and intensity calculated to revive a weakened faith in human affinities. Even the mother of the musical Miss Measons, after a glance at a skilfully disposed basket of calling-cards, called her "my dear" before she called her "that woman." In short, to express in one word a delayed and painful process, Jasmine Rigby deteriorated day by day, paid at long intervals, under pressure, and with cheques that were not her own, and finally, yielding no doubt to the instinct of flight from those whose good opinion we have forfeited, took a tearful and sentimental departure from the rooms which had been witness to fifteen futile years, and God alone knows what frenzied resolutions, what agonies of remorse and self-contempt as well. Financially, her loss was a serious matter, for she had rich and powerful connections, who might be trusted never to let her

sink too deeply into debt nor beyond a certain standard of outward respectability: in other ways it would be idle to deny Mrs. Barbour felt it a relief. It afforded her an opportunity to reduce her establishment and to sell off some of the furniture. But the joy of turning our possession into ready money and of ridding ourselves of old associates who have become encumbrances is a dearly bought one. It is likely that her health had been secretly unsatisfactory for years. It failed visibly from the day poor Druce, with the tears streaming down her honest wooden face, clasped her young mistress to her sparsely covered chest in the hall and said "Good-bye." She had never been a good sleeper, but insomnia now became her nightly habit. Her cheeks grew flabby, her eyes dull; her comely face exchanged its pleasant pallor for a disquieting earthen tint.

Fenella would have been less than human if, amid all these anxieties, regrets, and annoyances, Lumsden's letters had come to her otherwise than as cheerful heralds from a happier world, bright assurances of a better time in store. He wrote oftener than many friends, though not as often as most lovers. He was generous enough or wise enough not to depart from the note he had struck during their conversation upon the day of winter sports at Freres Lulford. She was still his "investment," always "in training." And yet it was marvellous what a very wide field of inquiry, of advice and speculation, this position was held to justify. Her cheeks sometimes burned at Bryan's letters. Even when they were mere cheery chronicles of sport and pleasure, there was a little mocking undercurrent of sarcasm in them — sarcasm, as a rule, at the expense of society's hypocrisies — its standards of what might and what might not be permitted between two friends of opposite sexes, which she secretly resented—resented, that is to say, to the extent of never referring to it in her answers. Why should Bryan expect her to take the more cynical view, she wondered? Surely illusions were permissible to a girl of her age. What man who respected one, wished one well, would see her cheated of

them? Clever letters are seldom written without ulterior motive. When heart speaks to heart it does so in language that admits of no double construction. It would save many a tangle were more sophisticated ones subjected to a merciless paraphrase.

For the rest, the time had probably passed when, in any sense of the word, she could be said to be "afraid" of Lumsden. He stood before her imagination now in all his pleasant power, holding open the gates of the fairyland to which he had the golden key, encouraging, inviting her to enter. Once through the gates, she had no doubt of her ability to justify and to repay. That money can discharge any obligation was just one of the obscuring simplicities of her youth. Another was that a stigma attached to the acceptance of money or money's visible worth. Beyond a cab-fare, she would have shrunk from such a thing as from actual dishonor; yet that money, to the extent of many hundreds of pounds, was being risked upon her untested power to please gave her only a very vague sense of indebtedness. It is true that to Bryan's personal interest she referred, with a completeness that was a little unfair to Mr. Dollfus's really kind heart, the ameliorations in her hard task—the warm dressing-room, the polite seriousness with which her views were entertained by the leader of the orchestra, the chair in the wings at rehearsals. She even fancied that she could detect a conspiracy to keep the seamy side of theatrical life from her. Mr. Lavigne, the stage-manager, never swore in her presence, though from her dressing-room she often heard language whose very volume implied profanity reverberate like stage thunder through the dark empty auditorium.

When general rehearsals began in March, among her new comrades upon the draughty, echoing boards, who stood blowsy or haggard in the perverse up-thrown light and exchanged the knowing, raffish jargon of their craft, there was abundant discussion as to her precise position, but no doubt at all. It is a pitiful thing to relate, but Bryan even got the credit of



the clothes in which poor foolish Mrs. Barbour had sunk the profits of her enterprise. Fenella's dress had always possessed sophistication, and although by this time she was "economizing," enough of elegance remained from the old life to wreck her character in the new. But where she was now such things were a common-place. The misconception even was of use to her in one way. It removed her from the envy of those who were struggling upward on the strength of mere talents. Seen from the wings, her dancing made little impression upon a race not prone to enthusiasm, and notoriously bad judges of their own craft. She was to have the lime-light, the big letters on the bills, the "fat" — that was enough. She was *hors concours*, a thing apart. The latest recruit might dream, and did dream, of having the same chance some day. A strange thing, that it should be not so much "luck" which failure resents as the crown upon hard work.

By an unhappy coincidence, the first dress rehearsal was called upon the day when her spirits were at lowest ebb. The night before, her mother, unable to keep the secret locked up in her breast any longer, had exposed with tears and incoherent self-reproach, the whole disastrous domestic situation. It was all mismanagement, muddle, abused confidence, rights signed away for a tithe of their value, mortgages and life assurances effected in the interests of people whose one service seemed to have been to draw the strangling net a little tighter. Fenella closed the eyes of her mental vision firmly and wisely against the disastrous prospect. She let her mother have her cry out upon her shoulder.

"No, dear; of course I'm not angry with you, or only a tiny bit for letting me be a foolish over-dressed little pig all these years. We'll give up this great big house before it's swallowed all that's left and move into a smaller one. They must give us something for the lease. And I've got Lady Anne's money coming to me in two years. We can raise something on that now. I'll speak to Mr. Dollfus about it. And

Mr. Lavigne told me the *Dime Duchess* comes on early in May; then I shall begin to draw salary, and all our troubles will be over. And, mummy, you *must* give those disgusting people upstairs notice. Never mind what they owe. Turn them out! I'll live in a garret with you, dear, but I won't have our home turned into a common lodging-house."

But, for all her brave words, her own spirits sank. Was she so sure of success, after all? To have so much depending upon it was only a reason the more for misgiving. Dancing seemed to be in the air. The flaming posters that met her eye on every side, of women in one stage or another of uncoveredness, filled her with nausea. Nothing depresses true genius so much as to feel that an inspiration with which they could deal worthily is given broadcast, under various mean forms of impulse or emulation, to those whose touch can only degrade. It is a failing so like unworthy envy that even to be forced to admit it to oneself is demoralizing.

When she reached the theatre a drama that was no part of the *Dime Duchess* was in progress. Miss Enid Carthew stood down centre. Her dress was Doucet and her hat Virot. Her sable coat was open at the throat and a diamond *collier* streamed blue fire on her agitated bosom. Her arm, thrust through a muff whose tails swept the dusty stage, was akimbo on her slender hip. She had a pretty, dissipated, sour face and a quantity of fair hair.

"Oh! I can't have it at all, Mr. Dollfus," she was saying, evidently not for the first time, biting her lips and tapping the stage with her foot. The manager, his hands thrust into his trouser pockets, his back to the footlights, straddled his legs in a truculent manner.

"You can't haf it!" he repeated, derisively. "Well, can yer lump it? Ah! Think yer the only tin can in the alley, dontcher, eh? Think you're de manachment, ain't it? I tell you once for all: I bills who I like, unt I bills 'em as big's I like. Now then — ah! eh?"

"You can tell all this to my solicitor," said Miss Carthew, loftily.

The word seemed to goad Mr. Dollfus to frenzy. He took a stride forward and shook a brown, ringed finger within an inch or two of Miss Carthew's Grecian profile.

"Now, don't gif me no contract talk. Pleece — *pleece* don't. 'Cos I drew up de contract, and I know what's in um. You can't holt me on de contract — see? You can go on rehearsing or you can t'row yer part down, and that's all — now?"

"I've a good mind to do it."

"Veil, make yer goot mind up quick, pleece, 'cos this happens ter be my busy day."

Before poor Fenella could retreat from the storm, the leading lady looked her up and down with an expression that was meant for contempt, but only succeeded in expressing dislike. The advantage of five years is not to be annihilated by a glance.

"Another of Lumsden's kindergarten," she observed, with a short, disagreeable laugh, and, having launched this Parthian shaft, exit left.

Mr. Dollfus turned upon the cause of the trouble rather irritably.

"Vot! aintcher dressed yet, neither. Good Got! ve oughter be t'rough the first act. Run upstairs at once! And while we're waiting let's haf the finale ofer again. I ain't satisfied yet, Mr. Lavigne. Come, *kapell-meister!*"

Somehow, and by an effort of her whole will, Fenella got through her two dances without actual disaster. For the first time in her life discouragement failed to react in bodily movement. Her limbs felt heavy — out of accord with the music, and, though this is a strange term for arms and legs, maliciously stupid. Once she stumbled and all but fell. Mr. Dollfus looked puzzled, and in the wings, where a brisk murmur of sympathy with the deposed favorite had been running, significant glances were exchanged.

She was leaving the stage-door, glad to be in the cool, wet street, when a big man who was holding cheerful converse with an exquisite youth — all waist and relaxed keenness — raised his hat and made a little familiar sign with his head for her to wait. Next moment Lumsden had cut his conversation short, resisting an obvious appeal for introduction, and was holding out his hand.

"Hello, Flash!"

At another time she would have been glad to see him, but, with that dreadful sentence ringing in her ears, his touch seemed an abasement. She plucked her hand away.

"I thought you were in Cannes."

"Came back Tuesday. Had lunch?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Get in, then, and let me drive you home."

There was a dark green motor-coupé standing by the curb. Fenella took a seat in it automatically. She noticed he had no difficulty in recalling her address.

"I've been sitting in front watching you."

"I wish I'd done better. I made a fool of myself to-day."

"Oh, you were all right. Been over-working?"

She shook her head.

"Dolly told me there was a breeze. Hope it didn't upset you."

No answer.

"Bless you! That sort of thing's an everyday affair with us. Oh, fie, Flash!"

"Sir Bryan" — and a big sob.

"Well, what is it? Having trouble with the boys?"

"I know you'll be furious."

"Never mind. Spit it out in mummy's hand."

"Don't make me laugh. I — I want to give it up."

"Pshaw!"

"Oh, but I do."

"What on earth for?"

She clenched her hands. "Because I feel such a *humbug* coming on this way. Those other girls have worked and worked and been acting when I was at school. And now I step in front of them because — oh! you know what they think."

"I warned you of that before, you know."

"Yes; but I didn't realize then."

"And now, because a spiteful woman has said the obvious thing, you do. Oh, fie, Flash! This is weak-minded. I wish you knew her own history."

The girl turned to him, and even laid a timid hand on his sleeve.

"Sir Bryan, that's the mistake you make. You're always telling me — I mean in your letters — what a hypocrite this person or that is. But it doesn't make any difference to me. Of course, we understand one another, don't we?"

"I think we've made a start," Lumsden replied, in all seriousness.

"Yes, but those girls at the Dominion — some of them even younger than me. Think what I must seem to them. I can't go to them and say, 'Oh, believe me, it's not what you think.' And so the more they admire me, and the better I succeed, the greater scandal I shall be to them. And perhaps, some day — Oh! it seems such a responsibility, doesn't it?"

"Such a big one, that I advise you to put it out of your head."

"Oh, if I could!"

"Well, don't do anything in a hurry. And, oh, by the way, Flash, I believe I met an old friend of yours last night. World's a small place."

"A friend of mine? One of the people from Lulford?"

"Oh, no. Further back. At La Palèze. By George! that seems ancient history."

His kind, candid expression did not change, and yet not a detail of the girl's agitation was escaping him.

"Where did you meet him? Tell me, quick!"

"Don't look so scared. It was at a very nice house indeed, and he was looking uncommonly well."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No. He hadn't much to say. It was at the Rees house, and he's evidently *épris*."

"What's that?"

"Why, smitten with his pretty hostess — Mrs. Hepworth — the woman who calls herself Althea Rees, and writes rummy books. He stayed behind. I saw it arranged, like the fly, with my little eye. I finished the evening with Nick Templeton, who knows 'em well, and he says every one's expecting — Hello! here we are."

He held her hand again at parting, and this time she didn't snatch it away. Once inside the door, she returned a languid negative to the suggestion of lunch, and went upstairs to change her clothes and think over what she had just heard. First she cried a little, though nothing like as much as she had expected from the apparent weight at her heart; then, opening her trunk, she took out a leather box and emptied all his letters on to the hearth. So often, during that last lonely week by the sea, when she was hungering for news of him in vain, had she taken them down to the dunes to read, that there was almost a teaspoonful of fine sand at the bottom of the case. She had even been reading them over, she remembered, the day Bryan spoke to her first. She sat down on the hearth-rug, struck a match, and, crumbling each letter scientifically in her hand, burned piecemeal about half her little hoard from the wrecked past. Then she lost patience and locked the rest away. She was chilly; there had been no warmth in this sudden eager flame. She stretched herself and looked once more at her reflection in the long mirror. Her tears had thickened her features and throat. Something strangely, suddenly mature — some new adaptability to life's sterner purposes — was looking back at her. She had wept — oh, how she had wept! —

before, and yet only yesterday with her tears it had been the aspect of childhood that returned upon her. You would have said then: "There is a little girl who has broken her doll"; not until to-day: "There is a woman who has broken her heart." Was it so, indeed? Had it survived the first, the crueller blow, to break now at a piece of intelligence that was only to be looked for? Had there been hope, insane and unavowed? And why could she not hate him, as was her right? Why was it that only a brooding, yearning pity for him survived this final evidence of his faithlessness? Oh! it was because life was so hard on him — always would be so hard on him. Into whatever toils he had fallen, she could forgive him, because she knew he had not been seeking his own happiness when he fell. Just as she had never once conjectured concerning the old loves, so now she hazarded no guess as to the history of the new; but her woman's instinct, her appreciation of the nature by whose complexities her clear, sane common-sense had refused to be baffled, served her truly. It was still his compassion that sold him into new bondage — still his fatal fellowship with all that was weak, maimed or forsaken that, like a millstone round his neck, sunk him out of her sight. Hate him? Oh, what an uprush of smothered waters! What a tingling, as love like blood flowed back into her numbed heart, rebuked the suggestion! She reached out her arms to the mirror, and from its frozen depths, like an embodiment of all he had renounced in life — happiness, love, laughter, and ease of heart — the woman whom he had held shyly and awkwardly against his distracted heart, and whom to-morrow a thousand base eyes would covet, reached out her arms, too, in a mocking response.

"Oh, darling! why couldn't you trust me a little longer? Just because I couldn't *say* things, didn't I feel them? I was what you wanted most. Just because I *was* so different. Why weren't you a little patient with me, Paul?"

And now for her work. There was another rehearsal next

week, but she couldn't wait. She would telephone Joe; have one called for Friday. They should see something then. She had a bit up her sleeve.

She was leaving her bedroom, humming over the first bars of her *Chaconne*, when she cannoned into the little maid who had replaced the irreproachable Druce. The sleeves of the girl's print dress were rolled up to her elbows, her cap awry.

"Frances, it's five o'clock. Why aren't you dressed?"

"Oh, miss! It's the missus."

"Your mistress? What's the matter with her?"

"Oh, miss, I dunno. She's a setting in the big armchair. It ain't sleep. Me nor cook can't rouse 'er, try 'ow we may. She's a moanin', too. I think it must be some kind of a stroke."



## X

### MONSIEUR DE VALBONNETTE

**O**NE of Paul's peculiarities, which I think I have indicated before, was a remissness in paying out the small coin of friendship. His visits were apparently governed by caprice, and as unaccountable as the fall of the red or black in roulette. Not to have seen him for the last month gave no warrant to expect him within the next. On the other hand, to have been honored with a visit last night was some reason for expecting a return on the morrow.

I had not seen him for two months when I ran across him in the foyer of the Elite Theatre. It was the first night of Durnham's *Miss Muffet*. (You will remember Brasier as "the Spider.") Things apparently were inextricably tangled up for all the smart sinners, and I was rather dreading the fourth act. I was surprised to see him there, though I knew he had got into journalism. In the twilight of our under-world one may know a man a long time before one knows what he is doing — perhaps only discover it then because he is found nibbling at the same loaf as oneself. I had never seen Ingram before in evening dress; he looked very gaunt and foreign and distinguished. One mentally added a red ribbon and the enamelled cross of the *Légion d' Honneur*.

"Hullo, Ingram! you a first-nighter?"

"I'm doing it for the *Parthenon!*"

"Oh! of course." Rumor had not lied, then. I had a horrible feeling that my comment sounded "knowing," and a suspicion that Ingram flushed at my tone. I made haste to change it.

"Lucky devil! You've got nearly a week to do Brasier's genius justice in. What d'you think of it all?"

"Pah! London bouquet. Sin and sachet powder."

"You won't say that in the *Parthenon*?"

"No." I noticed then how tired he looked. The bell began to ring.

"Look here, old man! You're quite impossible, but I want a chat. Where can you come on to afterward? Pimlico's so far away. What do you say to the *Concentric*?" (I belong perforce to an "all-night" club.)

Ingram demurred. "No, thanks. I don't much care for the frescoes at the *Concentric*. I've got rooms — a room, I should say — nearly as close. It's not a bad little crib. Come round there as soon as you've fired in your stuff." And I pencilled the address on my shirt-cuff.

Paul's room was at the top of a narrow, old-world house in Beak Street, almost looking into Golden Square. A creeper wandered over the front, and there were little painted iron balconies at each window. The first floor was taken up by a bowed, weather-stained shop front, and behind its narrow panes, on a rusty wire blind, appeared the following legend in gilt lettering:

"J. FOU DRINIER  
Table Liner and Leather Gilder."

The narrow staircase up which we climbed — for he let me in himself — was fragrant with the smell that is said to make radicals.

"What d'you think of it, Prentice?"

"Fine! Atmosphere here, my boy."

"It might be worse," said Paul, apparently misunderstanding my remark. "Imagine fried fish!"

I looked round me as he fought with a stubborn fire. The room was poor and low; its furnishings mere flotsam of the Middle Victorian era. The bureau and tallboy that I used

to admire so much at Westminster were gone. My heart sank a little. Paul wasn't getting on.

"Come over here a minute, Prentice," he said, getting up and taking the lamp. "Look!"

Upon the old-fashioned shutter which folded back in the window recess I made out a long name, clumsily cut and half obliterated by paint.

"What do you make of it?"

"It's not very distinct. There's a C and a V."

"I'll read it for you. It's '*C. Gaillard de Valbonnette*.' That thing at the top is meant for a coronet. Some French *émigré* had this room a hundred years ago, and amused himself by cutting his name. All this quarter swarmed with them at one time — Golden Square, Broad Street, King Street. Can't you imagine him at work here for a whole Sunday morning, with a nice pea-soup fog out in the square, and speculating about his wife or sweetheart in the Conciergerie. He's great company at times, is M. de Valbonnette."

"I think you live too much alone, Ingram," I said.

He put down the lamp. "I wonder do I?" he said, twisting his beard. "But it's Satan reproving sin."

"Let's club lonelineses, then," I answered impulsively. "I know what I'll have to put up with by now. Remember the old warning, '*Vae Soli*!' If nothing else in the classics were true, that is."

"No," he said, roughly, "it's the wrong time. How can I afford a friend when I'm throwing out ballast all around. And besides" — he seemed to struggle with an invincible repugnance to speak — "Prentice, I'm living on money a woman — gives me."

"Oh!" Shocked as I was, I tried to keep my voice flat and toneless. Even as it escaped me, the exclamation was rather a request for further enlightenment.

"You won't repeat your invitation now?"

I got to my feet. "Yes, I will. You can come to-morrow

— to-night, if you like. You're too good to lose, Ingram. I'm poor; but there's enough for two men like ourselves to struggle along on, even now. I can get you work of a sort almost at once; it'll be hack work, but you won't feel equal to anything better for awhile. Later on, when you're more yourself ——"

Ingram shivered, and then, putting his hands on my shoulders, considered me a long while gravely and tenderly. I could have cursed to think of the charm of the man, wasted in loneliness and silence, and put to such base uses at last.

"My! but you're *white*, Prentice, you're *white*," he said. "Sit down" — in a lighter voice. "It's not as bad as it sounds. A man doesn't fall into a pit like that so suddenly. No; at first it was advances — advances; nothing more."

"On your book?" catching at a straw.

"Yes — on my book."

"From publishers?"

"I thought so at first. When I asked the question outright, it was too late. I was in debt already."

"But, my dear Ingram," I said, immensely relieved; "if Mrs. Hepworth — I suppose you mean Mrs. Hepworth ——?"

"Yes."

"Well, if she liked to back her own opinion, I don't see where dishonor comes in at all. She's helped other people. And even if, when it's published, it turns out badly ——"

"Prentice, it never will be published through her."

"Get it back then. We'll try somewhere else."

"I'm afraid I'd have some trouble even to get it back now."

The mystification was getting too much for me. I shrugged my shoulders helplessly.

"I'm sorry to seem mysterious," said Paul, "but I really am telling you all I know myself. I even hoped you'd be able to throw some light on it. Because you know as well as I do how it started. She was enthusiastic, wasn't she? Would see no fault. She advised me to cut a good deal, it's true;

but it wasn't for reasons I could object to. Anyway I didn't object. I was too proud and happy. For once in my life I tasted full appreciation, full understanding. Oh! I know what that look of yours means — that I've been taking a woman's gush for gospel. But, I can tell you, a thing rings true or false to me the first time. Do you know, Prentice, once we were motoring to some place near Aylesbury, and she went ten miles out of our way to see the church where Ffoulkes — the English parson, you know — was a curate once. I'd just picked on the place haphazard, and then described it later. You know my mania for exactness in trifles. Nothing would satisfy her but to get out of the car, have the church opened, and scout around the vicarage. Now, is that genuine or isn't it? I tell you, sir, she made the people of my own book live for me — used to invent comments for them upon things we heard, so much in character that I wondered how I could have forgotten them myself."

"And then——?"

"And then"—wearily — "the subject dropped. When I spoke about it, which wasn't often, her answers were as evasive as a woman's can be who, I think, can't lie. I'm not an insistent person, and she seemed to guess it. Money got short: she guessed that too — offered me advances on the publication. Ever so delicately, mind."

"That was the very time for the *éclaircissement*."

"I know, I know. Don't be too grim. For me it's almost impossible to throw any sort of kindness back in people's faces. It's been responsible for half the unhappiness of my life. Then she got me this thing on the *Parthenon*. Lord, how I hate it! and the people it brings me into contact with, and how they must hate me! Sleek young barristers, on the make — you know the sort — dine out every night and say, 'Dear lady.'"

"Ingram! I say 'dear lady' sometimes."

"Yes, yes — but not the way they do. A precious

johnny-cake of an art critic who wears thumb-rings and doesn't wash behind his ears. . . . "

I hadn't been listening very attentively. A light was breaking in upon me.

"You meet a good many priests at Mrs. Hepworth's, don't you?"

Ingram raised his hands expressively. "My dear Prentice, at all hours — dinner, tea and lunch — bishops, deans, canons, monsignori. I don't know half their titles."

"I gather you don't find them sympathetic."

"Prentice, I just writhe."

"Aren't they civil?"

"Oh, intensely! It's their mental attitude that maddens me. So perpetually on guard, so impermeable to argument: bearing the condemnation of the massed intellect of Europe with a pitying smile, denying words their plain significance. What is it, Prentice? Is every one else really wrong? Does to be born at Guipuscoa instead of at Epworth make all the difference? Do these men know something that you and I don't? Sometimes in their company I almost feel I'm under mesmeric influence."

"Perhaps you are. I've always suspected you of being mediumistic. But, tell me, don't you suspect anything from all this?"

"Suspect — what?"

"That your book is really being held up because these men won't give it an *imprimatur*."

"Good Lord! I'm not one of their flock."

"No, but Althea is."

Paul flushed savagely, and muttered something I could not catch.

"Don't be too hard on her, Ingram. Probably her position's harder than either of us can conceive."

"Don't be afraid. There are about a hundred solid reasons why I couldn't be hard, even if I wanted to. Besides, I'm ceasing to care."

"Got the hump, in fact."

"Call it what you like. The book's become a scandal — a reproach. It's a relief not to see or hear of it. Once a certain point is reached a sense of humor comes to your rescue, and you cease to take a thing seriously. Something else is worrying me far more just now."

"What is it?"

"You'll only think me an old woman for my pains."

"Never," I answered stoutly. "Your virility is in your way."

"Do you believe in dreams?"

"Not as a rule. But at two o'clock in the morning, alone with you in a Soho attic whose associations you've just pointed out, I'm not so sure."

"I'm having the same one every night."

"Oh! What is it? A woman, or merely a tartan cat with acetylene eyes?"

"It's a woman."

"Go and see her then. Nothing will exorcise it like that."

"But it doesn't. Oh, Prentice! it's no use beating round the bush. You must know. I mean the woman we've just been talking about."

I confess I had been rather thinking of the Continental Express at Charing Cross.

"Go ahead old man," was all I said. "It will do you good to tell."

"It's in a church — always. A sort of foreign building with colored marble columns, gloomy side chapels, silver lamps, dark paintings of well-nourished virgin martyrs —"

"Wait a minute. Is it any place you've seen?"

"No. I'm sure of that. . . . She's always kneeling before one of the side altars. I'm not clear why I'm in the church at all. I'm not meeting her. Her back is turned, and she doesn't seem to know I'm there. And yet, mind you, I feel — I'm as certain as a man can be that there's something or other

she wants to tell me — wants me to know. Something she's struggling with, and I'm not to go until it's told."

"At this point you wake?"

"I used to until last night. Do I sound childish, yet?"

"I'm immensely interested, Ingram. No one but a gross fool laughs at these things to-day."

"Well, last night I lost patience, and began to look around and to take bearings. I noticed there was a way in between the chapels, so you could pass from one to the other. I could get in front of her, see her face if I wanted to. Of course I wanted to. I tell you, I was tired out with all this nightly waiting. But something or other I couldn't see — 'a Voice,' if you like — said, 'No, you can't!' 'Why not?' I argued. The answer was foolish."

"What was it?"

"*'It breaks the Law'.*"

I moved restlessly. "But I hope you didn't mind the Law."

"No; I went in."

"Well — — ?"

He took a long breath. "Prentice, she's been dead for years and years."

"Pshaw!"

"Yes, dead, I tell you. There's nothing gruesome about it. Just — bleached — whiteness. But you can't mistake. You'd only have to lay your hand on her and she'd crumble away."

There was not a sound for a few moments, until becoming conscious my expression must look strange, I grabbed the poker and began to make brisk play with it. I also decided not to tell Paul I recognized the church perfectly from his description.

"What do you think of it?"

"Think? Oh, nothing. It's some sub-conscious crazy notion that has never been definitely formed in your own brain, so waits until you're asleep to sprout. The same thing's happened to me. Once I was visiting some people. They were so far disagreeable that one had to be very careful what one



said before them. And every night I spent in their house I used to dream I was crossing the lawn, and underfoot, wherever I walked, were ducklings, and frogs, and new-born kittens, and everything that's most unpleasant to tread upon. You probably won't have the dream again. . . . What's the matter?"

"Look over there, Prentice! Do you see anything queer?"

I followed his eyes in the direction of the window upon whose shutter he had shown me the half-obliterated carving. To evidence my entire honesty in this matter, I will premise that having shifted the lamp from the centre of the table in order to find me a pipe, Paul had plunged all that half of the room in shadow, and also that the curtain, which he had drawn roughly aside to show me the *émigré's* work, still hung in awkward, bulgy folds. This much having been freely allowed, I don't mind going on and declaring that I saw, apparently as plainly as I have seen anything in my life, a man sitting upon the narrow window-seat. Every detail was distinct. He was as small as a woman, apparently old, and dressed entirely in black, with a white collar or cravat. One leg hung down to the floor, the other was drawn up to his chin, and his face rested upon it. He had white hair, gathered up or cut short round his ears, and a black cap. His expression was unforgettable. Serene, disdainful anger best expresses it.

I looked at him only a moment, for I don't believe in encouraging visions. In two strides I was across the room and shook the curtain loose.

"There goes some of your ghost," I said. I put the lamp back on the table. Its white reflection vanished from the blurred and darkened pane. "And there goes the rest!"

Paul didn't seem to listen. He was twisting his beard.

"See his face, Prentice? Now, I wonder what I said that irritated him?"

## XI

### "INEXTRICABLE ERROR"

**I**T WAS quarter to seven when Ingram arrived at the house in Portland Place. Althea, already dressed for dinner, sat writing at her desk in the big white room. It was the same desk, battered and inkstained, at which years ago — a staid little maid with a big pigtail, terminating in a sort of heavy tassel of auburn hair — she had prepared her home lessons. At one corner the leather lining had begun to curl up.

She scarcely looked round when he was announced, but thrust a bare white arm over the back of her chair.

"You find me achieving a last chapter," said she. "Sit down somewhere and, in the name of our common art, respect a fellow-laborer's agony."

"I suppose I'm unpardonably early."

"Doubly privileged mortal, then, to find yourself welcome."

"Do I abuse my privileges, Althea?"

"Never in the world. You are as unobtrusive, my dear friend, as a gray sky."

Paul, as he sat down by the fire, wondered why the phrase rang reminiscently. Who had compared his eyes once before to rain-clouds? Oh! he remembered. It was the little girl, in the summer-time, by the sea. He seldom thought of her now; when he did, it was without such a personal pang of loss as might have been expected. She had come — she had gone. The life before he had known her, the life after, like parted leaden waters in the wake of a ship, closed above her memory.

For form's sake, and in order that his presence might not fret his hostess, he picked up a book at random and opened

on his knee; but his eyes, after a few minutes' aimless reading, left the printed page and rested on her. She was writing quickly. The fountain-pen poised, pounced, ran forward, and was checked anew. A little pucker on her forehead straightened out as each sentence was completed. The shaded electric lamp before her left the brows in a green shadow, but flooded neck and arms with naked light. She was dressed in black; a long limp scarf the color of a dead rose-leaf lay across her shoulders, trailed upon the carpet, moved with the motion of the restless bare arm. Her beautiful chestnut hair was drawn up from her neck and dressed high on her head in soft rolls and plaits. Looking at her, and remembering the furnace through which she had passed, Ingram marvelled once again that the searing flame should have left so little evident trace upon her.

He had come prepared for explanation, reproaches, rupture even, but never in his life had he felt less ardor for battle, more doubt as to whether the cause were worthy the warfare. Hope deferred, neglect, dejection, had nearly done their work. He was beginning to doubt his own powers, inclining more each day to take the world's estimate of them as final. He had been writing a good deal lately, and to little purpose; it seemed unlikely that, years before, he had done better. No man endowed with the artist's temperament ever gained ease to himself by deliberately writing down to some imagined popular level. It is doubtful even whether the thing is to be done at all; probably every one that succeeds, even in the coarse acceptance of the term, succeeds by doing the best that is in him. The world may have no eye for genius, but it is quick to detect disrespect.

It was early in March: he had known her now nearly six months. To say that they had become better friends in that time would be inexact; it is juster to say that, from the high level of her first acclaim, he had never known her to descend. She had seemed to divine that he was already sick of beginnings that led nowhere, and lacked patience for the circumspect

steps that friendship in the first degree requires. From the outset she showed him a full measure. She had a multitude of friends — much devotion, even, at her command. Here and there, amid the exotic sentimentality that for some reason or other was the dominant note in her circle, a graver, truer note vibrated; and yet, before he had known her a month, Paul must have been obtuse indeed not to have noticed a special appeal in her voice and a special significance in the hand-clasp that was kept for him. And if he was not precisely grateful, he was, at any rate, tremendously impressed. He had learnt her history, and no adventitious aid that riches, popularity, fine clothing or jewels — and none of these was wanting — could have lent her would so overwhelmingly have presented her to his imagination as this. That she should have emerged from such an ordeal at all was wonderful, but that she should have come through it beautiful still, gentle and plaintively wise, lent an almost spectral charm to her beauty, and the same significance to her lightest comment on men or things that one strives to read into a rapped-out message wrung from the dubious silence of the grave. The strange unreality which none who knew Althea well escaped noticing, though all did not call it by the same name, reached him, oppressed as he was by the burden of the material world, almost like a native air. In her house he breathed freely, forgot his chagrins, was enveloped in a formless sympathy that, by anticipating the unwelcome thought, spared him even the humiliation of uttering it.

Perhaps, without looking at him, she had guessed his thought now. At least there was a little conscious gaiety in her voice as she laid by her pen and packed the loose sheets square.

"*Voilà!*" said she. To speak French always carries the register a key higher. She switched off the light, and moved to the seat opposite him with a soft rustle of skirts. One finger-tip was marked with ink. She put it furtively to her lips and streaked it, schoolgirl fashion, down her black dress.

"Would you like to know who you are dining with?" she asked, taking a slip of paper from the mantelpiece. "We're very worldly indeed to-night. 'Marchesina d'Empoli, the Countess of Hatherley, Lady Claire Templeton, Mrs. Sidney Musgrave.' Here! see for yourself."

As Paul glanced over the list, she put one slender foot on the curb of the fender and pulled her skirt a few inches above her ankle.

"'Sir Bryan Lumsden?' Who's he?"

"A stock-broking baronet, sir, of my acquaintance."

"That's a lurid description."

"He's very good to my 'Sparrow Parties.' Do you know him, that you pick him out?"

"I've seen him once," said Ingram slowly, pulling at his beard. "His manners where women are concerned did not impress me."

She tapped the rail with her foot. "You are very unmannerly. Mustn't I ask the world and the flesh sometimes?"

"What about the devil?"

She gave a tentative and rather frightened glance at his sardonic face.

"I think *he* comes the earliest."

There was no mistaking her meaning. Paul put the slip back on the mantelpiece.

"Don't you think," said he, speaking with equal intention, "that it's as well even the devil should be allowed to state a case at times?"

"Perhaps - - I don't know," Althea faltered in reply.

"Excuse me if I bore you. I don't ask often. Is there any news of my luckless story?"

"Some one is reading it."

"Some publisher?"

"Not exactly. I — I wanted an opinion from some one who — from some one —"

"Some one quite impartial, you mean?"

"Not quite that, either. From some one who is able to take a very special point of view."

Ingram laughed grimly. "Why don't you get some of your worldly friends to teach you how to lie?"

"Sir!"

He regarded her from head to foot and back again. Her cheeks flamed — not altogether with anger. It was not unpleasant to be looked at hard by him.

"Althea," he said at last, "suppose I told you I had come to-night to quarrel with you?"

She turned with a strange, scared appeal in her eyes.

"Oh! I should beg you not to. Don't ever quarrel with me, Paul — please."

The artless speech was so unlike anything he had ever heard from her — her voice, as she uttered it, so uncomfortably reminiscent of another, whose vain pleading had only just ceased to vibrate in his heart, that Paul had what may be best described as a moment of sentimental vertigo.

He laid his hand lightly upon hers. "Dear Mrs. Hepworth, do you dream I could be harsh with you?"

She did not move her hand from under his, nor appear conscious that one chapter of their intimacy was irretrievably ended by the impulsive moment.

"I only know I dread your anger. I suspect it can be awful."

"You shall never be sure, then. But reproof at least you must bear. Althea, you have put me under an obligation that no man finds tolerable."

Now she snatched her hand away. "Oh!" with a catch in her voice, "that is unworthy of you."

"And you are keeping me from what is at least a chance to discharge it."

"It is not I who keeps you from it."

The blood rushed to Ingram's head. "Some occult tribunal, then — some inquisition against whose unwarrantable interference my whole soul protests."

"Hush!" for he had raised his voice. "I think I hear a ring. People are beginning to arrive, and I must fly. Come down in about five minutes — it will look better — and wait after the rest are gone. I think you had best understand my position in this matter clearly. That much is due you."

## XII

### A CATASTROPHE

**C**HECKED in mid-course, and with all his righteous indignation bottled up, Paul, I expect, hardly found the "worldly" dinner a diverting affair. He had reached the stage of mental development — a mid-way one, be it noted — where types interest more than persons, and none of those he met to-night aroused in him anything save a burning desire for their speedy effacement. Lumsden did not appear to remember him, which was hardly wonderful, considering the complete change of dress and environment. Besides which the baronet was a man very much occupied and in request throughout dinner. He was just back from the *Côte d'Azur*, and was primed with the true inwardness of the approaching Manby-Millett sensation. Lucy Millett was passing through Paris alone, and thought it civil to leave a card on the only Mrs. Manby at the *Superbe* because she had sent her a wedding present. Mrs. Manby's reputation hadn't reached her, it seems, which was hardly wonderful, seeing Lucy was a daughter of the great Quaker sago-refining family, and rather out of things. She had left her own card and her husband's, and by a mistake of the clerk only the smaller card was handed to the gay lady on her return. Result: that Lucy found a *petit bleu* waiting when she got back from a round of the shops, which gave everything away. "Most impassioned," Lumsden understood, on good authority, and quite up to Manby form.

"And if you put that in one of your books, Mrs. Hepworth,



people would say there was too much — what d'you call it? — coincidence, wouldn't they, now?"

It happened that Lady Robert Millett had been the first woman Ingram had interviewed for the *Parthenon*. He remembered the sandy haired girl-wife at Isleworth, with her high teeth, awkward kindness and innocent pride, who had given him tea and, "as a special favor," shown him her white squirrels and blue-wattled Japanese fowl. Well — her happiness was destroyed. He did not join in the laughter when some one achieved a stammering, knock-kneed epigram in French; something about *sagou* and *sagesse*.

Captain Templeton had just won a seat for his party in a three-cornered contest. He detailed with considerable verve the intrigues necessary to induce a labor candidate to run and split the vote. The Liberal's wife had social ambitions. "I hope we shall meet in town, Captain Templeton," she had said after the poll. "We're Liberal; but *naturally* most of our friends are on your side of the house."

At the top of the table, with his noble old ivory-white face, silver hair, and limitless shirt-front, their host sat, a fine flower of democracy, and enjoyed his daughter's social success. His ponderous civilities failed to absorb the little Italian marchesina on his right (*Gioconda*, they say, of the *Fool's Errand*). Her heart was at the noisy end of the table; continually, at some new outburst, she would clap her tiny ringed hands autocratically for silence. "*What is this? What is this? I have not heard well.*" Things had to be repeated, explained, for her benefit.

Paul was nearest the door, and rose to open it as the women passed out. His hostess, who had barely addressed a word to him during dinner, bent forward as she passed and reminded him of his promise. Lumsden was the only man who seemed to notice the incident; and Ingram thought he caught the tail end of a look of intelligence as he returned to the table. But it was gone instantly, and presently the men drew to the side

next the fire and began to talk tariffs. Tongue-tied amidst the women's chatter, their host easily dominated the conversation now. He spoke of Republican prospects at the Mid-West conventions, their intimate association with business prosperity, discussed the new influences at Washington with good-natured banter, predicted worse times before a "banner-year," hinted what was worth watching meantime. The men listened to him intently — even Lumsden — carelessly, sipping their coffee or rolling their liqueurs round and round in tiny gilt glasses. Every word was golden now. Art, literature, philosophy, all the visions that visit an idle mood, blew off like mists when the sun mounts the sky. Paul, watching him in silence, felt an involuntary respect, a pride despite himself, in their common nationality.

"You're force," he was saying to himself, "blind Titanic force — that's what you are. And our business is with you and not with this trash that cumpers the ground and obscures the issue; these parasites, who imagine the things their own hearts covet were the incentive to men like yourself, who corrupt you because they fear you, and with grave, attentive faces are trying to make you believe now that there's great personal merit in what you've been doing. You've sucked up riches from a disorganized society that your energy took unawares, because you couldn't help it, and you spend it on yourselves because you don't know any better way. Well, we must show you one. The force that creates, the wisdom that could distribute — these two are groping for each other through a maze of laws, human and divine, that the world has outgrown. They must mingle, must come together, must interpenetrate, and if priests and judges hinder, then priests and judges must go. They were made for man, not man for them."

" . . . so if you've bought warrants at sixty-three merely on the report of divisions inside the amalgamation, you haven't done badly, Lumsden. And now, Lord

Hatherley, what do you say? Shall we join the ladies upstairs?"

An hour later Ingram was alone with his host and hostess. His presence, *ami de maison* as he had become, did not restrain Mr. Rees from a palpable yawn.

"You look tired, father," said Althea, putting her arm over his broad shoulder. "What are you going to do? Mr. Ingram and I have something to talk over."

"I think I shall read Lew Wallace for half an hour, honey, and then go to bed. Have my hot milk sent to the study."

"Let us go upstairs to my own room," said Althea, when he was gone. "I can always talk better there."

Ingram followed her, and, as she preceded him gracefully, something forlorn and lonely in her face and figure struck him, over-receptive of such impressions as he was. He thought she drooped. Once she stumbled slightly.

She often wrote till morning, and the fire was still burning brightly in her room. She took the strip of paper on which the names of her guests had been written and, reading it over again, crumpled it in her hand with a little gesture of disgust and weariness, and threw it into the glowing coals.

"Ugh!" she said.

"Why do you have them, then?" asked Paul, more reasonably than politely.

"Oh!" impatiently, "you don't understand." She hesitated a moment. "Don't you ever find such people strangely interesting yourself?"

"The least so of any class I've met," Paul replied, without hesitation.

"I mean — sit down, please — because they are so free."

"— of scruples?"

"Yes, of scruples, if you will. Don't you see as long as one has work to do, or an ideal to follow, or conscience to

consider, or a heart even, one's life must, in a sense be incomplete, fettered, bound. One must leave off in unexpected places — never go quite to the logical end, never run the whole gamut."

"That's just as well, isn't it — for other people's sakes?"

"Perhaps. You don't read Newman, I suppose?"

"Never."

"He speaks, in one of his poems, of 'A secret joy that Hell is near.' Now, he was a great saint, Mr. Ingram; no Augustine, but one of the predestined of God's love, who never in the whole course of their lives commit a vile act, say a vile word, nor probably entertain an ill thought. And yet, you see, he felt it."

She had taken out her handkerchief, and was twisting it nervously into a rope.

"*'A secret joy that Hell is near!'* That's what I feel at times. That's what I've been feeling all to-night, as I listened to those people. It's wicked, I know. It's even a refinement of wickedness."

"I think it's nerves."

"Oh, no, you don't. I won't submit to that kind of talk from you — but I'm not keeping you from bed to discuss my temperament. About your story: I'm so sorry I can't help you to publish it."

"Owing, I gather, to its religious views?"

"Why deny it? Yes."

"As exemplified in the Rev. Mr. Ffoulkes, the Salvation Merchant?"

"Oh! don't laugh. It's terribly serious. You have — I don't know where you learnt it — such a terrifying plausibility in your case against Providence. Nothing strikes at faith like a perverted mysticism."

"Name one instance!" — a little bitterly. "I'm beginning to forget what I did say."

"Well, you say that the most obvious result of punishment is to destroy the sense of guilt."

"So it is."

"Yes — perhaps. But —"

"In short, one may bear witness for your God, but not against Him?"

"I know I must sound illogical to you. It is so hard to explain."

"Don't try, please."

She was silent awhile, staring into the fire. "Mr. Ingram, you've heard, perhaps, that my life has not been a happy one."

"A word here and there. *Que sais-je?*"

"Exactly. What do you know? What can any one know of it? Imagination even couldn't do justice to the whole truth. I came out of it not desolate, alone; not only sick of body and soul, but even degraded. Yes, I mean it. A degraded wretch — that's how I saw myself. The poor street-walker seemed a clean and honorable thing beside me."

"And so you became a Catholic. Is this the usual way into the fold?"

"It is, for many. Yes," she went on, with a strange glow in her eyes, "for those who have endured great wickedness as for those who have committed it, God be thanked, there is one respirable medium left on earth. Call it what you will — a hospital of sick souls, a home for moral convalescents."

"I call it nothing. I take your word for it. Does this account for the decrepitude of so much of your doctrine?"

"Ah! don't be clever, Paul. Cleverness is a little thing. At least I should be loyal to that in which I have found peace, self-respect, a new life."

"You misjudge me, Althea. I grudge you none of your comfort. God is true if He's true for you, and He's true, for you, if the thought of Him gives you peace."

There really seemed nothing more to say, and he got to his feet.

"Send along my manuscript," he said, "whenever it's convenient, and dismiss the matter from your mind. It makes no difference."

"Why are you in such a hurry to go?" she asked fretfully, and put her hand to her head. She seemed to sway.

"Are you ill?" Ingram asked, coming across and standing beside her.

"My head went queer suddenly," she said. "It does that lately. It's fatigue, I think. Listen to me, Paul Ingram. I want to strike a bargain with you."

"Well."

"I want to buy 'Sad Company' myself."

"In order to destroy it?"

No answer.

"And at what do you assess the damage, moral and material, to your creed that its suppression will avoid. Come, now! just for curiosity's sake."

"Five hundred pounds — a thousand if —"

He interrupted her brusquely. "You must have taken leave of your senses. Do you think I'm to be bought? Burn the thing yourself, if you like — burn it in the name of whatever god it offends — but don't impute dishonor ever again to a man, even to a man that doesn't believe in Him."

She caught at his sleeve. "Oh, but you must have some money for it," she said, incoherently. "You must — you must! Don't rob me of a pleasure. You've travelled the world over, but you don't know what poverty in London means. Why, only to-night, as I looked down the table and saw your face so — so proud and fine, and thought how little stood between you and — there! I won't even name it. But don't be stubborn — for my sake. Because you must have money; you must have money, dear."

At the last word he took her in his arms.

"Let me go!" she whispered, pushing him away with all the poor force of her bare arms. "I didn't mean this. Oh! believe me. Upon my honor I didn't — nothing like this, Paul."

Ingram only drew her closer. "Stop struggling," he said, with authority. "That's better. Now then — kiss me properly."

### XIII

#### NEW WINE — OLD BOTTLE

**W**HEN the Reverend Antony Vernon, on the very morrow of a controversy whose issue was hailed variously in various quarters — here as a triumph and as a scandal there — forsook his fellow's rooms in Wadham, his parish of St. Hedwige, and the Hernandes Ethical Lectureship, to take the old, old beaten track toward the City of the Seven Hills and intellectual disenfranchisement, beyond a languid wonder as to what might await him in the less indulgent fold his migration aroused little interest. Excommunication or a cardinal's hat? Either, it was felt, might be the crown of his new career. He took no disciples with him in his incontinent flight, and he left no spiritual orphans to bewail his loss. No vindication of the strange step was ever published by him, and it cannot be pretended that his reserve balked any very keen curiosity. After all, had not the question been worn threadbare — to rags — years ago? To the fervor of the 'forties a generation had succeeded too weary of dogmatic strife to account for its own actions, far less demand an account from others; satisfied, in short, since it saved time and trouble, to accept the plea of impulse in full extenuation. During the traditional nine days, it is true, his motives were guessed at idly in the Common Room. Intellectual despair, said one; another, a recoil from the abyss to which a will to believe with the minimum of revelation always leads; a third might hint at reasons more personal and intimate still. None knew; and, when a few weeks had passed, none cared. The Reverend Antony Vernon was absolved and forgotten.



After his ordination in Rome, Archbishop Manning, who had been an old Oxford friend of his father, gave him a curacy in the northeast of London, in a district which had not then acquired its present sinister reputation, but was beginning to earn it. The mission itself was an old one, founded in the days of captivity and bishops *in partibus*; so much the fabric witnessed, a square box-like structure of hard yellow brick, with a stucco portico, and on each side four round-headed, narrow-paned windows of pinky-white glass, obscured by a wooden galley, and, on the side that faced the street, still bearing traces of some sort of wash which had once discreetly veiled the mysteries within. And yet, in its unpretending ugliness, the humble fane did not lack a certain charm denied to the great Gothic barn that has replaced it. It had been built upon the site of what had been a city merchant's suburban estate in the days of hoop and powder. Upon the side furthest from the street, two or three of the old garden trees had been spared, which of a sunny afternoon, according as the season lay, stained the clear panes a tremulous green and gold, or fretted them with an uneasy tracery of tangled branches. One guessed that, within the memory of man, before the city had spilled its desolating overflow around and beyond, gardens had bloomed — orchards borne fruit beneath these weather-stained walls, the odors of the hayfield stolen in at times and mingled its incense with that of the altar. For with cities it is as with the generations of men — new buildings upon which the old have gazed carry on, when they themselves have grown gray, the tradition of all that has been demolished and displaced around them.

"I am sending you into great temptation, Vernon," Manning had said to him at parting. (He had opened his heart to his superior, and there were no secrets between the two men). "The mission is the most difficult in the whole archdiocese. Since the trams were built the East End is pouring its cramped population into it in thousands. The old respectable families

are leaving, in absolute panic, as soon as they can sell or surrender their leases. There will be no better centre in three or four years' time for a great missionary effort; but until Swinton dies or retires nothing much can be done. You will have need of all your faith and of all your tact. Abroad you will encounter an animalism such as you cannot have conceived possible; at home, a creed almost without love, and to which only the darker side of the revelation seems to have been vouchsafed. Get to know your people quietly; watch your armor, and — pray! And, above all," he continued, laying a hand that was already ethereal upon the young don's shoulder, "above all, Vernon, never despair of the poor. Don't be appalled by anything you see or hear. The degradation is great, but it is my experience it seldom reaches down as far as the soul. A word will work conversion here — a week's illness make a saint. It is far, far easier to wash the filth off of them than it is to heal the ulcer of the rich, or purify the intellect of men like you and me. It is God's crowning mercy to his elect. 'Blessed are the poor!'"

Vernon quickly discovered that the difficulties had not been over-rated. Father Swinton, the missionary rector, was a scion of an old Northumbrian family. His eccentricity, probably congenital and the result of long continued intermarriage, had been heightened by a solitary life until it reached a pitch that was almost monomania. Beneath the outward uniformity which Catholic discipline imposes he concealed a fanatical Jansenist heart. He was perhaps the last of a generation of priests who took a perverse pride in the insular and secluded character which three centuries of persecution had impressed upon the Roman communion in England. He boasted of never having made a convert, and resented the new expansiveness as a personal grievance. He never returned to his "chapel"—you would have earned his resentment by calling it a church — from a visit to more pretentious missions without experiencing a stealthy joy in his own square, painted pews, his railed

gallery and bare altar, flanked only by two small plaster statues which a great lady, stubborn as himself, had imposed upon him as the price of peace. Two of his many aversions he made no attempt to conceal: he hated Irish curates, and he hated the beautiful modern devotion of the Sacred Heart.

"God bless my soul, Vernon!" he cried, one evening, shortly after the arrival of the new curate, waddling into the dining-room after benediction. "Do you know what's just happened me? No? Well, sir, a woman came into my sanctuary just now — my very sanctuary, sir! — as I was covering the altar, and asked me to bless a piece of red flannel for her — a common piece of red household flannel, sir, cut into the shape of a heart. Called it her '*Badge!*' I said: 'Take your blasphemous piece of red flannel home, ma'am! It's too small for a chest-protector, so make a penwiper of it. God bless my soul! haven't you seven sacraments?'"

Far from being shocked, the archbishop laughed at the story until the tears ran out of his watery blue eyes.

"Dear old Swinton!" was all his comment; "last of the Gallicans!" Vernon was early struck by the gaiety and love of fun among his fellow-workers in the vineyard.

As for the curates: he discovered he was the successor to a long line whose misplaced fervor and attempts to familiarize the channels of grace had brought them into collision with the heady old man.

"*Four — times — a — year*, Mr. Vernon," his rector would assert, bringing the palm of his hand down on the table at each word. "Four times a year, sir, and no more, if I had my way. And the three months in between all too short to prepare for the reception of this tremendous" — at the word something that was almost ecstasy descended upon the foolish old face — "*tremendous* Sacrament! Besides" — fretfully — "none of 'em knew how to eat like gentlemen."

Perhaps on account of his superior table manners, perhaps for other reasons, Vernon's enthusiasm — the enthusiasm of

the proselyte — was condoned. Often during his strenuous later life he looked back upon those three years of curacy as perhaps the happiest he had known. If he might not sow the seed broadcast, at least he could sow and tend it in his own heart. He loved to read his breviary of an afternoon, pacing up and down between two green matted grass lawns, under the creeper-covered wall of the meek little house of God. The sun, filtering through the tender leaves of the plane trees, made a dappled puzzle-pattern on the broad flagged walk at his feet, or, if the season was late, he crisped their shed vesture beneath his low buckled shoes. Often, as his lips moved in the prayer that he had now got by heart, his eyes, wandering from the familiar page, would map out by the line, and square the foundation of his settlement — his bustling citadel of the friends of God — so soon to arise in the great wilderness, blotting out this selfish little oasis of peace and stillness forever. This very walk the vault of a chancel should cover — vast, imposing, lined with glowing chapels that pictured in fresco and mosaic the hard-won battles of the Church militant — draped with embroidered banners of guild and confraternity. Here, at the ivied presbytery gable, where a mob of sparrows, heedless of impending change, were repairing their frail tenements of straw, the gymnasium should stand, with a dining-hall above, where from henceforth his daily meals should be taken in the company of the starving and the outcast; of the workless man, hovering with amazement upon the brink of crime; of the felon, still sore from the stringent hand of earthly justice; guests gathered at his Master's bidding from highway and byway, and set down with the broad robe of charity over their bowed shoulders. And once a week at night, when chairs and benches had been cleared away, the piano should tinkle and the fiddle tune, and lads and lasses, in whose perverse minds guilt and gaiety had become convertible terms, should learn the religion of joy, and dance the devil out of their souls.

These were his dreams during three years. And yet, in his

imagination, susceptible as a woman's to any influence of beauty and grace, and, like a woman's, sworn foe of all that is ugly and irrevocable in life, the quiet close was full of voices that reproached him for their outcasting. He used to pray against his weakness at night, when confessions were over and the church closed. Horse-cars jingled past the doors. The windows shook with raucous oaths; with cries of buyers and sellers in the market outside, from mouths furred with blasphemy and filthy talk; the naphtha flares threw strange, troubled shadows over the doomed pews and galleries.

Father Swinton fell ill in the middle of the third year, and after lingering a few months, died rather suddenly. At his death it was discovered that his private charities had been unbounded, and had eaten up all his inheritance. He left nothing of his own behind, save a family genealogy, in which the connection between the Swintons of Dimpleshall and the Swintons of Blacklash is clearly traced — a connection which, it would appear, Mackenzie, in his "View of the County of Northumberland," has been at pains to dispute, and a bound manuscript, much thumbed, of meditations on the Passion. The projected work had hardly waited on his death; indeed, Vernon was called to his superior's agony from a consultation with his architect. No man's dream is ever realized; but within two years a good deal of his was an accomplished fact. Vernon was a wealthy man, and, when his own money was spent, a consummate beggar. The dining-room, the schools, the gymnasium, the dispensary, and the old folks' hostel took shape one by one, amid discouragement, covert sarcasm, and abundant prophecy of failure. The trees fell, the chapel was gutted and torn down as completely as ever by Gordon rioters; the presbytery, with its panelled chambers, went the same way; the sparrows took to a dusty wing and, as covenanted servants, let us hope found sanctuary elsewhere. Last of all, the chancel, gaunt and bare as yet, a mere shell and outline of all it should be, but imposing if only by virtue of its bulk, with traceried

windows, flying buttresses, clerestory and triforium, towered over the wet slate roofs that smoked sullenly all day, like a slaked furnace, beneath its feet. At the centre of the cross, where the long chancel met the truncated apse and aisles, an octagonal lead lantern, lit by eight round lunettes, took the place of tower and spire. It was at this lantern that men stood to stare; toward it that the whips of passing van and 'bus drivers inevitably were pointed for many a long day. For there, set up too high for any to escape His appeal — a symbol of hope to the hopeless, a fable to the scoffer, a source of irritation to the Pharisee, lit up at night by two coronals of electric light that encircled the pierced feet and haloed the drooping head — the Man of Sorrows watched the sorrowing city, and plucked His vesture aside to show the wounded and flaming breast — the Sacred Heart, beneath.

At fifty-eight Canon Vernon would have been a strange portent in the Common Room at Wadham. He had gained sanctity, but there is no denying he had lost polish. One cannot sit to table habitually with the outcast and not become either a little self-righteous or a little disreputable; and nothing could ever have made Antony Vernon self-righteous. He had a brown, seamed face, on which the lines of humor and pain crossed and intercrossed; the loose, mobile mouth of the great actor he might have been; piercing black eyes, an untidy thatch of dark hair whitening only at the temples, and thin, sensitive nostrils rimmed with snuff. Snuff also liberally besprinkled the breast of his shabby cassock. There had been, three hundred years back, an ancestor who wrote himself M. de Vernon, and, in reverting to the ancestral faith, Vernon seemed to have reverted a little to the ancestral type. He had no apparent austerities, was fond of a certain brand of white wine which grocers do not stock, and when his young men saw him in his private room, gave them, together with absolution, an Egyptian cigarette that was no part of their penance. His life is now matter for biography. In the district

which is bounded roughly by Kingsland Road on the west and Hackney Road on the south, and which may be said to have London Fields—a rather tuberculous “lung”—for its centre and playground, it was even then matter for legend. Upon some of the legends his own comments were flippant, and we should probably err in attaching greater importance to them than he did himself. In speaking of his spiritual influence we are on safer ground. Very few—perhaps none quite—had ever withstood this. It was the old, old test. Power “went out” from him. Very unjustly, the worship of which he was the object did not extend to the hard-working curates with whom he surrounded himself. His delivery in the pulpit was bad, his writing all but illegible, and, as he never had time to prepare his sermons for the press, a good deal has perished that deserved to survive. We preserve a few fragments, however, as characteristic of his peculiar train of thought.

*“Of love:*

“There is no way to love God but through His creatures. It is through admiration of the work that we must be brought to the artist. But often the one condition upon which our love can stay sinless is that it shall stay silent.”

*“Of suffering:*

“There is a genius in suffering as in all else. The confessor may labor with Christ, the martyr be crucified with Him; it is the artist alone who can understand or share the agony of Olivet.”

*“Of sacrifice:*

“The history of Cain and Abel is full of significance to us. It is not of the things that renew themselves year by year that God would have us make our offering. To be acceptable to Him the sacrifice must be irreparable.”

Despite his gaiety, his personal pessimism was unbounded.

He was taken to task for it once by a burly and breezy Jesuit.

"After all, Vernon, God is Lord of life as well as of death."

"True," replied Vernon, as though speaking to himself. "But with a perceptible bias toward death."

He maintained that while it was our duty to resist all temptations, there were some so overwhelming that our responsibility was ended when we asked God to keep them out of our way.

He used to say that the crowning humiliation of the saints was to know their lives would be written by the devout.

Once upon his return from examining a school taught by religious, he was observed to be preoccupied, and was asked the reason.

"I was thinking," he said, "that few indeed are to be trusted with the credulity of childhood."

Of a noted atheist who was very charitable, he remarked: "G— gives alms for the hatred of God."

After leaving Oxford his remarks seldom strayed beyond the sphere of his new duties. When they did, they were apt to be rarely illuminating. He said of France, for instance: "Four words give us her genius and her history—'Often conquered, never ashamed.'"

He used to declare that, in striking a balance between a man's happiness and unhappiness, time was not to be taken



into account at all, because men live all their lives every day of their lives.

Religion, he observed, had an advantage that had not escaped the worldly mind. There is no other ideal which a man can live for and live on at the same time.

## XIV

### SOME THEORIES—AND A WAY OUT

**H**E WAS sitting in his study late one windy March Saturday when Mrs. Hepworth was announced. He had been in his confessional all the evening. A half-finished letter lay on his blotting-pad, but he had turned away from it and was warming his stockinged feet at the fire. She was heavily veiled, but he divined a crisis at a glance.

"Are you very busy?" she asked, in a smothered voice.

"Very idle," he answered gaily. "The appearances of industry are deceitful. I was really — don't tell — toasting my toes. Are you in any trouble?" he asked in a graver tone, taking her hand in both his.

She nodded, but did not speak. He drew an arm-chair to the fire, and poked a great lump of coal into a blaze.

"There, there!" said he. "Sit down and have the cry out. I have a letter to finish and another to write. By the time they are both done you will be calmer."

He went on with his writing; re-read, sealed, and stamped the two letters, rang the bell, and, when it was answered by one of the mission lads, carried them to the door himself. When he turned to her again the worst was over. She was drying her eyes. He leaned forward and patted her hand.

"What a big baby we are!"

She returned him a spasmodic smile. She was conscious of a tear-stained face — possibly a red nose. But then, he was a priest. That made a difference.

"And now, what is the trouble? Has invention given out?"

No? Come, come then, everything else is bearable, isn't it? If I were an imaginative writer, that fear would never leave me, and would end by paralyzing my pen. I should have stage-fright every time I sat down opposite a sheet of paper. It has always been less of a marvel to me that a novel should be finished well than that it should be finished at all."

Althea hardly listened. She was wondering how she should express the things of this world in terms that a man of the other should understand; a necessity — let the prurient believe it or not — that makes confession a dry business for all parties.

"Father Vernon, has it ever occurred to you that I am a woman as well as a writer?"

"My dear, a very charming one."

"At least an honest one. Three years ago, you will remember, I came to you on quite an impersonal matter. You divined an inward trouble — saw that I had missed the peace which passes understanding, and offered me — how delicately, I shall never forget — your aid to attain it. I refused it. You never would guess what the refusal cost me."

"My dear —"

"Yes, yes; let me go on. I must have seemed churlish. But if principles are to be anything beyond mere idle words, they must be held to; and one of mine is that for a woman to invite sympathy is only a degree less shameful than for her to beg for love. The way of the devout woman with her director is hateful to me. This unseemly self-revelation from week to week is treachery — treachery to her own heart and to those whom she takes into it. Am I very heretical?"

"Oh, my child! How it would lighten my task were there more who thought like you."

"Before I left, you bade me, if ever I was in great trouble, to come to you again. And now —"

"Now the time has come?"

"Yes." She rubbed her hands nervously one over the other. "I am in great straits."

"Is the way growing dark or only hard?"

"Oh, *hard — hard!*" she moaned, rocking a little backward and forward.

She looked up in his face and saw her trouble was guessed. When the will to help and the powerlessness meet upon a face that regards us tenderly we read our fate written there in letters of fire.

"Yes," she went on, as though he had spoken. "I am a Catholic: I am a divorced woman whose husband lives, and I am in love — in love with all my heart, and soul, and strength."

"The man? Is he free?" Vernon asked, perhaps for something to say.

"Yes. I thank God, whose captive I am, that he at least is free."

"He understands your peculiar position?"

"He understands nothing."

"My dear child, you should let him know. In justice to him."

His words irritated Althea vaguely, as a little professional mannerism might irritate us in the surgeon fighting for our lives.

"Oh, have patience! I am going to tell you everything. It is the man whose book I sent you to read. Mr. Prentice, a friend of mine, a journalist, brought him to me last summer. He was quite unknown in London and was finding a difficulty in even getting it considered. He is not quite a stranger to us; at least, we know who he is. My father is a friend of some of the rich branch of his family in Connecticut. My publishers made difficulties, of course, but the thing was in a fair way of being settled —"

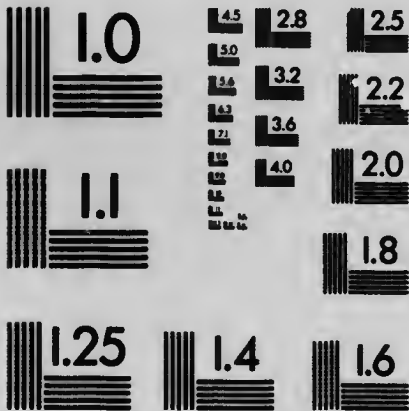
"But surely, my child, his opinions shocked you?"

"Not at all, Father!" Noticing his surprise: "You must take my word for that. It is so hard when one is leading two lives — the artist's and the other. There seems no contact between them — no common ground. I have had no



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

temptation myself to such things, and so the question had never arisen for me personally. No, I was conscious of nothing but the joy, the privilege of helping a fellow-worker toward his reward."

"When did you first find it a matter of conscience?"

"Once when I went to confession to Father Mephan at the Priory. I mentioned it almost casually. To my surprise, he took the matter most seriously — said I was incurring a tremendous responsibility, and that if one soul was led by it to love God less, the sin would be at my door. I had to get the manuscript back from the publishers. Oh! it was weary work."

"Mephan pronounced against the book, of course."

"Yes. I told him that to my knowledge the writer was a good man — in his way almost saintly. I knew him well enough by then to say that. But he said it didn't matter — that Antichrist had his own prophets and confessors, and even martyrs. Is that so?"

"I fear it is."

"He said something else stranger still. He said the virtue that was outside the Church was a greater danger than the wickedness. Do you believe that?"

"No, I don't. I think virtue, of any sort, is quite secure from popularity. But go on. You have told me nothing of the man himself."

"He continued to visit us. He was lonely and embittered at first, but it wore off. He is very handsome. I was proud to be able to show such a fellow-countryman after some that have been at our house. The men liked him, and I know the women envied him to me. Oh! a woman can see. I got him to tell me some of his life. It's wonderful! He seems to have deliberately sought out pain and labor as though some inward need of his soul impelled him to it. He does not know God, but he has never lost the spiritual vision. His heart is as clean as a child's and as simple. He has his faults. He hates the rich; but there is not a trace of envy in his hatred. He is not

even like Mill — led to the love of the many by the hatred of the few. It is simply the holy hunger and thirst after justice."

"My dear, you are painting a very good man. Did you never try to influence him toward the truth?"

"Father Vernon, do you believe in my sincerity or not?"

"I do, indeed."

"Then, believe me when I tell you it's not possible. Perhaps in years and years to come; but his heart will have to be broken first. No, his virtue is the virtue of Marcus Aurelius — of Julian. He has all the sadness of the old, stoical, pagan world. Will you think me exaggerated if I tell you how he affects me?"

"I think not."

"Well, I feel as though some great angel, neither of light nor darkness, neither fallen nor confirmed, to whom the test for or against God has never been offered, has folded his wings and dropped gently at my feet. I have but one fear — that he will spread them as quietly and take flight."

Two red spots glowed on her cheeks as she spoke. Vernon, considering her, suddenly realized how ill she was looking. There was even on her face an expression that, as a priest, it was part of his office to watch for.

"When did this thing happen — the thing that makes you so unhappy?"

"Last Thursday. He had dined with us. I had been feeling ill all day. Since the summer I have been frightened two or three times — it is my head I think — but I have put off getting any advice. He could not have asked for an explanation at a worse time; but I had no right to withhold it. I tried to explain, even offered him money, and then ——"

"Yes, and then?"

"Oh, Father Vernon, he grew so big! He seemed to tower. Everything else was small. Yes — let me tell the truth — religion, priests, even God — we all seemed to be a little band of intriguers trying to pull him down. He told me to burn nis



book, turned on his heel. I knew he wouldn't come back, and so — and so — I'm only a woman: I babbled something or other that was in my heart, and he took me — in his — arms."

She leaned forward, put her elbows on her knees, and looked into the fire. The action was deliberate. One never would have guessed what a storm was rending her breast.

"He kissed me only once," she went on. "He was very gentle. Then we sat down, and I found out that, all the time while I had been condescending, advising, putting him at his ease, I was nothing to him but just a little, lonely, spoilt girl."

"Have you seen him since?"

"No."

"Nor written?"

"No."

"He has called, of course?"

"Yes. I have not been at home to him."

"Then — the thing is over."

"Read this!" She drew a letter from the bosom of her dress and handed it to him. She watched him narrowly as he read it, but his expression of grave concern did not alter.

"Are you alone in town?" he asked, when he had read it through.

"My father and most of the servants are at Hindhead. I should have gone with them on Saturday, but I waited because — Oh! I just waited —"

"Do you want this back?" said Vernon, still holding the letter between his fingers.

"Burn it, please. No, wait a minute! Tear me off the signature first. I want that."

She pressed the little shred of paper against her lips.

"Oh! I love him so, I love him so," she moaned.

Vernon crumpled the sheets of paper one by one and threw them all into the fire together. The flames caught them at

once. The writing glowed red, then white. The draught from the chimney rustled the ashes to and fro in the grate.

"Well," she asked, almost roughly, "what am I to do?"

"There is but one thing — your duty. I cannot soften it."

"Duty!" she repeated, in a terrible voice. For a moment Vernon thought a nerve-crisis was at hand; but she fought it down. The wit that was almost the woman's second nature came uppermost.

"It's a pretty trap, isn't it? There ought to have been a notice-board on my narrow way, Father Vernon: 'Beware man-traps and canons.' God's ways are a little *impish* at times, don't you think so? Can I see him?"

"I think not, dear child. It will only make it harder for you both."

"Pah! You say that, but you really don't trust me. You're only a man, after all. Can I write the letter here? It won't be very long."

Without a word he wheeled his writing-chair round for her, and pulled out unheaded note-paper and plain envelopes. She wrote a letter of six or eight pages quietly, without hesitating, except just at the end, when Vernon noticed her lips were pursed and her eyes swimming in tears. The second letter was a much shorter affair, and she enclosed in it the slip of paper which she had saved from the burnt letter. It lay on the top, and he noticed the address was that of a bank.

"I will leave these with you to post," she said; "then you will feel quite safe. I shall go down to Hindhead to-morrow and stay a good while, I think. I like watching the spring come. Good-bye; and remember it is by what you *didn't* say to-night that I measure your sympathy. I don't think I could have stood platitudes."

"My child, I preach to those who are bearing their cross, not to those whom God has nailed to it. Before them I dare only kneel and pray."

"Oh, I felt it! I felt it! Something seemed to come out of

you and break my will suddenly. Besides"— she hesitated — "besides, there's always something a woman keeps back, they say. I think, perhaps, he is saved from great unhappiness by what you have made me do to-night. I can't say more, even to you."

"My dear, love is never sent idly, never in vain. It is from our ignorant misuse, our blind misapprehension of its meaning, that the pity and the waste come about. Many a precious purpose is brought to nothing by the world's superstition of the happy ending. In love, as in life, those who seek selfishly forever seek vainly; even as they grasp it, the radiant vision turns a corpse within their arms. It is they who humbly and submissively — no matter how hard the law, how intolerable the accident—follow the inscrutable finger beckoning them from pleasant ways, to stumble upon the road that is narrow and steep and dark, who have their heart's desire given them in the end. . . . Yes! Who is it?"

There was a knock at the door

"Please, farver, it's Mrs. Murnane come about Jimmy's charackter for the 'am-and-beef shop."

"Say I'm coming. . . . Would you like to spend a few minutes with me in the church before you go? We have the Forty Hours' devotion this week. I can let you out by the side door into the street. I suppose you have your car?"

She passed before him down the staircase and along a white-washed corridor, whose bluntly pointed windows and doorways were wreathed by texts in Gothic lettering. Mrs. Murnane, a woman with a commanding eye and great digestive capacity, was sitting on a long bench in the hall; the ham-and-beef aspirant, a knock-kneed lad who seemed to grow more uncertain and wavering of outline as he receded from his enormous boots to his cropped white head, sat by her side with an air of being in custody. Behind the bench successive sessions of unwashed heads had besmeared the wall with a grimy average of height.

The church was dark, and silent too; not with the mere

absence of sound, but with a positive and penetrative stillness that seemed to radiate from one white disk, rimmed and rayed with gold, and enthroned, amid a phalanx of tapers and sweet waxen flowers, in one of the side chapels. A lad in a scarlet cassock and laced cotta was extinguishing a guttering candle, almost beyond his reach. As he rose on tiptoe the long pole trembled in his hands like a fishing-rod. Within the rails two men, their heads sunk beneath their shoulders, and without the rails two nuns, in broad white *cornichons* and turned-back sleeves of serge, watched the host motionlessly. On a votive-wheel near by many tapers, some white, some red, were blazing and dripping. The smell of incense was everywhere.

She knelt upon a rush-seated *prie-dieu* in the same posture of absorbed devotion as the others, but her thoughts strayed, like a child's brought to church by an elder sister. She tried to count the tapers — how many red? how many white? — wondered what the nuns' faces were like behind the flapped white caps. The scene took shape in her head in little biting phrases, just as another kind of artist would have seen it in tone and composition. She was rather restless, wanted to be gone, and even said to herself that this last move of Father Vernon's was in doubtful taste. After going through so much —!

But the silence, the stillness, the enervating loaded atmosphere gained her little by little. She had an access of devotion: tapers, flowers, prostrate fellow-worshippers were all part of some intimate rite of which there were two protagonists — that white sphere toward which, from time to time, she stole an awed glance, and she — a white host herself, with tired, folded pinions, submissive, only waiting for fire from heaven to complete the sacrifice. . . .

. . . . Oh, God — the pain! the pain in her head! She wanted to scream, to faint, but her horror, the refined woman's horror of any "scene," kept her dumb and almost still. She prayed, wildly and incoherently — pressed her

gloved fingers into her temples; her forehead was damp with perspiration. . . .

It was going now. Yes. In wave after wave, each less poignant than the one before, the pain left her. She lifted her head, wet her lips — wiped her forehead with the handkerchief still damp from her tears. Her eyes were tired and dim; the altar swam mistily. She looked across to Father Vernon, and he, noting her restlessness at last, rose and, with a low genuflection on both knees, beckoned her, and passed before her from the church.

In the open air she revived, and even began to doubt the reality of what she had just undergone. There is a dream-like quality about intense pain that makes it hard to estimate it truly afterward. The car was waiting, in a dark slum that had once been a walled country lane smelling of mould and verdure. Even now the warm restlessness of spring could be felt in its fetid air. The chauffeur sat sideways upon his seat, reading some strange by-product of literature in a green cover. A dozen or so of ragged children, shock-headed and sore of face, clustered round the headlights like so many poor scorched flies. She shared the coppers in her purse between them.

“Write me from Hindhead,” Vernon said, at the door of the car; “and come to see me again when you get back. Be sure, my dear, God has some great work for you after this. And if I were you, I should see some-thing about the headaches. Nerves? Oh, yes! but it never does any good to have good advice. Good-bye, good-bye! God bless you, my dear. Now then, babies, why aren’t the lot of you in bed?”

The car rolled, smoothly and swiftly, southward and westward. Through brawling, chaffering Saturday night markets; through the old “Square Mile,” deserted now, its mysterious lanes coiling away to left and right in tortuous perspective; across the Circus, in whose midst the bronze archer poises him-

self, choosing his prey and aiming his unseen arrow day and night at the spinning wheel of pleasure; round the sweep of the Quadrant — and home. Two and two, two and two; the men leaning over the women, the women leaning toward the men. Nature, after all, was slightly vulgar. To be placed — by circumstances — out of reach of its allurements had compensations — lent dignity to the point of view. It was almost enough to make one turn to virtue to have to share vice with so many. . . .

There she went again! Phrases, phrases! Well, it was just as well, since, after all, there wasn't much else left for her now. How tired she was of it all! And what was the great mercy that Father Vernon had predicted so confidently? . . . Home, at last.

"Three hours, probably more," the doctor said. It was Pemmer-Lloyd, the great cancer specialist from Weymouth Street, just round the corner. He was in golfing tweeds, and felt justly aggrieved that, with so many general practitioners in the neighborhood, he should have been called away from breakfast, for this. The nine forty-five to Amersham was out of the question now.

One window-blind had been drawn up, crookedly and hurriedly, and through the rhomboidal opening a sinister light fell upon the disorder of the room. Two frightened maids and a housekeeper stood at the foot of the bed, watching the doctor, with inane hope upon their faces. One of the maids was crying, but looking about her curiously at the same time.

"Done? No! of course nothing can be done. Am I not telling you she has been dead over three hours. Had any doctor been attending her lately?"

"Not to our knowledge, sir."

"There may have to be an inquest, then. In that case you must see that nothing is touched. Have the family been advised?"

"No, doctor. I thought first ——"

"Wire and 'phone them immediately! *immediately!* and the police as well. Here is my card for the inspector. I shall have to stay at home all day now. In a case like this, you should always call a general practitioner."

They say she must have been reading a great part of the night. Two books were on the table near her bed—"Ma Jane Bovary," and "The Imitation of Christ." Flaubert and à Kempis! Poor Althea! It was almost your life's epitome.

XV

A LAST WISH

**M**ANY will remember the profound impression that Althea's death created. It extended far beyond the circles that her novels had reached. There was something about that last mysterious journey through London — the sudden, unheralded end, at some conjectural hour, when the great heart of the city was beating its faintest, that struck the popular imagination, always ready to be harrowed, and secretly grateful, I believe, for evidence that fate works with an even grimness under all the inequalities of rank or fortune. I attended the funeral, combining for the last time my professional duties with the privileges of an old but lately neglected friend, and saw her committed to the awakening earth. She was buried with all the pomp and circumstance that the church of her adoption gives its children as a last assurance of its own unshaken power, but through all the chants and absolutions the chill human ache of an irreparable loss persisted, as, through the perfume of incense and flowers, the raw smell of the polished elm coffin pierced to the sense. The church was crowded with her friends, wreaths and crosses, lyres with snapped strings, broken columns of rare exotic flowers, all symbols of untimely end, were banked round the catafalque, but the coffin itself was stark and bare, covered thinly by a pall of purple silk wrought at its feet with passion flowers. The girls in some refuge or another poor soiled doves whose unwearied friend she had been, had sat up, it was said, night and day in order to complete it.

About the time that references to Mrs. Hepworth's career were



ceasing to appear even in the minor papers, rumors of a theatrical hoax began to circulate through London. The new dancer, whom the zealous friendship of a certain well-known sporting baronet had forced upon an unwilling management, would not, after all, appear in the new play that was to replace the *Motor Girl* at the Dominion some time in May. "*Would not appear!*" Imagine what an eye trained to cheat the censor of his spoil could make of that; with what significance a tongue, thrust into a leathery cheek not quite innocent of biscuit and cheese, at the Bedford Street Bodega, could invest those three little words.

"*Will not appear*, my boy. Catch on? Why won't she? That's the joke, my boy. Because she's got to stop at home and nurse her mother."

Imagine it! just once, and then let us pass on into sweeter air. Even if it must be the air of a sick-room. For many weeks Fenella hardly breathed any other. During that first breathless rally which hardly gave thought to the final issue, and during which a spoonful of broth swallowed, an hour's quiet rest or a fall in temperature were triumphs repaying the sleepless night, dull eye, and hollow cheek a hundredfold, career, character, seemed very empty, shadowy words. Even if one of the vile journals in pink and blue and yellow covers addressed in a handwriting needlessly disguised, which, be sure of it, the postman did not fail to deliver at Number Eleven, had reached her, had not — as all were, in fact, been torn from its wrapper by honest Frances' grimy hand to light parlor or kitchen fire — I doubt very much whether the marked paragraph would have had power to inflict one pang upon her self-respect, or bring one drop of blood to her cheek.

How much she loved her mother, how far the wholesome, homely *fact* of her had been the basis of all happiness in life, Nelly had not guessed until now, when the thought must be faced of its speedy change to a mere memory. A reproachful memory, alas! She looked back on her girlhood — her school-days, and saw herself heedless and heartless. How niggardly

of love she had been, how chary in response! She even accused herself of a little snobbishness in her mother's regard—unjustly, since it was from the innate expansiveness of the older woman and not from the accident of station or manner that her own finer nature had shrunk. But, in circumstances like these, to be conscious of a finer nature does not administer much comfort.

Mrs. Barbour rallied a little from the first stroke, but never rose from her bed, and never spoke intelligibly again. Sometimes, by bending close to her lips and straining every sense, Fenella fancied she could construe the formless gabble into words, but into the words even her affection could read no meaning. During the day, indeed, her presence seemed to agitate the invalid to such an extent that the nurse had to be roused and the desperate effort to speak cut short by some opiate or injection. Once, driven almost mad at sight of her mother's mental suffering, Fenella took a sheet of stiff white cardboard, propped the sick woman upon a pillow, and put a pencil into the palsied hand. Slowly, with infinite pains on the one hand and infinite patience on the other, five dreadful letters took shape upon the writing-pad; five letters such as a dying man might scrawl with a finger dipped into his heart's blood:

“D — A — N — C — . . .”

A light broke upon the girl. “You want me to go on rehearsing? Is that it, mother?”

Oh! what joy in the poor fading eyes at being at last understood. The trembling head nodded again and again, and fell back on the pillow exhausted.

“I will then, dear!” Fenella whispered in her mother's ear. “I'll go and put my things on at once.”

She came back, dressed as for the street, and kissed her mother good-bye. Ten minutes afterward, in response to a stealthy knock at the door, the little Scotch nurse whispered that the patient was fast asleep.

From now until the day on which the slowly curdling brain ceased to receive any impression at all the little loving conspiracy of lies went on. Every morning, at the usual hour of her departure for the theatre, Fenella, in hat and long coat, kissed her mother's cheek and forehead, and asked her how the night had passed — that night whose every hour she often had watched. At seven o'clock, dressed again, she came back, having first laid her cheek to the marble mantelpiece in the drawing-room, that it might be convincingly cold. (The best women have these depths in deception, this recognition of the importance of trifles.) She would sit down upon the bed and regale her duped parent with a long and elaborate history of the day's doings — what Mr. Dollfus had said, what Mr. Lavigne had said — how tiresome the chorus were, how jealous the leading lady — how set, above all, were all signs and portents toward ultimate triumph. Her achievement in this new field stirred even little Frances, now become a person of vast importance and responsibility, to involuntary admiration.

"Miss! You can't 'alf tell 'em!" that little helpmeet would say, harkening her.

Whenever a protracted illness has ended in death it is a commonplace of comfort with well-meaning but shallow folk to say, "You must all feel it a *merciful release*." Apart from its sincerity, the phrase is founded upon a misconception of human feeling. No dead are missed so much as the dead who have been long a-dying. The presence of a perilous illness brings many an evil into a house; it at least casts one out. *Ennui* never reigns in the house that has the straw in front of its railings. A great drama is going on, and there never is a moment when one may not steal upstairs on tiptoe to measure its progress. Hence, apart altogether from sorrow, a strange emptiness in life when all is over, a bitter superadded regret for the close, shadowed room, haunted by broken murmurs, that was once the core of a whole polity of existence.

In her sad absorption Fenella forgot Sir Bryan all but com-

pletely. He wrote to her often. His letters, headed in black or blue, or embossed whitely in thick square letters—"The Turf Club"; "369 Mount Street, Tel. 9087 Mayfair"; "Coffers Castle. Parcels: Balafond Stn. N. B. R."—lay strewn about her dressing-table or stuck carelessly behind looking-glasses, for all the world, represented now by Nurse Ursula or Frances, to read if they would. (We will not suspect Nurse Ursula of such a thing for a moment, and on any that have been placed in my hands there is no such grimy finger-print as I am sure Frances would have left.) She answered rarely, and then only in little set missives, mere bulletins of her mother's health. She begged his pardon for leaving so many of his letters *unanswered*. She was quite well, thank him, had had a quiet night, and felt quite *energetic*. The doctor had been and said mother's *strenth* was well maintained. She thanked him for the lovely grapes from Stanmore. She hoped that "Mud-Major" would win in the big race at Liverpool, and she remained sincerely his—Fenella Powys Barbour. She had decided on the full signature in letters to Lumsden. It sounded stately, and enforced respect. She would have been vastly surprised seeing the sort of respect with which the misspelt little notes were treated.

It is only part of the general injustice of life that while the man who was doing his clumsy best to lighten her sorrow hardly stayed in her mind a moment after she had cast his letters aside or scribbled an answer to them, the false lover, who had kissed her in her own home, loved and ridden away, haunted every hushed empty corner of it. Her very unhappiness brought him back to her, as a new illness weakens the smart of an old wound. She had an impulse once, which the lonely and deserted will understand, to set her thoughts on paper in the form of a letter to him.

"MY DARLING LOST LOVE" (she began),

"What years and years it [*sic*] seems to have past since I saw your dear face ——"

Then she stopped, and tore the sheet into little pieces. Anything approaching literary composition suddenly became hateful. The thought had occurred to her: How well the other woman could do this! The other woman — in her grave nearly a month.

One morning, while she lingered outside her mother's door, after perpetrating the customary deception, Frances, the begrimed, brought her Lumsden's card in a corner of her apron. He was in the small drawing-room, straight and fair and good to look upon, standing amid a dusty huddle of chairs that had not been restored to their places since the doctors consulted there a week ago.

"I came to see if you were killing yourself," he said, when they had shaken hands and he had asked after her mother.

"Oh! I'm as strong as a horse."

"That remark rather loses its force with me, because I know something about them. When did you take your feed — 'horse'?"

"Sir Bryan! I eat with nurse."

"Oh! I know the sort of meals. You're dressed. Have you been out?"

"N — no."

"Just going then?"

Fenella blushed, but did not reveal the pious fraud.

"I've got the big car outside," said Lumsden. "Care to come for a run till tea?"

The suggestion had its attractions.

"I must run upstairs first. You don't mind waiting a minute?"

Nurse not only gave permission, but a little straight hygienic talk she had been saving up, too professional to be repeated here. Fenella took her seat almost with a feeling of duty done. Bryan ordered the chauffeur into the back and took the wheel himself.

"Tuck this round you. Now, where shall we go that's within reach? Richmond?"

"Oh no!" hastily — "not Richmond. Let's go to Hampstead."

"No; I don't care for Hampstead," with a sudden shadow of distaste. Two pasts met in their glance — her woman's fault of loving too well — and his.

After a while the mere physical act of breathing fully and deeply again, the rush of the spring air, pleasantly cold, past her pallid cheeks, did their work, and unsealed the springs of joy in her own young breast — a facile joy, born of health and perfect balance, for which she had often blamed herself since the summer, ignorant of how between it, as between every function of her body, and the ascetic ideal which a heart, untimely chastened, sought to impose, there was war declared, in which she was a mere battle-ground for contending forces. It had rained hard in the forenoon. Now, level with their eyes, a belated sun flooded the suburbs with temperate gold, spilled its overflow on wet slate roofs, set bright jewels in the upper windows of gray stucco houses, and wove a filagree pattern, beaded with tender green buds in railed gardens and bristling walled shrubberies. Nothing was beneath its glorifying magic. Between the flashing tram-rails the very bed of the wide road seemed flooded with alluvial dust. A wonderful sky country, all mountain and islet-strewn tarn — such a landscape as may lie at the gate of dream-cities in the Alps — closed the prospect into which they were rushing. The wheels hummed, the six cylinders purred happily. She began to sing to herself, stretching her neck and pouting her lips, a foolish little song she had caught from one of the Dominion girls:

"I like your old French Connet  
With the ribbons on it,  
And I like your cha-a-a-arming ways.  
If you'll come to Parry  
Then we two will marry  
And our wedding march shall be the Marseillaise."

“Feeling happier, Flash?”

She had forgotten him. Now, as she turned, self-reproachful, at the sound of his voice, the unreasonable little fit of happiness took wing. Yet she could not but admire him. How cleverly and coolly he drove! What chances he took! They were passing every one. Once, at some congestion in the traffic, a policeman touched his helmet and let him through. He seemed to feel this was a man not used to wait his turn. Paul had once said to her that most men failed in life because its detail was too much for them to tackle; at least, this was what she made out of a rather more ornate speech. Bryan didn't seem to find any difficulty. She remembered Jack Barbour's comprehensive phrase, “Bryan's first-class in anything he takes up.” Was it because she was ambitious, aspiring, herself that she resisted this power, instead of succumbing to it, as ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have done, and being content to shine with a reflected glory? She had had her own little dream of success — the packed theatre, the thunders of applause, her name flashing and winking in letters of fire — part of the madness of a great city by night — paragraphs, interviews. All very mean and personal, no doubt, yet with an element in them that somehow dignified the ambition. For to be the favorite of the public was what she wanted — nothing else would do — the great good-hearted public, that rings its hard-earned shilling or half-crown upon the ledge of the ticket-office, shopman and clerk with honest wife and sweetheart at his side, equally ready to laugh or cheer or cry, who dip a mutual finger into a box of chocolates and believe that even a dancer can be an honest girl.

## XVI

### AZRAEL

**T**HEY stopped at a little place in a fold of the Chiltern Hills, a mere roadside inn which the neighborhood of a fashionable golf-course had galvanized into new and rather graceful life. The stone front was covered in ivy, two wings of red brick terminated in sunny bay windows, there was a bowling-green at the back, and an academician had repainted the sign. A few men in tweeds and flannels whom Lumsden appeared to know were strolling about the place, but abstained tactfully from more than a passing greeting. While tea was getting ready the baronet lit a cigar, and the girl gathered a bunch of primroses in the garden and pinned them at her waist. Now that she had taken off the heavy coat he had insisted on her wearing, he noticed for the first time the shabbiness of her black house-frock. A white thread, dropped from some needlework, clung to one sleeve.

Lumsden was a man for whom some kind of a love affair had always been a necessity. Even before he left Eton he had had friends among women of the world. His bluff, slangy manners covered a good deal of intensity of a rather un-English sort. Men of Scotch race have a subtlety denied to the obtuser Southron. They are both more steadfast and more perfidious. His early manhood had been shaken by one great passion, which had ended happily and which it is no part of our business to disinter. A long series of inconclusive sentimental experiments had followed it; inconclusive, because he had the grace or the vanity to think that, had it been constancy he was seeking, he might often enough have found it.



The devotion, indeed, which one might strike up against in unexpected quarters was, in his opinion, a serious drawback to the game. He was a generous lover. The idol of the moment was always bravely apparelled, always had plenty of tinsel on it, and if a sense of its inadequacy oppressed him, he got rid of the feeling by putting on a little more. All he had asked latterly was that it should simper prettily and do him credit. He was deceived, of course, from time to time, but never before his own waning attention had given betrayal at once its justification and its clue. Thus it fell out that, although his favored pastime had cost him a great deal of money, it had never cost him what such a man would consider his self-respect. It will save time to admit that his intentions toward his young cousin (she was not really his cousin, we know, but he liked to speak of her, even think of her so) had not been honorable. That she was kin and of the same caste as himself had no weight with a man accustomed to divide women into two classes — those he would not marry under any circumstances and those whom he would only marry if there were no help for it. Fenella, to do him justice (and, in a way, to do her justice too), had belonged to the second class from the beginning, but her emergence from it now into a category all by itself was not due to any recognition on his part of her integrity — why should he recognize what he had not tempted? — but simply and solely to the fact that the illness of that poor lady, her mother, had upset all his early calculations. He had his own code of conduct, and one of them was that you can not call at a girl's home, inquire after the maternal health, send the invalid fruit and game, and then — well, without an entire change in perspective as regards her. Of late, indeed, she had lain in his imagination to a quite distressing extent. The impulse that had made him give up a day's hunting and come spurring to her side over ten miles of muddy ground had not failed to repeat itself again and again. His thoughts turned toward her incessantly. At every man's tale of fraud and wrong her

image stirred uneasily in his imagination, and the ideal, rather deferred than quite disowned, to which his whole life had done violence, joined with his passion in pleading for a reparation that was at once so easy and so pleasant. Women are generally avenged competently by some woman. The eclipse of the individual in the species never lasts. She emerges, armed with all the old illusions, and often at the very moment when a man is weakest to do battle with her.

Smoking silently, he looked at her now, busied with the pretty feminine duties of milk-jug and sugar-tongs, marked the perceptible changes of face and figure since their first encounter. His experience projected, as it were, her maturity, even her gray hairs upon her — owned that she would always be charming, always a sweet woman.

“Dreaming, Flash?”

She had only been respecting his own silent mood, but did not deny her abstraction.

“I was thinking of the Dominion. When’s the first night?”

“In about three weeks. It’ll be *Hamlet* without the prince for some of us, eh, coz?”

She did not answer.

“You must only look upon it as put off for awhile,” he said reassuringly. “You’ll get another chance.”

She shook her head. “I don’t feel I shall. Don’t you ever feel there’s just one time for the one thing?”

“Even if I didn’t, Shakespeare has. But you’re over-young, Flash, to be thinking of fortune at the ebb.”

He looked down at her hand. There were no rings on it. He had a suspicion that was confirmed when she snatched it off the table and put it in her lap.

“Don’t think me impertinent, but will it make much difference, I mean financial difference, to you if your mother dies?”

“I don’t know. I’m afraid so. But I have a little money coming to me when I’m twenty-one. Not a lot.”

“How old are you now?”

"Nearly nineteen."

"Two years! What are you going to do meanwhile?"

She shrugged her shoulders, or maybe shivered. Life *was* gray with the dream out of it.

"Work, I suppose — at something. I can always teach dancing again."

"Flash, I'm ungodly rich. Won't you let me ——"

"*Bryan!*"

It was the first time she had ever called him familiarly by his name, but her face was so shocked and white, her voice so like a real cry of pain, that he did not notice it. He flushed, and churned the gravel with his heel.

"What have I said? Do you know, young woman, I don't find the expression on your face very flattering."

"Bryan! If I thought you meant what you've just said, you — I — we ——"

"Well, what?"

"Never, *never* could meet again."

Lumsden swallowed his humiliation, but it didn't go down very far.

"I beg your pardon. Will that do? There was some excuse for me, you know. You let me help you once before."

"Not with money."

He wasn't in a mood to be very delicate. "Wasn't it?" he said with a short laugh. "Never mind, then."

"Why do you laugh that funny way?" said Fenella, with unexpected spirit. "You must tell me now. Did you have to pay Dollfus to take me?"

"Dear *ingénuel*! Do you mean to say you've never suspected it? You don't think Dollfus is in business for hygienic reasons, do you?"

"Much money?" she persisted.

"Oh, ask Joe," said Lumsden, rather wearily. "He's on the telephone."

Fenella beat her palms against the side of the chair. "I've been a fool," she went on, in a fierce soliloquy, "a little, credu-

lous donkey. No wonder that girl thought me a fraud! And yet — I believed you all believed in me. Do you think I'd ever have let you — unless I felt sure? Oh! you must know it."

"My dear child, be content. You carry conviction. I acquit you from this moment of everything unmaidenly, generosity included."

"Generosity!"

"Yes. It sometimes requires as much to take as to give. But you're like all women."

"Why?"

"When they're not insulted at being offered money they're insulted it isn't more."

"How dare you call me 'women'?"

"Does it hurt your dignity?"

"Never mind what it hurts. You've no right to speak that way, to class me with — with others. Oh, yes, you have, though. I'd forgotten."

"Flash, let me tell you one thing: No matter how young or charming or virtuous you may be, to keep harping on what you know hurts a man's feelings is to be a shrew."

"Your 'feelings'!" The vexation went out of her face. She leaned her chin on her hand and gave him a look so piercing, so direct and unexpected, that it went through all his worldly armor.

"Well?" he asked, grimly, through his teeth. She never guessed the restraint he was putting on himself. "Haven't I a right to any?"

She looked away without answering.

He got up abruptly. "Let's go home," he said. "We've had enough heart-to-heart talk for one afternoon."

They rode back into the London lights in a silence which the gentleman in the peaked cap who drove them probably misconstrued as perfect accord. "They don't talk much, not w'en they're 'olding 'ands," he said that night in his

avored house of call. But he only held her hand once, to say good-bye at the door.

"Have I been a prig?" asked Fenella, contritely.

He seemed to be turning the matter over, but was really thinking how prettily penitence became her.

"Have I offended you?"

"I'll tell you whether you have some other time."

Apparently not beyond forgiveness, for he came again two days later and took her for an hour's drive — and then the next day. Good or bad, the habit formed itself. Two or three times she allowed herself to be persuaded further, and let him take her to dinner. At such an hour the big restaurants would not be very full; but it seemed Bryan could not go anywhere without meeting a man he knew, and who, while speaking, divided his attention pretty evenly between the baronet, half-turned in his chair, holding the lapel of his friend's coat, and the pretty stranger to whom he was not introduced. He was very kind and cousinly; had theories as to what people should eat (he never asked her to drink) when low-spirited and anxious, kept clear of the personal note, and always saw she got back in time. Thus, little by little, the hint she had received of a dangerous hardness in his nature was effaced. In time of trouble the heart receives more impressions than the head, and it is wonderful into what bulk tearful eyes can magnify a little kindness. Fenella was to blame herself subsequently for her conduct during the last days of her mother's life; but I think, perhaps too indulgently, that it was only the instinct to grasp at enjoyment while enjoyment was possible. The very pang of self-reproach with which she took up her nightly task might have convinced her of this. Old habits are not effaced in an instant. From babyhood she had known no surer way to make her mother happy than by seizing all opportunities for pleasure that came her way. Outsiders who suspect love because it falls from some

arbitrary standard they choose to set up have no idea how often apparent heartlessness is justified by some such little secret covenant between the loving and the loved. And then, though the period of suspense was short, it passed so heavily. The days seemed counted out with pitiful slowness by a power that knew how few they were. Time, like distance, deceives when one is seeking the way. She was so fearfully alone! Her vision sometimes ached at the obscurity of her own destiny. In that still room uncertainties seemed to multiply, thicken and coil, like smoke in a tunnel. She envied every one in turn — Nurse Ursula, with her brisk professional manner and endless prospect of clearly defined duty — cases to come running into perspective like beds in a long ward; slatternly, pretty little Frances, with her brisk love-passages in the area; the woman upon the bed, nearer with every breath to a change that raises no problems but solves them all. She often whispered in her mother's ear, "Mother, mother; take me with you. Don't go without Nelly."

Foolish extravagances of an undisciplined heart. Even for death, Nelly, we have to wait until the time for enjoying it is past.

Early one morning, following a night in which her mother had seemed much easier, and in the very first hour of her untimely sleep, the nurse shook her by the shoulder. In the one look that the two women exchanged her news was told. Fenella huddled on her clothes and followed to the sick-room. Her mother was breathing strangely. Every inspiration was like the hiccough that follows a fit of weeping in a child. Her brows were knitted — she seemed puzzled and absorbed. Occasionally she tried to lift a hand stiffly and clumsily toward her head. By noon all was over. The doctor called twice, and, for the first time in many days, failed to write a new prescription. The lawyer was telephoned for. About three o'clock in the afternoon two decent pew-opening bodies

were admitted without question, stole upstairs, and, having performed their office, stole as quietly away. The charwoman stayed for tea, and uncovered a rich vein of reminiscence suitable for the occasion. The blinds were drawn down, the windows opened. Outside, in the square, was heard the champing of bits, the rattle of the harness, that poor Mrs. Barbour had loved to listen to of an afternoon in spring or autumn.

Toward evening, when they were all done with the dead woman, Fenella went softly upstairs. Nurse Ursula, upon whose breast, for want of a nearer, the orphaned girl's first passion of grief had spent itself, but whose attentions harassed her now, would have accompanied her, but she would have no one. She approached the door full of awe as well as sorrow. Within it seemed some dark angel, with brimming chalice, had been waiting till she was calm enough to drink. There was something sacramental in this first visit to her dead; her passion composed itself for the encounter. Through the lowered blinds the afternoon sun shined the room with a warm amber light. The windows were opened slightly at the bottom, and the fresh spring wind puffed and sucked at the light casement curtains. She laid her head down upon the pillow and put her lips to the chill, sunken temples, upon which she felt the hair still damp from the sweat of the death-struggle. As there are depths in the sea which the hardest diver cannot support save with constraint of breathing, so there are depths of sorrowful reverie wherein the soul abdicates for a time its faculties of memory and comparison. Fenella did not cry nor remember nor rebel. The briny flood rose quietly — encompassed her utterly — covered her insensibly at the temperature of her own forsaken heart. Sorrow so deep has many of sleep's attributes. She had been vaguely conscious for some time of a knocking at the door before she raised her head. It was turned quite dark; the charwoman, with a candle lighting up her frightened face, stood in the open door.

“Mrs. Chirk! How dare you disturb me.”

"Oh, miss, I'm sorry; but I knocked and knocked. Nurse is upstairs and Frances is out, and there's two gentlemen below says they must see you. I 'aven't told them nothink, miss, not knowin' as you'd 'ave me."

Some more of the dreary business of death, she concluded. She went to her own room, bathed her eyes, dressed her hair hurriedly, and came downstairs. She started as she opened the dining-room door. Her visitors were Lumsden and the Dominion manager.



## XVII

### A DREAM COMES TRUE

**T**HE two men were in evening dress, standing a good way apart. Both seemed ill at ease, and each showed it in a different fashion. Bryan was pulling at his fair moustache, and Mr. Dollfus, his watch in his hand, full of suppressed excitement, had evidently just checked himself in a nervous pacing of the carpet. Before she could give her indignation words, Bryan came quickly across the room, and kept her silent with a gesture.

"Miss Barbour, just a word before you say anything, and before Dollfus tells you our errand. I've brought him here to-night because I don't want either you or him to reproach me afterward that I came between you and even a hundred-to-one chance; but I want you to know before he begins that the whole thing's against my judgment, and against my inclination, too. Now then, Joe, fire away, and remember time's valuable."

The Jew only seemed to have been waiting to burst forth.

"Mith Barbour," he exclaimed, with a nervous movement of his hands, and lisping worse than ever, "I wantcher to thave me."

"To save you?"

"Yeth. Oh, don't look at me that way. I'm thpeakin' sense. Dontcher know what's happenin' to-night?"

She shook her head.

"What!" he almost screamed; "you meanter thay you've forgotten. It's the first night of the *Dime Duchess*. They're playin' the second act now, and, by Gott, the piece is damned already!"

He wiped his dripping forehead with a big scented handkerchief, and began to pace the floor again, flinging out his arms exuberantly.

"It's a conthpiracy from beginning to end," he cried, shrilly—"a conthpiracy! I tell yer, Lumpsdén, I bin in front, and I know a lot of the faces. Fifty or sixty of Costello's people if there's vun. I'll haf the law on him. But cher can't turn out sixty people, eh! They've stopped Ormiston's encore twice; Mith Carthew's so frightened she can't sing a note. Three months' work and thousands of pounds gone to h—ll in a night, by Gott!"

"Stop swearing and raving, Joe, and tell the girl what you want."

Dollfus sobered himself with a great effort and wiped his mouth.

"Scuthe my langwitch, please, Miss Barbour," he said in a lower tone. "I'm excited; I ain't meself. I wantcher ter come and dance."

Fenella stared at him. "To *dancel* to-night?"

Bryan, who had kept his back to them, turned his head now.

"That's right, Flash," he said over his shoulder, "my advice to you is 'don't you do it.' Joe's crazy, but he ain't exaggerating much. They're pretty wild over something in front."

Dollfus shook his head despairingly from side to side.

"There you go Lumpsdén, there you go agen. You're all wrong. I've bin tellin' him that all the vay in the cab. He don't know the public like I do. They're jutht in the mood now when somethin' new and somethin' good'll carry 'em off their feet. Mith Barbour, I haf ter go back anyhow. It'th for you ter decide. Will you come or wontcher?"

"Bryan," she said. "Doesn't he know?" pointing to the ceiling with her head.

"Bout cher mother!" said Dollfus, who was watching her narrowly. "Courthe I know the poor lady'th ill. But

I'll take yer down and I'll bring yer back. Think! Three quarters of an hour! You'll never be mithed."

"Mr. Dollfus, mamma died this morning."

The Dominion manager took up his hat without a word and walked on tiptoe to the door. Bryan followed and, if looks could have killed, Mr. Dollfus's troubles would have been over then and there. In the hall the little man turned.

"Mith Barbour, pleathe, *pleathe* belief me. Not for a thousand pounds, not for ten thousand, I wouldn't er had this happen. I couldn't know, could I — ah? I gotter heart — eh? You von't t'ink the vorse of me?"

"Oh, come on!" said the baronet, taking hold of his sleeve. "Haven't you done enough mischief already?"

"*Stop!*" cried Fenella, so loudly that both men obeyed. She stood rigid for a moment, pressing her hands over her eyes. Across her brain in letters like fire the last message from the beloved dead was throbbing and glowing. "*Dance! Dance!*"

"I'll come, Joe!" she cried. "Just two minutes to put on my cloak, that's all. Don't stop me, Bryan! I know what I'm doing. Let me pass! Oh, I've had enough of its being made smooth and easy for me. I'm one of the crowd to-night, and I'm going to help 'em pull the fat out of the fire. I can do it, too. I never was afraid, and I've got a bit up my sleeve you haven't seen."

She was gone and back in a moment, cloaked and with a little box under her arm.

"My make-up box," she said, tapping it. "I just thought of it in time. Have you got the car outside? How long'll it take? Mrs. Chirk!" she called down the kitchen stairs. "Tell nurse I've been called away on business and not to sit up."

"You're a herrowen, a herrowen," said Joe, dabbing at his eyes this time, as they took their seats in the cab.

"Oh, no, I'm not, Joe. No more than any of the other girls.

Do you think I'm the only woman that's got to grin to-night when she'd rather cry? I never was stage-struck, like other girls. I always knew it was 'work! work!' once you were over the floats. Don't look so glum, Bryan. That's 'cos he only knows half our business, isn't it, Joe? He's only a dabbler. It's bread and butter and a bed to lie on, and perhaps medicine for somebody's mother, isn't it, Joe? Some of those girls told me they'd been eighteen months out and three months rehearsing! Think of it! Oh, why doesn't he get through the traffic?"

The front of the Dominion flashed past, festooned with boards announcing that stalls and dress circle and amphitheatre were full. The vestibule round the box office was crowded with men in dress clothes.

"They're just t'rough the second act," said Dollfus. "Now you know what you've gotter do." And he repeated his instructions. At the stage door he took her hand and pulled her after him, past the wicket and down the whitewashed corridor, full of girls in spangled finery, who gazed at her in amazement and drew aside to let them pass. Near the wings the manager was pounced on by various subalterns, but he waved them aside furiously.

"Go 'way! ask some vun else! Do somethin'! Getter hustle on! What is it, Mr. Lavigne? Oh! the band parts for the cymbal dance. Take 'em rount to Steiner. I ain't the orchestra! Run up to your old dressin'-room," he said, and let go of her hand; "I'll send up your own dresser. Mr. Lavigne — 'ave the old cue put back. You know. What's it — 'muffins'?"

Jack Ormiston was just finishing his third song as she came down dressed, made up in vivid white and carmine, and with the little silver cymbals on her hands. He tumbled off, breathless, perspiring through his grease paint, and stood for a moment, his knees trembling, trying to catch some encouragement amid the babel of cheers, counter-cheers, whistles, cat-

calls, and cries of "Order!" that followed him through. And she had to face *that* presently — unknown, untested, her name not even on the programme.

"Do you think you can do it, Flash?" Bryan asks, nervously, chewing his moustache. In defiance of the "well-known Dominion rule" he has followed her behind.

"Wait and see!" she says, without looking at him, and next moment has taken her cue and is on the stage.

In front the vast concavity of the auditorium sweeps away from her feet, outward and upward. It is dark, confused and populous, full of faces, like pebbles, she fancies, dragged seaward by a retreating wave — flecked white with shirt fronts and fluttering programmes — a hungry monster, ready to engulf her at a tremor or hint of fear. Its hot breath mingles with the cold down-draught of the stage like the flush and chill of an ague. Beyond the blurred footlights her eyes, misty with emotion, watch the leader of the orchestra lifting the first languid bars of the score. His head is turned toward her. In a moment he will give her her signal. Yet, though not a single stroke of his baton but is counted by her, as she waits, poised and tense, for the note upon which, with a clash of cymbals and a tremor of her whole body, the dance must begin, her thoughts, strangely detached and visionary, stray far away from the present moment with its personal crisis of success or failure, to brood, with a perverse preference, over the two great sorrows of her life — the lover who forsook her at the cross-roads of his own ambition because she had not wealth or wit to hold him — the mother, deserted now in her turn, whose waxen fingers, stitch by stitch, had sewn the very dress she is wearing, and who lies at home unwatched or watched only by strangers on the first night of her pitiful state. Life! life! this is life. Something beautiful yet horrible, too. Something that in its demand for service — for distraction — takes as little heed of the woman's breaking heart as it took of the man's thwarted ambition.

"*B-r-r-r!*" The note is reached. As she clashes her cymbals together all visions take flight. The music rises like a flood, pours over the footlights, enters into her and possesses her utterly. She has sold herself to it, and, true to the bargain, her bangled feet beat -- beat out the rhythm upon the boards as they once, upon the sand, had beaten out a tune that one man and the eternal sea sang together. Not a movement of her body above the waist but is poised upon them, governed by their shifts and changes, and nothing is stranger than, having watched them awhile at their work, quick and calculated as the shuttle of a machine into which a brain of steel has been built, to look upward to where arms and breast and head thrown back are all partners in some dream of an unattained desire, that hovers just out of reach of the inviting arms, swoops wilfully for a moment to touch the pursed lips, and, just as it is clasped convulsively to the heaving breast, escapes, to leave her gazing after it with set, expressionless face and limbs, suddenly grown rigid again.

"*B-r-r-r!*" The cymbals bray their harsh discord anew. The music begins, more faintly at first; slowly, slowly it woos the coy vision back to her arms. Her face softens. Out of despair intenser desire is born. Nearer and nearer still. But a new note of warning has crept into the score. A muffled drum-tap, hardly heard at first, grows louder -- falls faster. And her face changes with it. To bewilderment, horror succeeds rapidly. Either this is not the dream that fled her arms before, or else some new significance in what she sees terrifies her, now when it is too late. Straight and level as a blow it reaches her. She covers her eyes, tries to strike it down, holds it from her with outstretched hands, folds her arms across her breast to deny it entrance. The music tears through crescendo to climax, and all the time she is dancing as well as acting -- dancing with all her strength and skill. She cannot feel the tension of the audience, does not know what a tribute

is in its breathless attention. She only knows that her dance is nearing its end and that they are silent. Why does no one cheer or clap their hands? Is it possible that, amid those hundreds, not one knows how well the thing is being done? Furore or failure: this had been prophesied of her, and she had given no thought to the alternative. It is to be failure then. All her work is to go for nothing — her dishonor, the violence done her own feelings to-night — for nothing. With success she might even have forgiven herself. A great terror seizes her of the pitiless many-headed monster whom she has wooed in vain and whose churlish silence has power to change all she had thought inspiration into the dross of a crazy, heady folly. It is beginning to murmur — to move restlessly. As she holds her arms out to it in a sort of last abject appeal, the murmuring grows louder. It is the wave, the wave again, of her first fancy, that has hung suspended while she danced, and that now, gathering volume, rears its head to finally overwhelm her with shame and confusion. She was mad to have ventured! Nothing living can face it! She stifles a scream, dances out the last furious finale of the orchestra, and falls prostrate, her arms stretched out before her, the silver cymbals held upward.

Everything turns dark and thunderous. She feels the chorus sweep past her with a glitter of gold legs and a stiff rustle of skirts; fancies that the orchestra is playing again, but that something louder and stormier is drowning it; gets shakily to her feet, takes one frightened glance at the tumult before her, and, with a half curtsey, totters through the wings. Mr. Dollfus rushes to meet her; he is shaking her hands again and again, some one else is holding her round the waist and whispering in her ear.

“Pull yourself together, Flash! It’s all right. You must go on — once, anyhow. Damn it, Joe, give the girl a few moments. Can’t you see it’s got over her?”

“Did I — do — all right?” says Fenella, between gasps.

“All right?” Dollfus repeats, excitedly. “Cantcher hear

'em? Listen to the noise! Wotcher think they mean? Come — surely to gootness, you're ready now?"

She is calmer, and draws herself out of the baronet's arms.

"Go on, kid," he says, as he lets her go. "Go on, and taste popularity. Take a good long drink of it, Flash."

As she came through the wings the dropping fire of applause exploded into a roar again. It was nearly three minutes — I mean three real minutes — before she was done kissing her hands to us all, and the play was allowed to proceed to its triumphant finale. I happen to know, because I was in front, and a good deal of what you have been reading is my own impression, on record in the columns of the *Panoply*, of the night Fenella Barbour came into her kingdom.



## XVIII

### ICE TO THE MOON

**A**ND yet an hour later, when the theatre was empty, the cheering and the speeches done, and the linotypes were pecking various people's impressions of a wonderful night into place, she was crying as though her heart would break. She was sitting in Lumsden's study in a big chintz-covered arm-chair. She had taken off her hat but not her cloak, and her hair fell in some disorder over tear-stained cheeks. The baronet sat on the edge of a table opposite her, his long shapely black legs stretched out before him. He had changed his coat for a silk dressing-jacket and was smoking a cigarette. In spite of his air of being at home, something in his face, harassed and unquiet, checked the inference that he was also at his ease. His thin hair was ruffled and his eyes were a little bloodshot. Quite frequently he reached across to a tray on which a syphon, a cut-glass bottle, and a long thin tumbler kept cheerful company.

"Don't you think you've cried about enough, Flash?" he suggested, presently.

She pressed a handkerchief, already wet through, against her eyes, but made no attempt to check the flow. There was something disquieting in this steady drain upon her emotions. It seemed to tell of a mortal wound to affection or self-respect.

"I t-told you I should. You should have let me go home."

"My dear child, it's natural you should cry after what you've been through. But there's a point where every one ought to stop. You'll make yourself ill."

"I shall never forgive myself — *never, never!*"

This was a point of view that the baronet had evidently tried to combat already, and unsuccessfully. He sighed, and took another drink.

"I'm bad — wicked — heartless and disgraced." She jumped up and began to button her coat.

"I must go — at once!" she cried. "Where did you put my hat?"

*"Flash!"*

She was so near him that without rising he could put out his hand and catch her arm. She looked at his face and sat down, weakly and as if fascinated. He held her so for a few moments, and then turned his eyes away.

"Don't be a little muff!" he said.

His words seemed to relieve a tension. She giggled hysterically.

"You're up here to-night," he went on deliberately, "because I made you come up, and because I wasn't going to have you go home, after eating nothing all day, to a house where every one's in bed, and cry yourself to sleep or lie awake starving and self-reproachful. You won't be so hard on yourself after eating and drinking something. Hello!"

There was a stir and tinkle of glass and china from the inner room. Bryan threw the door open.

"Bring it in here, Becket," he said.

Two servants entered, carrying a tray. Quickly as a conjuror the elder of the two cleared the low table, spread a fringed linen cloth and laid out supper. There was soup in brown silver-covered bowls, and something in a tureen with a white tongue of flame licking the bottom, and an epergne of fruit topped with a big pine and a phalanx of thin glasses. The footman put a pail on the ground full of cracked ice, out of which three long bottle-necks were sticking. He began to cut the cork of one of them loose.

"Anybody call while I was out, Becket?"

"Madame called about nine, Sir Bryan."

"Again?" he said, in a surprised voice.

"Yes, Sir Bryan."

"Did she leave any message?"

"She said you would probably hear from her to-night, Sir Bryan."

Lumsden looked at the clock and shrugged his shoulders.

"You needn't wait up, Becket," he said. "I'll telephone to the garage."

The outer door closed softly upon the two men. Neither of them had looked at her once.

"Now then," said Lumsden, expanding hospitably. "Sit where you are and I'll wait on you." He put a napkin over her knees, tilted the scalding bouillon into her soup-plate, and filled two glasses with the spumy wine. He emptied one himself and refilled it immediately.

"Aren't *you* going to eat anything?" asked Fenella.

"Oh! I've had dinner. Besides, I'm a bit off my oats, Flash. Been worried lately." He gazed at the fire awhile, chewing one end of his moustache, but didn't enlarge upon the reason of his disquiet.

"Is that all you can eat?" he asked presently, seeing she put aside her plate. "You must have some Hide-and-Seek, then. You should have taken some first. It'll give you an appetite; and it'll give you a color besides. That's another of my worries. You're too pale, child. Have you always been so?"

"I suppose so."

"Oh! it's all right, then. Of course it's a divine color; but one doesn't want an artistic effect at the expense of health. Well, Flash, here's a toast: 'The New Life,' Miss Fenella Powys Barbour." He bowed profoundly and emptied his glass.

Fenella just sipped her own wine. A suspicion that had crossed her mind even in her own house, and again when Lumsden held her in the wings, but which, in her excitement,

she had forgotten, returned upon her. Every time he filled and drained his glass fear clutched at her heart.

"What a rummy little face you made then, Flash. You won't do that when you're ten years older. No, no! Thank God for the juice of the grape. It's killed more men than bullets, but it's better to be full of it than full of bullets. 'Ah! eh!' as Joe would say. Don't jump!—'tother cork's just going."

"Bryan, don't drink any more. It — it isn't fair to me."

"Oh, oh! So that's the secret? That's why we're such a tongue-tied little lady: that's why we've lost our appetite? My dear kiddie, you surely don't think a bottle more or less makes any difference to an old war-horse like myself. But I love you for hating it. It's a low taste for a girl. I get fits of loathing myself; sometimes even the smell suggests dyed hair. There, then!" He thrust the open bottle back into the melting ice. "Now, turn to vinegar! . . . But I'll tell you a secret, Flash. Half the work of the world is done by men who aren't quite sober after nine o'clock. Just cosy, y' know. And the best paid half, too. I could give you names that would surprise you. It's a rummy world."

He meditated awhile on the strangeness of the world against which he had so little cause of complaint, shook his head, and, probably from force of habit, mixed himself a whiskey and soda.

"What was I saying when we were interrupted? Oh, yes; I remember. I'll tell you while I'm cutting up one of these little brown birds. Why — just this, Flash. You're unhappy because you're confusing reasons with motives. One can have all sorts of reasons, good and bad mixed, but it's the motive that counts. Take yourself to-night. Why did you come and dance? Well, Joe in tears is an affecting sight: that's one. Then you don't like to see work and worry wasted: that's another. And I think you're a helpful little baby. That makes three good 'uns. Suppose in with all these there *was* a bit of vanity mixed, a little half-formed wish to show 'em a trick or two and a very pretty shape. . . ."

He stopped suddenly and threw down the knife and fork he had been plying. "I say, Flash, don't you think you and I ought to know where we stand?"

"Where we stand?" Her mouth went suddenly dry.

"Yes" — nervously but stubbornly — "where you and I stand. It's the proper time for it. There's a new life beginning for you to-night, Flash. I don't want to exaggerate it; I've seen too many of these things end in smoke, and the time's gone by for any Lola Montes. The world wants things just as bad, but it wants to pay less for 'em. But you're good for three or four years, and that looks a long way ahead to me. Flash, what do you think of me? I mean, personally. Bryan Lumsden — the human animal?"

"How can I tell? I don't know you well enough."

"That's the sort of answer that tries to gain time and only loses it. I'm playing *bona fide*, Flash: don't you play Punchedello. You're woman enough to know the most important thing about me."

"Important for you, perhaps."

"Yes, my clever girl, and for you, too. You can't play the lone hand forever. All life's a conspiracy against it. When fate throws two people like you and me together, it doesn't let them go under an explanation, at least. Let's have ours."

She covered her eyes. "Not to-night, Bryan; not to-night. Think what I've been through."

"Yes, to-night, coz. Don't look scared. You ain't going to hear anything you shouldn't. I'll begin at the beginning. . . . Nine or ten months ago, you know, I was at La Palèze. I'd been asked to put money in, and I went for a look. God knows why I stayed on. We didn't have much to do in the evenings except talk scandal, and I admit there was a good deal talked about a French artist and his pretty model, who were staying together in the town. You've heard, perhaps, how common that arrangement is all along the coast. But this time they said the model was English, and even before I saw

you I felt sorry for you. It's a kind of national pride, I suppose. We ain't angels ourselves, but we don't like to think of our own women that way, abroad. My bedroom window looked right out along the beach, and when I was dressing for dinner I used often to see you coming back along the sands. Do you remember it?"

Fenella was leaning forward now, intense interest on her face, her lips parted, and her eyes half closed.

"I know — I know," she broke in. "We used to go to Sables and have tea in a little windy, boardy place that he said reminded him of America. It was about half-past seven or seven when we used to come back, wasn't it? And the hotel windows seemed to be all on fire, and the village all low and gray and sad, and, however quick we walked, the streak from the sun over the water kept up and dazzled us. And I used to stop and grub for shells and funny things, and when I looked up he'd be miles ahead, and I had to run — run — oh! I'm sorry for interrupting." She looked at Lumsden and all the glow died out. "Go on, Bryan."

His mouth twitched and his face grew dark.

"Well, I spoke to you at last. I hope you remember that as vividly. It didn't seem a great sin against propriety under the circumstances. You'd gone before I found out who you were. If I had known, it might have made a difference. Because I knew your father, Flash. I used to spend my holidays at Lulford, often. Coffers was always let to some rich cockney or other, and we used to live on the rent in Pimlico. He taught me how to throw a fly. Then he dropped out. I heard he married some one — who didn't — you know —"

"He married a farmer's daughter for love," said Fenella, proudly, but inexactly.

"It doesn't matter. When I got back from New York just before Christmas, Joe came to see me, full of news. He told me you had gone to him asking for an engagement and that you were to spend Christmas at Lulford. He wanted

money. I wouldn't promise till I'd seen you. You know what happened then, don't you, Flash?"

"I know some of it."

"I'll tell you the rest. When I came into the library, I won't say I lost my heart. I'm not a man to be bowled over by the first piece of plaintive prettiness with a white neck and a turned-down collar that comes his way. I've seen pretty nearly every pose, and that's the one I mistrust most. Besides, I already had La Palèze against you."

"It wasn't such a secret as you think. Other people had it against me too."

"Yes. But with the unimportant difference that I got the credit of the walks to Sables in the sunset and all the rest of the idyll."

"Which you never took the trouble to deny."

"Frankly, I did, coz."

"Why not, I?"

"Ah! there you touch a kink in my nature that I can't explain."

"You saw that we were left alone. You must have noticed the women cut me. Do you know that my own cousin spied on me at night and accused me of wearing clothes and jewelry you'd bought for me?"

"Flash — don't scold! I didn't know all this; and if I had, it wouldn't have upset me. It seemed more my business than any one else's what had happened you before."

"*You! you!* Why is my reputation your affair?"

Instead of answering, he knelt down on the bearskin hearth-rug, and leaned forward until their eyes were on a level.

"Look at me, Flash — straight! That's a good girl. Now, tell me this. I've met Ingram once. If I were to know everything as, say, for argument's sake, God knows it, is there any reason I shouldn't like to meet him again?"

"*You'll — never — know.*"

Of all the answers she could have made him, it was probably

the one for which he was least prepared. He jumped to his feet and stood, baffled, pulling at his moustache and looking down on the floor. Then he threw up his head.

"So be it," he said. "I'll take that risk with the others. Flash, will you have me?"

She curled her lip.

"Oh! quite respectably. A man with his shirt outside his coat shall say those few words first that mean so much."

"No, Bryan. I won't."

"Don't be a little donkey, Flash. You don't realize what you're throwing away. You don't know what a man like me is prepared to do, once he's hard hit. Don't believe all the tales you hear. My heart's been burgled, but it's never been raided before. You *are* the first, in a way. I'll be gentle — I'll be respectful — I'll be as like the men in the novels girls read as I can. I know my faults. Haven't I been holding myself in all the time? It's not as if I wanted you to give up anything. You can live your own life, till you've tired of it. I ain't" — he laughed shortly — "jealous of the public. And as for the man you won't tell me about, you see I'm putting him out of the question. He's gone, anyhow. And oh, Flash! I'll make your life a fairy tale come true. Think of the dresses you'll have. I'll never be tired of seeing you in new ones. And the travelling! We'll go all over the earth. If you've got those new ideas, I'll settle money on you in a lump. Then you won't feel bad asking me for it. I'll leave everything to your own generosity. Could I say fairer? Could I offer more? Oh, why don't you say something? How can you sit there and listen to me, talking like some rotten old driesalting coronation knight?"

He knelt down on the hearth-rug again, unlocked her fingers, and took them into his own — gently and with a sort of frightened respect for the repulsion in her averted face. His own was flushed and ignobly eager. His agitated breath, tainted with liquor and tobacco, seemed to penetrate her fine dry



hair to the scalp. Within, I suppose, was ferment and chaos — blind, confident passion waiting impatiently on a tenderness, felt indeed, but which seemed to perish on his lips in one bald unconvincing speech after another, whose unworthiness he felt as he uttered them. Somewhere inside the animal tegument that his life had thickened and indurated he was groping for his starved, mislaid soul.

"Flash, why don't you speak? Haven't I eaten enough dirt yet? What pleasure can there be in watching a human being grovel? Why don't you say 'Yes'?"

"No — no — *no!*" she cried, passionately, stamping her foot. "Bryan, don't touch me! I won't have you touch me! I've got a temper. Oh, can't you see I'm not the sort of woman that gives herself twice."

She thrust him away and jumped up, pushing the arm-chair back on its smooth casters. He rose, too, and picked a hair or two carefully from his broad-clothed knees.

"I see," he said, gloomily and comprehensively. "It's a lesson not to judge by faces. Yours has given me the sell of my life — but it's what I've always maintained. The first man — the first man, however great a hound he may be. You never catch him up."

"Think what you like of me," she cried indignantly, "but don't dare suppose evil of him. You can't even imagine him. He's as far above me and you, Bryan, as the stars are above the ground. You've met him, you say. How could you look in his eyes and not be ashamed of all your horrid, wicked knowledge? Oh!" she went on in a softer voice, "I don't despise you, Bryan — truth and honor, I don't. I like you as a friend. I've heard things about you; but I feel that if I was a man and had your chances I mightn't be much better. That's honest, isn't it? You and I are much about the same. We're fond of the world and pleasure and all the good things money buys. What you offer dazzles me in a way — specially the clothes. Perhaps if I hadn't known him first — but

oh, Bryan, I can't — I *can't* come down after that! You don't know how hard I fought for him. I found him at his work and I tempted him away. I made myself pretty for him. I made all the advances. I'm full of tricks, really. There's things even I couldn't tell. But they don't mean the same to him, Bryan, as they would to us clay people. I don't know what they do mean. I thought I might have in time. Because he was always kind. He saw through me, I think, but my feelings never got hurt. I think I was just a little bird that had come to drink out of his hand, and he wouldn't frighten it away."

"It's a pity Mrs. Hepworth isn't alive," sneered Lumsden. "You and she might compare notes."

"Is she dead?" said Fenella, in a still lower voice. "Poor thing; that's it, then. She was ill and suffering and told him. He couldn't resist those sorts of things — Paul couldn't."

"He must have been an amusing companion."

"Not amusing, Bryan, but, oh! something so much deeper. Don't think I loved a muff. My darling is as strong and brave as he's good. I felt so *safe* with him. You don't know the terror a girl can feel of a man she isn't sure of. It's like a nightmare where you can't run away. I'd have gone tramping with Paul. I'd have slept under a hedge if he'd had me in his arms. Now, don't you see how impossible it is? I'm tired, Bryan, I *must* go home. Will you 'phone for a cab?"

The dogged silence in which he listened to her, sitting on the edge of the table, his hands thrust into his pockets and his head hanging down, should have warned her. Now, when he lifted it and showed his face, she measured the full extent of her folly in trusting herself to him. He walked deliberately across the room and locked the outer door. With an open laugh at her terrified face, he slipped the key into his pocket and stood before her, his hands clutching the lapels of his smoking jacket.

"Now then," he said, and took a deep breath. "You've

had your advantage and you've used it as a woman always does — mercilessly and foolishly. It's my turn now."

She faced him bravely. "I know what you mean," she said without flinching, and without raising her voice. "Don't go mad, Bryan! If you destroy me, you destroy yourself."

"I'll take the risk," he answered. "I see you looking at the windows. You're quite right. They ain't locked. You can throw one open now and squeal. I shan't stop you. There's a bobby on point just round the square. Tell *him* your story. But, before you do, just look at the clock, and think how you'll come out of the show-up yourself. Time passes quickly in the kind of chat we've been having. I think, under the circumstances, there's discredit enough for us both. You won't? That's sensible. Now listen to me."

He stopped for a moment as though his mouth were dry, filled a glass from the syphon and gulped it down. She watched his face with a sort of disgusted fascination — the bloodshot, frowning eyes, the dilated nostrils, and the twitching mouth.

"You say you've the same flesh and blood as myself, Flash. Perhaps you can imagine, then, how it feels when you've chucked your heart at the feet of the only woman in the world, and she's danced on it and kicked it back to you. Pretty bad, I assure you. There's nothing like a little real life to chase away the dreams you've been filling your head with."

She would have fainted if he had kept his eyes upon her; but he turned aside to drink again, and when he looked up it was into the muzzle of a little steel revolver. He didn't flinch or start — only kept quite still and whistled softly under his breath.

"I'll shoot!" she said. "I swear I'll shoot, Bryan, if you don't unlock the door and let me out. It's his present. He told me I'd want it. It was under my pillow all the time at Lulford. I've had it in my coat pocket every time I went out with you. Will you let me go?"

"No," he said. "Less than ever now."

Her hand wavered — steadied — tightened convulsively. Next moment he had gripped her wrist. With a little cry of pain she let the revolver go. It fell on the thick carpet almost as noiselessly as on grass. He picked it up and examined it before he put it in his hip-pocket.

"By gad!" he exclaimed half under his breath. "She really pulled the trigger. Why didn't he tell you to push the safety catch up first?"

She had fallen back in the arm-chair, quite beaten and crying.

"Have mercy on me, Bryan!"

"O'n, yes! I'll have mercy. I'm going into the library to collect my own thoughts. I'll leave you here for a quarter of an hour. You can do a lot of thinking in that time. All I've offered you stands. If you make up your mind quicker than you expected, just knock at the door or call me."

He opened the door of the inner room, looked at her for a few moments, checked a sudden movement either of ruth or passion, and closed it behind him. She heard him drag a chair along the floor and sit down.

Left alone, she looked quickly round her for a means of escape. The windows were not bolted. She opened one, trembling at the slight noise it made, and looked out. The street was twenty feet below her. Empty asphalt stretched left and right, scalloped by the street lamps into white semi-circles of incandescent light, whose dim edges touched one another. There was a triangular open space across the road to her left. Some hotel or club opened upon it. As she watched, one of the glass leaves of the door swung open, and two men in evening dress came out. They parted at the bottom of the steps with some light talk that ended in a coarse unrestrained laugh. One took a cab, the other went swinging along and still shaking with laughter, in the opposite direction. Call for help! — tell her story! — to a world like this!

She closed the window and looked round her with that de-

spairing glance that leaves no corner unscanned. Suddenly her eyes were arrested in their search. At the farthest end of the room, just beyond the light of a shaded reading lamp, they caught the familiar ebony and silver of a telephone apparatus. The nurse was not to leave them till to-morrow, and she was sleeping in Miss Rigby's old room. They had decided to give up their telephone, but there was a month or so of the old lease still to run. She tiptoed across the room, lifted the receiver from its bracket and put it to her ear. Silence for a long, long while. Then the metallic sound of feet approaching along a zinc-covered floor.

"Number please?"

She tried to keep her voice low and steady.

"3087 Paddington."

"I can't hear you."

She ventured to speak a little louder, glancing over her shoulder as she did so, and the man repeated the number. After what seemed an eternity she heard a piping, sleepy little voice with a Scotch accent. Thank God! It was nurse.

"Who are you?"

She had not answered when the receiver buzzed in her ear, nearly deafening her. Another voice, louder, more urgent, broke in.

"Are you Mayfair? Is this Sir Bryan Lumsden's?"

"Oh! please go away," pleaded poor Fenella, "you're interrupting a call."

"I *won't* go away. We're Hampstead. Is this Lumsden's? It's urgent. It's life or death. Tell him ——"

She listened for a moment, then dropped the receiver with a scream. Bryan burst into the room, haggard, his tie hanging loose.

"What's the matter? Are you hurt?"

"Oh, Bryan! There's some one on the telephone for you. They say your son —— I don't understand. It's something awful."

Lumsden caught the oscillating receiver and clapped it to his ear. This is what she heard:

"*What! Both? My God! The boy's alive? Have you got —? What does he say? Yes! At once! At — once!*"

He turned so quickly that Fenella, who was standing by his shoulder, was nearly thrown over. She had to catch his arm to keep her balance.

"Is it bad news?"

"Yes, yes! Oh the devil! — the devil!"

"You'll want the car, won't you?"

"Yes. Do you know how to call it? Put the peg in the hole marked 'Garage!' Say: '*At once — dressed or not.*' I can drive."

He tried the outer door, cursed at finding it locked, then remembering, took the key from his pocket and flung it open. He shouted. It seemed scarcely a minute before the passage was full of servants, half dressed, the women with their hair loose, and the men fastening their braces — hardly two before the car was at the door, filling the quiet street with the throb of its great pulse.

"Call a cab and get home quick," he said, as he twisted a white muffler round his throat. "You'll find the number of a cab-rank in that red book. Have you got money for your fare?"

"Can't I go with you, Bryan? Can't I help?"

Even in his distress he had time for a moment of surprised admiration.

"Oh, Flash!" he groaned, "there's no one like you. Come on, then, and be in at the finish!"

## XIX

### THE WAGES

**T**HE chauffeur was fastening his leather gaiters as they came out.  
"Frognal!" was all Bryan said. "And drive like h—ll!"

The lad touched his cap. As they took their seats, the car seemed to bounce and then leap forward. The streets and squares were empty, except for an occasional limping shadow on the pavement that stopped short at their approach and turned to watch them past. From time to time the chauffeur's shoulder dipped to one side, and the piercing wail of a "Gabriel" horn went before them like an admonition of judgment at hand. She knew then that they were nearing a corner, and that she must hold her companion's arm, for the suddenly diverted impetus seemed to heel the car over on two wheels and she could not keep her seat on the inflated cushions except by clinging to him. But he never spoke to her, or seemed to notice the clutch upon his sleeve. The muscles of his forearm were always moving spasmodically, as if the anguish of waiting found relief in some restless, regular motion of the hands. She knew he had a trick of twisting his signet-ring round and round. The carriage lamp was behind his head, and she only saw his face in silhouette. In the dark lanes around Hampstead the car seemed to be plunging giddily into a tunnel of light made by its own lamps.

It stopped, almost as suddenly as it had started, outside a thick hedge of evergreens. Over an unpainted oak gate an

electric light was burning inside a tiny drop-lantern of frosted glass. Beneath it three or four men were standing together; one of whom wore a flat braided cap with a peak. Lumsden jumped out almost before the car had pulled up, and, with a hasty word to the man in blue, disappeared. He had not asked her to come in with him, and she was shy of renewing her offer of service. She sat still in the corner where he had left her, and began to look about her and take her bearings. The hedge was so high and the house so far back that she could only see two of its gable windows. A light, turned very low, showed in one of these. Across the road, on the other side from the house, was a pebbled path with a fringe of coarse grass at its further edge. In front of her a few lamps marked out a curved perspective of road. Beneath it and beyond, the heath lay in confused patches of various intensities of blackness. The sky was paling over in the direction of Highgate, and a bird in a tree overhead, roused probably by the glare of the lamps, was beginning to pipe drowsily and tentatively.

A "*honk! honk!*" like the croak of some old marsh-haunting reptilian bird, began to sound behind her from the direction in which they had come. It grew louder. A motor-cab slowed up behind them, and two men, one of whom carried a large bag, passed quickly into the house. The two chauffeurs, avoiding the whispering group at the gate, walked up and down together on the edge of the heath, smoking the cigarette of freemasonry and stamping their feet, for the morning was turning cold. A French maid-servant brought out a big cat-skin rug. "For mademoiselle," she said. Her beady eyes scanned the girl curiously as she tucked it round her.

It was broad daylight when Fenella woke, and the heath was a dull sodden green under the window. Lumsden was shaking her by her shoulder. She woke suddenly and completely, as we do from a sleep of which we are half ashamed.

"Why didn't you call me before?"

"You were better asleep. You couldn't have done anything."



"Is — is the boy better?"

He shook his head, and put his hand to his throat as though his collar irked him.

"Not — dead? Oh, Bryan!"

"S — s-h! Just going. Come in now. I want you to see him first."

The house was quite new, full of quaint projecting windows planned to trap the sun, with a tiled roof that dipped and rose in unexpected places. A house of nooks and corners — built for light and air, and the new religion of open window and running water over porcelain baths, in which one feels death to be almost as incongruous as dust. Half the hall door was of glass, in bubbly panes like the bottom of a bottle. He held it open for her, and, bidding her follow, crossed the tiled hall parlor to a white-railed and velvet-carpeted staircase. A red-eyed maid-servant, carrying an enamelled pail and with a mass of soiled linen over one arm, stood aside to let them pass. At the head of the staircase was a square landing, lit by an octagonal turret skylight. A great many doors opened off it. Bryan turned the handle of one.

"In here!" he said.

The room was large and gaily papered. In the centre was a brass-railed cot. Its brass-railed sides had been lifted off and stood, behind it, against the wall. All around the little bed, upon tables and even chairs, were strange utensils, meaningless to the girl, some in glass, others in shining white metal with tubes that coiled and trailed, and linen, linen, everywhere that sheet or towel could be hung. The room was as full of strange scents as of strange shapes, but that of rubber overpowered all the rest, and was to be, for all time, the smell that could most vividly recall the scene to the girl's memory. The blinds were up, but no one had remembered to switch off the lights. Into one corner of the room a pile of toys had been hastily swept; prominent among them a great elephant brandished four lumpy wheeled legs in the air.

Upon the bed a little lad of five or six was lying, covered with clothes to his waist. Even now, with his poor little face lead-color, and all the spun silk of his hair damped down on his forehead, he was beautiful: with the hue of health on his cheek the face must have been that of an angel. His fringed eyelids were closed, and had dark shadows under them; his pinched nose was pitifully like Lumsden's. He seemed to be very tired, and very glad that all these clever people had given up exercising their skill upon him. For no one was doing anything now. One man, in shirt sleeves, held his limp wrist in a great hairy paw, and kept his eyes upon his watch; the other stood at his colleague's shoulder with his hands behind his back, intent upon the shrunken little face.

Lumsden cleared a chair, and, pulling it forward, bade the girl, with a gesture, sit down.

"Any change, Webber?" he asked.

"It may be a few minutes yet. *Hush!*"

He got up and put his ear to the boy's mouth. A faint snore was audible. He looked up at his partner.

"Cheyne-Strokes' breathing beginning, Girling."

"Is he suffering?" Bryan asked. He seemed to have lost interest in the technicalities of the question. "That's all I want to know."

"No, no," said the younger man. "Please believe us, Sir Bryan. He won't have suffered from first to last."

"Why's it such a long business?"

"Oh! seven hours is nothing unusual. The power of resistance in children his age is generally much greater. Twelve to fourteen is quite common. I still believe, Webber, there was subcutaneous administration as well."

"Perhaps. I could find no puncture, but his reaction to the ether certainly looked like it.

As Webber spoke he dropped the wrist, pocketed his watch, and made a sign to Lumsden.

"Can I take him up?" said the baronet.

"Yes. It doesn't matter now."

Bryan lifted the inert little body out of bed, held it to his breast, and put his face down on the wet curls.

"*Squirrel! Squirrel!*" he whispered once or twice, and held him closer.

"I can't hear anything now," he said at the end of a few minutes.

"Let me look at his eyes," said Webber.

Bryan gave a great wild laugh. "His eyes! Good God, man! what do you think you'll see there? Eyes? He never had any. He was born blind."

He laid the body tenderly down on the bed, put one hand across his face for a moment, and touched the weeping girl on the shoulder.

"Come down, Flash. I must send you home now. Don't cry so, girl! It's not fair. This is *my* funeral."

On the way to the head of the staircase they passed another door. He laid his hand upon the brass knob.

"I promised I'd show you real life. There's more inside here. Do you want to see it?"

"No! no!" The girl shrank away, and pulled her skirts from the panel.

"All right, then. Don't be afraid. I haven't been in myself yet. I'm not going to. The fiend! oh! the fiend, Flash! A little child like that — a little boy born blind! He never saw the sun. Look out of this window over the heath and think of it. For all he ever saw he might have lived and died at the bottom of a well. I used to describe things for him though. He was stupid with some people, but he knew my voice. Gad, how he knew it! You'd see the poor little devil's eyes straining, straining, and he'd struggle and kick and push things out of the way till he found me. Oh! the incarnate fiend!"

"Bryan! She's dead, remember."

"Dead! What do I care? If she wasn't I'd have killed her

myself. And she knew it. She was the one I cared for least. A cold, vicious, bargaining jade. I tried to get the boy away, but she was too d—d clever. So many hundreds a year more, that's all he meant to her. Do you remember my asking you once if you were fond of kids? I was thinking of him when I asked you that. Some day, perhaps — I thought — 'Cos some good women are the devil over things like that, Flash; and if I'd had a dozen born right they shouldn't have come in front of him — This is nice talk to a girl!"

"I don't mind, Bryan. I don't seem to mind a bit now. I think I've missed my proper delicacy, somehow."

He stared at her. "You haven't missed your health, at any rate. You must be a robust little animal for all your color. This time yesterday, Flash, think of it! If it was put in a book, who'd believe it? I wonder if everything that ever can happen a man and a girl has happened us, or if there's more coming to-morrow."

They had been talking in the dining-room. He went over to the sideboard for a drink and stopped suddenly. A half-crown was lying on the top of the buffet. He brought it over to the light, lying flat in the palm of his hand.

"This is a rummy coincidence, Flash," he said, without taking his eyes off it. "D'you know, years and years ago in Vienna, where I was a thing that danced and trailed the conquering sabre past the *Töchterschulen* in the *Hohenmark* on court days, I spun a coin this very size to decide a rather important matter for me. 'Tails I go on; heads I go out.' I wasn't bluffing. I was pretty hard hit, or thought I was. But I was young, too, and I'll never forget my feelings when I looked down and saw the double eagle — I'd shut my eyes while it spun, and I remember feeling behind in my hip pocket—Hello! Where did this come from?"

He was holding Ingram's strange present in his hand.

"Of course. Another property. 'Act ii., scene 2: The lair of the wicked baronet.' Do you want it back? No, I

won't, though," snatching it back as she reached for it. "Guns are for people who know how to let them off."

He made a movement as though to put it back, then checked himself, and balancing it in his hand looked from it to the coin and back again. The half-crown lay now, head upward, upon the table.

Suddenly Fenella caught his arm. "Bryan! not that — not that!"

He seemed to rouse himself. "Not that?" — angrily. "Why not? What d'you mean? How can you know what I was thinking of?"

His hand had closed upon the weapon. She loosened his fingers one by one to find her own hand held fast.

"Bryan, perhaps I've been too hard on you to-night. Suppose — suppose — Don't look at me that way or I'll stop. I don't promise anything. I must have time. It won't be easy for either of us."

He bent his head and put his lips to the hand that had been held out to slay him and to save him in one night.

"As you will, Flash. God bless you whatever you do with me."

"And now, dear, let me go," she said gently. "Remember, I have my own dead to watch."

as  
d  
e  
l,  
—  
7.  
t  
s  
-  
ll  
t  
n  
h  
;

**PART III**



# I

## THE BATHS OF APOLLO

**O**N A foggy November morning of the year whose events have been chronicled a man came out of a house in Westminster and stood for a moment on the worn steps, supporting himself against one of the pillars of the porch, to blink sorely at the raw day. The house he was leaving was one of a few old buildings that still exist on the long, crooked street whose northern frontage follows the ancient precincts of royal abbey and palace. From its size, the graceful detail of its doorway, the white and black squares unevenly paving its hall and the depth of brickwork which the long recessed windows revealed, one judged at once that this had been, in days gone by, the town mansion of a great legal or political family, forced by its very functions to dwell at the gates of the legislature. But whatever it had been in olden times, to-day the great house was inexpressibly sordid and degraded. The cupids and garlands of its doorway, blunted by two centuries of whistling house-painters, had well-nigh disappeared once for all beneath a last coat of coarse red-brown paint. With the same dismal tint — the old penitential hue of the galleys — were daubed window-sashes and sills, the panelling of the wide hall, the carved brackets that supported the crumbling edges of its tiled roof. Within, one conjectured rightly bare lime-washed walls — disinfection, not decoration — sodden boards worn away round the knots. Even in the foggy half-light, so merciful to all that has beauty of outline still to show, its crude defacement did not escape. One felt that the pickaxe and sledge-hammer of the



house-breaker, busy in a neighboring hoarded space, spared it too long.

A thick, dun mist had been creeping up-river since dawn from the Kent and Essex levels, gathering up on its way the filthy smoke of glue factories and chemical works, and holding it suspended over the spires and domes of the Imperial city. The close alleys and wynds that, like a fungus growth upon polluted soil, cover the area once sacred to the brothels and dog-kennels of the Plantagenet Court, seemed not so much to be endued with smoke and grime as actually to be built up out of compacted slabs of the sooty atmosphere. The sun was still in the east — a red wafer stuck on a sealed sky.

For a few minutes the man stood still, as if either too tired to make up his mind which way he should take, or as if, really paralyzed for the moment by the equilibrium of the forces that acted on his will, he was at the point where, vertigo having seized upon the mind and, as it were, disorientated it, direction loses its meaning. It is almost certain that had any passer-by — a policeman, a man bearing a burden, even a child — jostled the man, he would have gone on in the direction to which the collision turned him.

He wore a jacket and trousers of what had once been blue serge, faded by exposure, by dust, by rain that soaked in the dust, and sun that dried the rain in turn, to that color which is obtained by mixing all the primaries upon a palette. A streak of the coat's original color showed still under the upturned collar, and had the effect of a facing upon a soldier's tunic. Coat and trousers were miserably frayed at the edges, but neatly mended in more than one place. Probably from being worn night and day upon an almost naked body, the stiff straight lines natural to modern clothing had disappeared, and they had acquired, in their place, an actual mould of the limbs. His shoes, spattered with mud and grease, seemed once to have been brown. They were broken, and the heels had been trodden down so far that the soles curled up in front

like an eastern slipper. The man was quite clean, his hair and beard even trimly kept. His face was refined. Whatever physical suffering he was undergoing or had undergone, it was evident he had not yet reached the depth at which the soul contracts and shrivels once for all, and, dropping into some inmost recess where only death shall find it again, leaves the animal epidermis to bear the outrage of life. Under one eye the discoloration of an old bruise showed faintly.

As he looked about him — first above his head, then mechanically to left and right — what was almost a look of relief and peace came over the tortured face. In this narrow drab margin twixt night and night — a day only by the calendar and by the duties it imposed — it is possible he felt something akin. Something of the mechanical precision of life that was such a reproach to his own confusion would have to be relaxed. It would be a day of late trains, of crawling, interlocked traffic, of sudden warnings from the darkness, with the ever-present possibility of some levelling disaster to lend a zest to the empty hours. Excluded from human communion on the side of its pleasures, the outcast yearns toward it all the more upon the side of its pain and mischance. What is the savagery of revolution but a very exaltation of perverted sympathy? "Weep with me, my brother," says the red of hand, "weep with me at least, since I might not rejoice with you."

He had been the last to leave the common lodging-house which had given him a night's shelter, and, as he lingered, the deputy, a big, fleshy man in shirt-sleeves, came down the passage behind him, whistling and sweeping before him the caked mud which forty pairs of broken shoes had brought in during the night. At the sound of his broom against the wainscot, the man turned sharply, with a sudden energy that was like the release of a coiled spring, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, strode off to the left quickly and aimlessly as a caged wolf. Where Great Smith Street runs into Victoria

Street he turned to his left again, and followed the main thoroughfare southward. Through the happy accident of its deflection midway, at the point where the colossal doorway of the Windsor Hotel confronts the Army and Navy Stores, Victoria Street possesses, as all visitors to London with the architectural sense must have noticed, a dignity and effectiveness unique in the city of costly ineptitude. Approached from the river at sunset or sunrise, or in any light low enough and dim enough to hide the sorry detail of its lofty houses, the effect approaches the monumental. The wanderer's eyes had been fixed on the ground; but, possibly arriving at some spot where in former days he had been used to watch for it, he raised his head and stood, unsteadily, for a few seconds, intent upon the beauty with which the world is as prodigal as it is niggardly of its substance. The sky was an orange dun, deepening and lightening almost momentarily, as though some pigment with which the day was to be dyed later were being prepared overhead. The long Italianesque façade of the stores was all one blue shadow, but over its roof, through some atmospheric freak, the campanile of the new cathedral emerged, pale pink and cream, and in the upper windows of the great hotel, whose pillars and helmed mask closed the prospect on the right, a few wavering squares as of strawberry tinsel foil reflected the foggy sun. As he watched, leaning against the railing, one might have noticed his lips move. He took his clenched fists from his pockets, and opened them slowly with a strange gesture of surrender. It was as though some inward resolution, evidenced by the hasty walk, the lowered eye, the clenched hands, yielded at its first contact with the influence he was attempting to forswear.

A man who had been walking hastily from the opposite direction, with a long roll of blue prints under his arm, stopped short, pulled off his glove, and, diving into his trouser pocket, pulled out a copper and pressed it against one of the open palms. The dreamer started, closed his hand upon the penny convul-

sively, and, without a word of thanks, gazed after the bustling figure. He opened his fingers slowly and looked at the coin, with the same fear and repugnance that a sick man might show who, having put his hand to his mouth, finds blood upon it. Then, still holding it in his hand, he quickened his walk, until it was almost a run.

In a baker's shop near the terminus he spent half the money on a stale roll, and ate it, standing in the doorway of the Underground Station, and using his free hand to cover his mouth, as though he felt his voracity was indecent. A wretched little waif — a girl child, bareheaded, in a long dress like a woman's, and with her hair done up in a wisp -- seeing him eating, approached, held out a hand scaled with dirt like a fish's skin, and begged of those rags with the same blind confidence with which the child in heart asks relief of a beggared providence. He gave her the halfpenny, and as much of the bread as he had not eaten; then, crossing the road, he shouldered his way into the station yard.

The Continental Night Mail, more than half an hour late on account of the fog, was just in. A long line of motor-cabs, with an occasional four-wheeler, stood along the curb. Porters in charge of portmanteaux and trunks were shouting and gesticulating; the air was full of grunts, whistles, and the sudden clatter of horses' feet catching hold on the pavement. The man paid no attention to the motor-cabs, but, slipping behind a four-wheeler loaded with luggage and a bicycle, followed it from the yard and into the street.

The cab rolled along through Pimlico and in the direction of the river. Almost immediately the station was left the fog shut down and hid the houses on either side. The driver, an old street pilot of thirty years, kept on at a steady amble; the man behind, quite ignorant of his destination, settled down to a steady loping run, which apparently he was prepared to keep to between the wheels as long as the horse kept to it between the shafts.

At a cross-traffic break he looked up, and saw he was not alone. A short, thick-set stranger, with a bullet head and strangling, wheezy breath, had joined him *en route*. That competition which is said to be the soul of trade was not to be lacking.

"Ullo!" said the stertorous one, as soon as he felt himself observed. "W'ere did *you* come from?"

Finding he was not rebuked, he thought it safe to essay a little further.

"You be awf and find a — keb for yourself. D'jeer? Follered this from the stishun, I did."

His bearded brother in misfortune gave him such a look that he judged it wise to defer settling the difference. The cab started again, turned, and twisted in the maze of stucco streets, always followed by the two men; stopped finally in a crescent that even in daylight was secluded, but in a fog might be said to be mislaid. Bullet head, being outside the wheel, used his tactical advantage to lay one authoritative hand on the leather trunk and the other on the bicycle.

"It's aw ri', guv'nor," he called, reassuringly through the window to their proprietor. Even as he spoke, he was himself deposited upon the pavement in an efficient manner of which the tall comrade's face had given no hint. Followed, not so much a volley of oaths, as a kind of set-piece, a transparency of language, which hung suspended in the shocked air of Pimlico long enough for a window or two to open, presumably in protest. Appealed to by his fare, a literary gentleman of peaceful habit, upon the score of age and experience, the driver refused to be drawn into the conflict.

"Settle it between yerselves," he said complacently, sucking on a voice lozenge and pocketing his legal fare. "Door to door, my trade is, and don't ferget it." A woman meantime had opened the hall door, and was scolding every one, impartially, in the dialect of Fifeshire.

Nothing goads to madness like foiled knavery. The tall

man, having already shouldered the trunk, the short one laid a violent and ill-advised hand upon it from behind. Next moment it was set upon the ground and with a vigorous movement of the shoulders that gave his words authority, the dreamer spoke for the first time, in a voice whose accent and whose idiom alike were familiar.

"See here, now! You have one minute to hit the grit. If you're not gone then, I'll lay that mouth of yours against the sidewalk and give it the dry cleaning it needs. Now that goes — all the way!"

"My God!" I cried, "it's Ingram!"

He turned to run, but I clung to him. He was a powerful man, much stronger, even exhausted as he was, than I have been at any time, but I am proud to think my grip upon him never once gave way. At last he desisted, perhaps because he heard tears in my voice, and disengaged my fingers gently.

"Ingram! Oh! in God's name what does it mean? I thought you'd gone back — thought you were thousands of miles away."

He laughed. "Can't you see what it is, Prentice? It's the last note in journalism. A delegate to the depths. Talks with the underworld. I'm doing it pretty thoroughly, don't you think?"

Well, I stood there and pleaded with him. His competitor carried in the baggage meekly, under Mrs. Mac's petrifying eye, was paid, and went his way — the mystified Jehu cracked his whip and rumbled off into the fog before I had exhausted half the arguments and expedients with which my brain swarmed. I wanted him to take money, to come in and be fed and clothed, to go back to America (assisted passage). He shook his head at everything, and at the last suggestion set his bearded jaw hard. I thought his objection very fanciful.

"I won't go back," he said, "to see a democracy that has had its chance and missed it, done to death with a golden

bandage over its eyes. It's less hard to stop here among the poor devils that have never known what economic independence meant."

He found reasons equally good or equally bad for resisting my offers toward rehabilitation in England.

"It's no use, Prentice," he said, again and again. "Believe me, between the very last rung of the social ladder and the depths in which I'm swimming round and round, and waiting for the final suffocation, there's a sheer fall that no power on earth can ever bridge again. From where I am I can speak still, hear still, even feel. I look up and see living men on the slope above me. Some are slipping down, some, who have stood once on the verge and looked over, are crawling up again, weak and half dead from terror. But I and those with me are past help. You don't know the gulf that separates having a little money, even your last pound, from having none at all. That's an experience as final and irremediable as death. None can imagine it unless they have known it, and none that have known it ever come back to tell."

Before such remorseless logic I weakened, little by little. I told him he was ungenerous — that friendship involved debts of honor he had never been willing to pay; finally I went into the house to make him up a parcel of warm underclothing. I remember blubbering like a whipped lower-form urchin as I ransacked drawers and trunks, and how the string kept snapping as I tried to tie up the great untidy brown-paper parcel. When I came downstairs the street was empty.

## II

### LIGHTNING IN THE FOG

**H**E RAN, he has told me since, like a man with a hue-and-cry in his ears, turning left or right at random. At last his breath failed; he remembered his rags, and noticed people looking suspiciously after him.

He came out onto the river somewhere near the Tate Gallery, by a yard full of spray-battered old ship figureheads, and crossed the big new bridge to the Albert Embankment. At a river sluice below an iron yard men were unloading bundles of Belgian tees and angles from a barge. The river was falling fast, and he got an hour's job helping them to unload the cargo. It was on such casual labor, I suppose, that for months he had supported life. He was paid sixpence for his hour's work, and, seeing his strength and famished willingness, the lightermen overloaded him and raised a weal on his shoulder. He was still nearly starving, but did not dare spend the money till later. By two o'clock in the afternoon the fog was general and very thick. He was standing in the centre of the little foot-bridge that runs under the viaduct from Charing Cross Station. Above his head trains rumbled softly and circumspectly. There were Pullman cars filled with sun-worshippers on their way from the winter-smitten city to France and Italy — to ivory villa and amethyst bay, maybe to the white sun-steeped cities upon whose ramparts he had once stood sentry. The fog-signals went off in his ears like cannon. On the Middlesex shore of the river was a dim bustle, muffled tang of gongs, constant flitting of blurred lights; but under the Surrey shore, lonely as a quicksand on the Breton coast, a strip of mud



left by the falling tide shone, a coppery red, beneath the bulk of the big Lambeth brewery. Below his feet a squadron of empty lorries lay moored together, four — four — and three, like a hand of cards dealt face downward by a fortune-teller. All around him was mewling, as from a dozen litters of kittens; the fog became thick with the fluttering winged forms of sea birds. No one had passed him for a long time. He stretched out his arms and spoke aloud —

“Soul! what things are these that hem us in — that compass us about this November noontide, as we roam, stifled and uncertain, through Babylon’s foggy streets? These towers, soaring into the infinite; these palaces, whose limits we conjecture from the dimmed overflow of light within; these chariots, rolling one instant soundless from obscurity, next instant engulfed by it? What things are they? Even such as to-day thou beholdest them: shadows, phantoms, vapor, and cloud. To-morrow the wind shall smite them, and their places know them no more; daylight seek them, and find them gone. Oh! paradox immeasurable, that where the sun had lied to thy senses fog should truly bespeak them!”

Solitary as he seemed, he had been observed for some time. A bulky figure, in heavy overcoat and helmet, stepped from behind a girder and touched him on the shoulder.

“Don’t you think you’d best get to one side or the other? It’s bad loitering weather.”

Ingram started at the touch, then looked over his shoulder and laughed.

“I see,” he said. “But there’s no fear of that,” and he looked at the river again. “You’d have come in after me, I suppose — boots, overcoat, and all.”

“I’m not saying what I’d have done,” the constable answered stolidly. “My dooty, I hope. . . But it’s not the day I should choose to win the Albert Medal on.”

He looked at the suspect closer, and seeing a man probably as strong as himself, his voice and manner changed. There

was a new freemasonry in it when he spoke again, and a strange curiosity, shame-faced but eager.

"Man to man, mate; is it very bad?"

Ingram turned on his heels like the soldier he had been.

"Man to man — no. I've earned sixpence this morning; that's supper and bed. My nakedness is only an offence to the providence I've ceased to believe in, and I've the æsthetic sense which makes a thing like that," and he pointed to the patch of rosy mud, "a living joy. What man who works for bread will have more to say in two hundred years? Do you know there are great artists who'd go a day without food to paint truly what we've got under our feet. Not many English ones, though. I'll do them that justice."

"I think I know wot you mean," said S. 11. "I'm fond of pitchers myself. I suppose you know there's one of our force gets 'is pitcher into the 'cademy reg'lar every year. But hunger's one thing and starvation's another."

"It's not starvation, man; it's the fear of it that's putting out the sun and stars for three quarters of the world. 'Do *my* work or starve! do *my* work or starve!' that's what every factory hooter and works bell and alarm clock is ding-donging from morning till night. We're all too frightened to do ourselves justice. We sit down to our desk, or stand to our bench or easel with a full belly and an icy cold heart. So the great book never gets written, and the great picture never gets painted, and the great wrong never gets righted, and the soul we have no use for is passing into piston-rods and flywheels that eat up human flesh and blood as the beasts of the field chew grass. No thank you, constable. Didn't I tell you I'd got sixpence. Keep it for the next woman you have to move on. *That's* the shame — *that's* the unpardonable sin."

There had been no present thought of self-destruction in his mind, but, in spite of himself, the policeman's suspicion stirred a dormant idea that was now a comfort to him, now just so far as it lay vague or assumed definite sh

climbed the ascent into the Strand, glad to be in the crowd again, and to feel himself jostled and elbowed by its hurrying life. Amid all the human tide that, after having turned the wheels of commerce all day, was now setting homeward, there was probably no one who walked straighter or brisker than he.

His long steps soon carried him into a distant quarter of the city; but as night fell he turned them toward Westminster again — back to the house where he had slept last night and perhaps many a night before. It was no better than others that lay to his hand, but at least its horrors were familiar. He shrank from new initiations. Besides, it was not seven o'clock, and eight was the earliest hour at which such places opened. How to kill an hour?— absorbing occupation for a mind like this.

He decided to follow the Embankment again. There, if his feverish walk outpaced the clock, he might loiter — lean upon the parapet, sit down upon one of the seats. He would buy some liver in Lambeth and cook it before the lodging-house fire. He was faint when he reached Blackfriars, and not from hunger alone. Dimly he divined a crisis. The last of a little store of illusions with which he concealed from himself how personal and irremediable was his misery had been expended during that wild talk with the man in blue upon the bridge. Something, if life was to continue, must supply its place.

The work upon the widening of the bridge was still in progress. Opposite De Keyser's Hotel a big wooden hoarding covered the pavement, making a little niche with the low granite wall of the Embankment. It was too early in the evening for the recess to be occupied or to be explored by the bull's-eye lantern of law and order. He crept within it under cover of the fog, and, resting his arms upon the wet granite wall, relit a half-smoked cigarette. All day long, throughout his defiant speech, his indignant bearing, his wretched assumption of energy, he had felt himself under an observation as unfriendly

as it was thorough. Some other self, cold, critical, sneering, was watching his struggles with amused contempt. He had felt its presence before, but never so utterly detached, so hostile or so impatient. That *alter se* which education creates and easy living nourishes, and which, deplore him as we may, is a personality to be reckoned with at every crisis and in every action of our lives, is never long content to outlive such an experience as his. It is only a question of time before the rational in man wearies of prison and poor entertainment.

*"Let us go hence!"*

Ingram smoked his cigarette until it burnt his lips, leaned over the parapet, and, as he dropped the glowing end into the river, measured the distance to the water that was "*clop-clopping*" soupily against the foot of the Embankment. His isolation in the heart of London was strangely complete, for such foot-passengers as passed, passed wide of him by a railed plank walk built outside of the great wooden hoarding that concealed him from view. The wide roadway, moreover, full of vague sound and motion — blast of motor-horns, rumble of trams, quick come and go of blurred lamps, accentuated his solitude. He waited until a heavy tread that was going westward had died away into the fog. Then he drew up his legs, first one, then the other, upon the parapet beside his hands.

*"Oh Gawd! oh Gawd!"* a voice groaned behind him. He checked his sinister movement and listened intently. Some one — some fellow-creature in torment — was cursing and sobbing on the pavement he had just left. He got down and groped for it. A man, huddled together, and with one leg jerking convulsively, was lying with his head against the boards.

Ingram put his arms round him and lifted him gently.

### III

#### VALEDICTORY

**M**RS. McNAUGHTEN has assured me that I stood for nearly five minutes, the brown paper parcel under my arm, staring blankly, first in one direction, then in another, and licking my lips. I am glad of her evidence that a mood so abject and personal lasted no longer. Because — alas! — what held me in a trance that temporarily lost count of time was not that this intolerable thing had befallen Paul Ingram, dear Paul, with whom I had sat, so many a night and on into the small hours, holding converse, high and austere, on man's destiny through life and beyond — no, it was that, having befallen him, it might befall any one, and, befalling any one — let me give the full measure of my craven heart — it might befall me. For one paralyzing instant that veil which mercifully cloaks the extreme chances of fate had been plucked aside. I had looked full into its malignant eyes, and, like the man in the Greek fable, what I had seen had been enough to turn flesh to stone. In that moment the shadowy safeguards which men erect between themselves and the grim possibilities of destiny — knowledge of the world, self-consciousness, confidence in untested friendships — stood revealed, the shams they are. The security born of years — anxious, toilsome years it is true, but during none of which, for a single day or night, bread, clothing, or sheltered sleep had failed me — shook and fluttered darkly like the eternal hills in an earthquake. I literally lost hold on life.

Thank God, the mood was over soon. I had time to be pitiful, to be even angry, with an illogical but humanizing

wrath that fate, taking hourly toll of the world, had not spared one dear to me. I blamed myself bitterly for leaving him alone those few minutes. I had wearied of well-doing too soon. He must have yielded at last. Seated by the familiar fireside, fed and comforted, with the pipe in his mouth that still bore the scar of his long wolfish teeth upon its stem, a better mood must have awakened. I say a better mood, because, at certain depths, misfortune calls almost for the same treatment as crime, and the kindness that seeks to save must be disciplining as well as compassionate.

I dined at the *A-peu-près* after my work was done, hoping against hope there would be news of him there — some indication that might put me on his track again. Smeaton was in the chair to-night — old Smeaton, best and bravest knight that ever set quill in rest — with his little restless pink face, snapping black eyes, tumbled white hair, and bulging and disordered waistcoat. I was greeted uproariously. For nearly a month I had been away in the south of France, press correspondent at a murder trial which had stirred all thinking Europe by the depths it revealed of cynical depravity on the one side, and of morbid, reiterated condonation on the other. It was by far the biggest thing I had been given to do yet, and I hoped I had done it well; but it was too much to hope that, in a subject coming home so nearly to the average sensual male, the psychological conclusions I had drawn should pass unchallenged. I sat for over an hour, besieged by questions, pelted with authorities, shouted down, derided unexpectedly and as unexpectedly championed. Ever madame's indulgence was not proof against such pandemonium. She pushed open the lace-curtained door, put her hands to her pretty brown ears, and shook a reproving finger at her unruly family.

*"Quel tapage! Mon Dieu, quel br-r-ruit!"*

*"Oui!"* cries Smeaton, pointing at her excitedly with the nut-crackers. *"Et vous en êtes la cause!"*

"Do you remember your Yankee friend's dictum on the

little point of manners we've been discussing?" Mackworth asked me when order was restored. He was a dark, depressed man, perhaps the richest who dined at the *A-peu-près* regularly, and had written the most talked-about novel of the year before last.

"By the way," interrupted Smeaton, whose manners are bad, "who's seen Ingram lately?"

"I saw him — to-day," I answered, balancing the spoon on my coffee-cup.

"What's he doing? I thought he'd gone back to the States."

"He followed a growler I took from Victoria and wanted to carry in my trunk. Would have had to fight another man, too, for the sixpence."

Madame could not have desired a more complete cessation of turmoil than followed these words of mine. In more than one pair of eyes I saw the panic that would be my own lasting shame rise suddenly, and as suddenly be checked. I wonder how they got it under.

"Was he very bad?" asks Smeaton, in a low voice. "Down — right down?"

I nodded.

"*Poor — devil!* Did he know you, Prentice?"

"Not at first. It was too foggy to recognize the house."

"What did you do?"

"Grabbed him as he turned to run, and held him. He wouldn't come in, but let me go to fetch him some clothes. When I came out, he'd bolted."

"Bravo!" said Smeaton, and clapped his pudgy little hands.

"Why do you say that?" I asked, voicing a surprise I think we all shared.

"Because it confirms a judgment of my own upon Ingram. He was the logical animal *par excellence*, and to take money or substance one hasn't been allowed to earn, if it's only a penny to buy a loaf or a rag to cover nakedness, is to sell logic as Esau sold his birthright. If there were more like Ingram, the

tangle of this filthy old kaleidoscope we call life might straighten out. He'll die, of course, but at least he'll die with a man's soul in him."

"Listen to Satan rebuking sin!" said Waldron of the *Hemisphere*.

Smeaton brought his fist down on the table. "Yes," he thundered. "I know what you mean. Yes, I've given charity. I've cast bread on the waters — to drowning men that were begging for a rope. I've helped lame dogs—over stiles that led to nowhere. And every time I've done it, Waldron, I've been ashamed of myself. For I know I'm helping to protract an agony and perpetuating a state of things that ought to have been done with twenty years ago. Literature isn't paying its way to-day: that's the cold fact we must face. And a thing that isn't paying its way is a sham, no matter if it's as brilliant as the last ten years of the old French monarchy. It's falling more and more into the hands of men and women who either eke out a little private means by scribbling, or else eke out their hire by borrowing. Journalism's not so rotten; but, by the Lord Harry, after a morning in Fleet Street I sometimes think half of us are living by taking in one another's washing."

"You're taking rather a black view," said Waldron.

"Am I? Well, compare the present day with long ago — with Grub Street — with what Macaulay calls the darkest period of English letters. Read Johnson's early life — Savage — all the historical instances. Look at the sums those beggars got! Twenty-five pounds benefit from a play that ran fourteen nights: fifty pounds for an ode to Royalty once a year: ten pounds for translating a volume of Portuguese travels. Why, to many a man whose name is a household word to-day these things read like a fairy tale. They used to call on publishers with 'projects' and have luncheon served them while he read 'em over."

"What about the novel?" says Waldron, with a half-look at Mackworth.



"In its death throes. Fifty years hence the English novel — considered as literature, mind you — will be as dead as the epic poem. I stick to what I've said. When a thing ceases to pay its way, it's a sign the stage of national development that called for it is over."

"What's going to take its place?"

"Look around you. Something's begun to take its place already: articles, books — by people who've *done* things, not dreamed them — written in the English any one can write who tries. 'Three months' lion slaughter in Central Africa'; 'One degree nearer that pole'; 'How I made my millions.' Especially the last. People never weary of that. They don't see that the game must be up, or the secrets wouldn't be being given away."

"Come!" — noticing a silence of dissent round the table. "Take a concrete instance. Mackworth, there's only one opinion about 'When the Sky Fell.'"

"You're very good."

"Simple justice, my boy. Now, take us behind the scenes a little. How long did it take you to write it?"

"Nine or ten months."

"Say nine. Working hard?"

"All day and every day."

"How long before you found a publisher?"

"Finished in June, and it came out in the autumn season."

"That's a year. Were you paid on publication?"

"No: six months afterward."

"Eighteen months. I don't like to ask you any more."

"Oh, I don't mind telling. I've cleared a hundred and twenty pounds."

"For eighteen months' work and worry."

"It's great fun. I've nearly done another."

"Yes, but assuming, for the sake of argument ——"

"——that I had to live on it, eh? Well, I'm afraid there'd have been a third after Prentice's cab this morning."

"I think that settles it," said Smeaton, looking round. "No. The novel's had its day. And what a day it's been! Let us think of that. Fielding to Henry James! It's like the creation of another world. Come! I'll give you a toast we can all drink in silence—"Speedy deliverance to Paul Ingram!" And now let's talk of something more cheerful. Who's been to see Fenella Barbour's Cuckoo dance at the Stadium?"

"I suppose that's really the stage of national development we've reached," hazarded Mackworth.

"If it is, there's something to be said for it," said Smeaton, stoutly.

"She's paying *her* way, anyhow," said some one. "Two hundred and fifty a week ought to keep the wolf from the door."

"Oh, the wolf at the stage door is a domesticated animal. No one wants to frighten him away."

I wasn't interested in what followed, and dropped out. Now and then a word or two struck me: "A clog-dancer with sophistications." "Anyway, you'll see a jolly pretty girl!" "No, not Jewish, Mackworth—Phœnician. Mother was Cornish, and she's a throw-back more than two thousand years straight to Carthage." "As much again for the posters. Briggses paid her four hundred for the 'Crème de Pêche.'"

And I smoked on, thinking of Ingram's rags. As our party broke up, I thought Smeaton made me a sign to stop on. When we were alone, he smoked silently for a while, and then—

"This is a more than usually filthy tragedy, Prentice."

"About Ingram? Yes, it's pretty bad."

"Wasn't there some book he was going to set the Thames alight with? Has it been published?"

"No. It had some funny adventures; but not that one."

"You read it. Was it really good? Between ourselves, you know."

"Oh, I answer for it."

"Don't be in a hurry. It's not late. You knew Ingram better than most of us. Now, wasn't there something between him and the little girl we've been talking of? Perhaps you guessed I didn't mention her by accident. Didn't they come here together more than a year ago?"

I told him what I knew, including the boat-train incident.

"Isn't that Ingram all over?" he exclaimed. "If his eye or his friend or his ladylove offended him, one felt the axe would be out in a minute. You know what they're saying about her now?"

"About dancing the night her mother died? Why shouldn't she? If she'd been a shop-girl or a typist, no one would have thrown stones at her for going on with her work. They'd have thought the more of her for it."

"No, no, my dear boy. I mean the Darcher case — woman at Hampstead who poisoned herself and the little boy, you know. There was a mysterious lady came down in the car with Lumsden. Her name was kept out, but they say ——"

"That it was she. Oh! impossible, Smeaton! How could it be?"

"Because she left the theatre with him, and happened to be in his house when the message came through. Two o'clock in the morning! I had it from a quarter that isn't usually wrong."

"And you believe it?"

Smeaton shrugged his shoulders. "My dear boy, I've given up guessing. Anybody that wants it can have the benefit of the doubt, now." *Puff! puff!* "I often think of poor Newstead, last time I saw him, at Guy's. They thought he was going to get well, and he was sitting up on the pillows reading one of those blasted Sunday papers that you write for. 'Well Newstead,' said I, as I was going, 'what am I to tell the boys?' 'Tell them,' he says, laying his poor claw of a hand on the paper, 'tell them I'm driven to my grave at last by the beauty and the horror of life!'" *Puff! puff!*

"Why don't you go and see her? You can get there easy enough. She's interviewed once a week on an average."

"What good would it do?"

Smeaton rapped for his *addition*. "I dunno. I think if I were a friend of Ingram's I'd take a certain amount of malicious pleasure in letting her know what you saw to-day."

#### IV

### SOMETHING LIKE CLOVES

**A**S A matter of fact, I found no difficulty at all. Little Winstanley was pleased with my murder specials, and fixed up an interview over the 'phone in no time.

"You're getting rather heavy metal for this, Prentice," he said, puffing out his cheeks and regarding me with the benevolence a man keeps for the work of his own hands; "but toddle along and see what you make of her." One of Winstanley's illusions is that he has "formed" me.

Fenella had a very pretty little doll's house in the tiny square that is tucked away near Knightsbridge Barracks, whose gardens back upon the Park. The brickwork was very neatly pointed, and the window boxes were full of chrysanthemums, and a red door with brass appointments flew open to my rather timid ring with a disconcerting suddenness. But I was not prepossessed with the stunted little maid who opened it. Neither in manner nor appearance was she "up to" the house. There was a latent hostility, too, in the way she scanned me.

"Noospapers?" she queried over her shoulder, as she closed the door.

I admitted it.

"Come in 'ere and wait."

I was precipitated rather than ushered into a fireless dining-room, a little cold and uncheery for all its graceful furnishings of dark scrolled wood and striped mulberry velvet cushions. There was a hanging lamp over the oval table, of liver-colored

bronze; mistletoe leaves stuck over with little electric berries, which budded into light as the girl left the room. The sideboard was covered with silver toys. I remember a jointed crab and lobster, and a ship on wheels with all its sails set, and a coach and six, whose driver, his calves in the air, waved a long whiplash over six curled, trampling stallions. I know there are more striking contrasts in the world if one goes seeking them, but for me the injustice of life always stands pictured now by a shelf full of useless beaten silver toys on the one hand, and on the other by a coat buttoned across a naked throat.

I wonder would I have known my pale little girl with the frightened eyes, whose heart I had been so strangely commissioned to break, eighteen months ago? Then I had only been able to guess at the probable grace of the body which a rough travelling coat so thoroughly covered, and though, even in the strained, anxious face and disordered hair, beauty had been apparent, it had been beauty seen through a mist of tears, its harmonies disordered by the tortured questioning soul.

Since that time I suppose her figure had attained its full graciousness of line and had reached the limit of development which modern standards of bodily beauty, forced to take a fashion into consideration, would consider compatible with elegance for a woman of her height. She was still in half-mourning, and wore a trained dress of some soft gray material embroidered in black on the breast and sleeves. I am a child in such matters, but imagine her dressmaker, or the builder of garments more intimate still, must have been something of an artist, for, seen thus, there was absolutely nothing to recall the boyish *sans gêne* of figure and manner which was her great asset — her trump card upon the stage, and which, from the moment she kissed her hands across the footlights, never failed to bring rapturous applause about her ears. Her dark hair, "fine as the finest silk" (after all, there is no bettering the robust descriptiveness of fairy-tale), was dressed rather fashionably than prettily — wide across her forehead in front, and

rather far beyond her head at the back. I thought she wore too many rings, and diamonds glittered in the soft shadow of her throat.

She did not recognize me, but gave me her hand to shake without condescension, which was all in her favor. I will make a further confession: At the first frank, interested glance of her eyes I consigned old Smeaton and his hateful friend who didn't often make mistakes to the eternal fellowship of Ananias. The impossibility simply began and ended with those eyes. It was not the glamour of a lovely face and a gracious welcome, for, as I took her hand, I remember feeling indignant that so little shadow of the wrong my friend had done her crossed the bright well-being of her life. It was too evident that she forgave and forgot with equal completeness. Poor, logical-minded Paul, carrying about with him night and day the image of this lost mistress. Did I blame him that food and raiment were hateful to him?

"Why," she said, "poor man! you're shivering. This room is a bit cold, isn't it? I'm afraid Frances doesn't like the press. I've noticed she always shows them into whichever room hasn't a fire in it. She's rather a tyrant, Frances is. But it's nice isn't it, to have some one left who cares enough for you to bully you. Druce, the housekeeper, was my nurse once. Come across to the drawing-room. It's much prettier, and there's a fire in it. Twenty minutes now"—lifting a warning finger—"not an instant longer."

I followed her across the ridiculous little hall into a drawing-room whose size surprised me. It was low but very long, and the bottom was filled in by a curved window of leaded glass looking out over the sodden Park, where a belated rider or two still walked a steaming horse and probably dreamed of a hot bath and dinner. The room, with its lacquered "dancing dado," and walls hung with Chinese silk, has been often paraphrased. It smelt of sandalwood and roses, and had a fire of old whale-ship logs burning in a steel casket upon the

hearth, with little spurts of flame, all manner of unexpected tints — violet and bottle-green and strawberry red. How fond she was of color and glitter! A frightful old bull-terrier — reared, I should say, from his appearance, in the bosom of some knacker's family, and whose head something, prosperity perhaps, had turned violently on one side — got up from the hearth-rug and came limping and sniffing across the room. Fenella got down on her knees and put her soft cheek to the repulsive pink nose.

"Did *he* want to be interviewed then? And so he shall. Do you know" — looking up at me — "you're the first one that's seen *him*? I generally show two small ones like pen-wipers; but they're away at a show." She turned to the dog again. "Is he *vezzy* old then, and *vezzy* blind, and *vezzy* much chewed and bitten, poor old man! and is the world just one big, dark smell to him? Well if 'oo *will* chew my whiskers, dear, of *tourse* 'oo'll sneeze!" She jumped up as though some thought suddenly checked her playful mood. "Put *him* down, please!" she said, pointing in a business-like manner to my open notebook. "Name? Roquelaure — Rock for short. Eighteen years old — two years less than me. Fancy *that* — younger than me! No tricks — only habits. We were puppies together — at least, I mean — Yes, yes. Put it down that way. It sounds rather *dean*, I think. Sit down, please. Now, what else do you want to hear about? My dancing? Oh! I've always danced. Used to do it instead of flying into a rage."

"Wait one minute, please," I said. "'The usefulness of dancing as an outlet for the emotion is probably a discovery as old as the world itself.' Um — um — When did you begin to take regular lessons, and how far —?"

I looked up. She had recognized me. Forgetfulness? Oh! I was as bad as the others.

"Wait a moment!" She rose, and left the room as quickly as her tight silk underskirt would let her. She was back again in a minute, holding my card in her hand.



"Are you *his* Mr. Prentice?"

I bowed my head, and laid note-book and pencil aside. What a fool I had been to come!

"Where is he? Do you see him? Oh, *how* I've tried and tried to remember your name!"

"I don't know where he is."

"But you've seen him? I know you have. Answer, please. Why do you look so queer?"

"I saw him last week."

"Was he well? Was he happy?"

"He was — starving, I think."

"*O-oh!*" I had seen tragedy in the girl's face, now I saw it in the woman's. I told her as much as I dared. I hope I was merciful.

"Why didn't you hold him?" she cried, at one point of the story. "Oh, my God! Why did you let him go? Don't you know the sort of man he is?"

"I thought I was doing my best. I had only gone to get him some warm clothes. It was such a raw, foggy morning. That seemed the first thing."

"Some warm clothes!" she repeated, under her breath, looking round at the silk and silver and roses. Then she broke down, and cried and cried. Poor soul! I had to stop her at last. I was afraid she'd be ill.

She was very docile, dried her eyes, and begged my pardon for what she'd just said.

"You're his friend, aren't you?" she pleaded, "his real, true friend? You won't give him up?"

"What can I do? I'd even bear it for him if I could."

"No you couldn't," she said, tightening her lips and shaking her head decisively. "Nobody can bear anything for him. Do you think I didn't try?"

She rolled her handkerchief up into a ball, and tucked it away, with a resolute little gesture.

"I'm not going to despair," she said bravely, with a kind of

gulp and a tremor of her throat that set the diamonds streaming blue fire. "I think things will come all right. I've had a kind of a — kind of sign. Shall I tell you?" — timidly.

I'm foolishly impulsive, and I kissed her hand. After all, the dog does it.

"Listen, then! Thursday week"— I started, but she didn't notice it — "Thursday week I was feeling simply *awful* all day. I can't explain it. Imagine some one you love is being tried for something that means death — or more awful still, if it goes against him. It got worse and worse. I've never missed a night I was billed for, but I shouldn't have been able to go on as I was. Still, I went down to the theatre — just on chance, you know. It was half-past seven or quarter to eight. I had an hour, but I dressed early to be safe. Suddenly something seemed to say inside of me, 'Now! now! down on your knees, quick. This is the dangerous time.' My dresser had gone out. I locked the door, and fell on my knees in a kind of faint. I prayed, and prayed as well as I could. I don't remember much what. I think I asked God, if Paul was never, never to be happy again, to take him the best way to some place where nothing could hurt him any more, and where he would see me and know what I was feeling for him. And then, Mr. Prentice — and then — Oh! it was wonderful. Something all warm and comfortable, like — oh! like *cloves* — why do you laugh? I'm trying to tell you the best way I can — seemed to come round my heart. I got up from my knees. It was eight-fifteen, and my dresser was banging on the door and asking if I was ill. I opened it and hugged her. She must have thought me crazy. All the sadness was gone — every bit. I knew they'd done trying him, and he — and he —" She struggled with her emotion, and, then, covering her face with her hands, rocked backward and forward, moaning and sobbing — "he's Not Guilty. No! my love's Not Guilty."

There was a knock at the door. She turned her head quickly into the shadow.

"Come in!"

"It's Sir Bryan, madam."

"Tell him to wait in the dining-room. . . . Now, Mr. Prentice, we must try again. What are the best papers to advertise in? Papers that — that quite poor people read most?"

I gave two or three an unsolicited testimonial.

"Write your address — your private address — on this card. I'll put an advert." — she said it this way — "in three for a year. Just your initial. The moment you hear, telegraph — no, telephone me! I'll say you're to be always given my address. I don't go to New York for nearly a year. Good-bye. I'll send you something for your paper to-night."

I did not see the sporting baronet, but I smelt his cigar in the hall, and I saw his damned motor-car outside the door. And as I walked out of the little square, I wondered whether perhaps it wouldn't be to every one's advantage, and his own, if Paul Ingram should never be heard of on this earth again.

V

A VERY VULGAR CHAPTER

**I**NGRAM, PAUL. Will Paul Ingram communicate at once with 'P.' 15, Darlaston Crescent? The matter is urgent, and concerns the future happiness of another."

Some day, when Paul Ingram is already a legend, the dipper into musty records who stumbles upon this heartrending appeal in issue after issue will imagine he has made a rare find. Always supposing another eventuality, which I sometimes seem to foresee, has not supervened, and that a reformed society, for security's sake, and as an earnest of its reformation, does not make a bonfire once for all of the records of its past depravity and madness.

Nothing, to me, affords fruit for such sad thought as to see unworldly folk taking advantage of the machinery of a world that is organized to crush them and their like out of existence. That Oxford graduate who seeks "congenial employment as amanuensis or secretary," the gentlewoman "thrown suddenly upon her own resources through financial loss" who is anxious for a post as nursery governess, as companion, as anything that will allay the fright and loneliness at her heart—"fond of children," she adds. Poor soul, one sees her casting a wistful glance into passing perambulators.) Do not the very composers, I wonder, laugh as they set up such type? I was sorry indeed for that "other" whose happiness depended upon Ingram's resurrection.

Meantime I had given my word, and I was not idle. Every

good journalist is a bit of a detective at heart, and I discovered a mournful zest in following Paul's calvary, step by step, from one lodging to another. Everywhere I found help and sympathy, and conceived a new regard for the maligned race of landladies. (Mrs. McNaughten, of course, is *hors concours*.)

"Ah! poor gentleman," said one grimy soul. "Well I remember the night he come. I knocked at the door to arst 'im if 'e wouldn't take somethin' 'cartenin' with 'is tea — a bloater, or a rasher — and there 'e wos, settin' with 'is 'ead down on the table. Money? Oh, a trifle of rent, sir. Wanted to leave 'is trunk be'ind; but there, live and let live's my motter. It went to my 'eart to 'ave 'im go — wanted care, 'e did — but you see, sir, me bein' only a workin' woman, and 'avin' a 'usband at 'ome with bronickal trouble — Thank you kindly, sir, sence you orfer it. You won't think no worst of me for takin' it, will you?"

At the very next stopping place — I had almost said stumbling place — the trunk came to hand. Strangely enough, he owed nothing here. I suppose at a certain point in misfortune a man flings his possessions from him as a swimmer flings his clothes.

"Took 'is things away in a bundle, wot there wos," said the mistress of this house, who was nursing and rocking a child as she spoke. "I ain't techt nothink," with a slight shiver. "If so be you're a friend of the party, you'd prabst better open it. The keys is upstairs. No: nothin' owin,' but I wasn't sorry w'en 'e went. Too strange in 'is manner. It goes agenst a 'ouse w'en things — you know wot I mean — 'appens in it."

To Mrs. Purvis's secret disappointment, I believe, there was nothing in the trunk but a mass of torn paper and a queer brown-paper parcel that I seemed to recognize. It was addressed to the house near Golden Square, and the label was headed with the name of some legal firm in the West End. It was the manuscript of "Sad Company."

For a long while after Mrs. Purvis had left me to attend to

the shrill wants of some of her elder children, I sat with it in my lap, looking out of the rain-spotted window upon the mouldering back gardens beneath, where string after string of intimate household linen dried or stiffened in the sooty air. I thought of the tender, mournful wisdom, the sad insight into life which that despised bundle contained, bought with the blood and sweat, and tears maybe, of thirty years: jotted down — for I knew its history — in cattle camps, by Algerian bivouac fires, in hotel lobbies of roaring Western cities. And I thought of the little luxurious house beside the Park, filled with all that ministers to the lust of the eye and the pride of life. A pretty face and figure, an aptitude for bodily movement, a few shallow tricks of manner, had earned that in a year for a woman whom I had already occasion to know couldn't spell. Well, the world knows what it wants. The world had chosen. Was there to be no appeal? Is failure here failure forever? Or is there, beyond this world, with its stark denials of justice, another where such things count still, and where the reward so insolently and capriciously withheld shall be bestowed, the hungerer after justice, even artistic justice, have his fill? Sad questions that no religion cares to answer.

And here my search ended. He had left no address: no letters had followed him. I took the manuscript away with me and locked it into a drawer. I was not sure yet what I would do with it. Show the world what manner of man it had despised, perhaps. Or perhaps tie a stone around it and sink it in mid-channel. I must think which Paul would have chosen.

Nearly six months afterward in late summer, I was sitting at my desk and beginning to think of turning in, when Mrs. McNaughten rapped at the door. A "vairy rough body" was asking for me. Should she show him up or bid him state the natur-re of his business?

"Doesn't he say what he wants?"

"He'll say nothing but that he wants Mister-r-r P. He

says ye'll understand fine. *Mister 'P.'* I think the body's daft."

The advertisement. My heart jumped. "Show him up, please. At once!"

A short thick-set man in soiled working clothes and with a colored handkerchief round his neck came in, tossed a cap on the table with a gesture full of natural grace, stretched his neck two or three times, as if to intimate that he was ready for any manner of reception, and began to beat a limy dust with the back of his hand out of as much of his corduroys as was within easy reach.

"Nime of Palamout," he said, oracularly and rather hoarsely. "Builder's mite, my tride is."

I indicated a chair. "And what can I do for you, Mr. Palamout? I am not contemplating any repairs or additions to my quarters at present."

All this time the man had kept one hand in his pocket. He drew it out, holding a newspaper, folded very small and very tight.

"In conneckshun wiv two advertysements," said he. "Fifteen Darlaston Crescent is the address wot's on one. 'Ere y'are. Marked in blue it is. Initial of 'P.'"

He unfolded the journal and handed it to me. It was the paragraph which heads this chapter, and which, having been paid for a year in advance, would reiterate its useless appeal for another six months to come unless — Somehow Mr. Palamout did not impress me as a bearer of glad tidings.

"Well," I asked, without much hope. "What news can you give?"

"'Old 'ard," said my visitor, who was feeling through various pockets, as if in search of fresh documents.

"You needn't bother," I said, irritably. "I know it's in more than one."

The horny-handed one smiled, a powdery and superior smile, as of foresight justified.

"Ah!" said he. "That's wot I thought you'd be in the dark abaht. Two parties there is. Complickitions — that's wot I calls it. 'Ere y'are. Sund'y 'Erald. Twenty-first July. 'Work'ahse Marster, depitties *and* uvvers."

I snatched the paper from his hand and devoured the salient paragraph. It was a very superior article; far more calculated to strike a reader's imagination than the feeble little effort we had concocted between us. I read it aloud.

"£200 Reward. To workhouse masters, lodging-house deputies and others. . . ."

"The above reward will be paid for information that shall lead to the discovery or certify the death of PAUL INGRAM, native of Lilburn, Massachusetts, U. S. A. He was discharged from the French Foreign Legion in March 19 —. Was subsequently correspondent in Morocco for the Federated Press, and is known to have been living in London in very reduced circumstances as recently as last September.

"Communications are to be made to the American Consulate, St. Helens Place, Bishopsgate, or to Messrs. Pollexfen, Allport and Pollexfen, Solicitors, 52a, Bedford Row, W. C."

A description of my hapless friend followed, remarkable, or perhaps not remarkable, for conveying the very haziest notion of his appearance.

Mr. Palamount was regarding my amazed face meanwhile with excited relish, somewhat tempered by his surroundings which were ill adapted to its natural relief by expectoration.

"Wotcher mike of it?"

I stared helplessly. "It's — money, I suppose."

The builder of houses was now approaching his supreme effect. He half rose from his chair, made an ineffectual attempt to rid his voice of cobwebs, and pointed an accusing finger, about the shape and size of a banana, at the two papers in my lap. At last he spoke.

"'Ue and cry: that's wot that is."

"What on earth do you mean?"



"Wot I ses. 'Ue and cry. There's lot of blokes, mind you as won't tike blood-money as'll give evidence of w'reabahts if they thinks it's all stright. Money? yus — I *don't* fink. Certify 'is deaf? It'll be certified all right if 'e puts 'is nose inter that loryer's orfice or if any bloomin' copper's nark as knows 'im gets 'is eyes on that parrygraft. Tike it aht, guv'nor. Git 'im aw'y somew're w'ere there ain't no extry-edition treaties. Shive 'is beard, too, 'e'd better, less 'e growed it since."

To say that I was dazed by Mr. Palamount's mental processes is to state bare truth.

"You think he's done something, then, and is in hiding?"

"Yus. Cut a bloke in hot blood, I fink."

"And that my advertisement will help put the police on his track?"

"Yus," said Mr. Palamount succinctly and without any implied respect for my superior lucidity. "Watch the 'ahse, they will, and pinch 'im w'en 'e calls."

"But — my dear obfuscated friend ——"

"'Ere, guv'nor; no langwidge please."

"Well, my dear friend, Paul Ingram's an old friend of mine. He's a highly respectable citizen. It's true he's got no money, but you and I know that isn't a crime. One advertisement is put in by his friends who want to help him, and as for the other — it's too late to-night, but I shall find out all about it first thing to-morrow."

My new friend made a repressive gesture. "'Ere guv'nor — none o' that. I seen it fust. If it's all right, them two 'undred quids is prop'ly mine."

"Well, do you know where he is?"

"I know w'ere 'e wos a week ago. To fink," catching up his cap and dashing it to the ground, "to fink as I showed 'im that one o' yours four munfs ago."

"You'd better tell me all you know," I said, losing patience. "Will you have some beer first?" The cobwebs were getting on my nerves.

"Beer!" echoed my visitor. He had, indeed, a generally unslaked appearance that rendered the question an impertinence. "Beer!" he said again, giving the word this time its full diapason or organ sound. The rest was vigorous action.

Unfortunately he had not an equal talent for connected narrative, and I was too anxious about Paul to welcome the light upon dark places which his discursiveness incidentally threw. One day, late in the previous autumn, I made out, his own trade being slack, he was working on the tramway extension to one of the northern suburbs. About midday the fog came on so thickly that the road-making gang were laid off for the day, and wended their way home after the riotously sociable manner of their class, with frequent calls at favored houses of refreshment. When evening fell, he was drinking in a bar the other side of Blackfriars with a neighbor and fellow-workman, whose patronymic of Barker had been long abandoned in familiar discourse for the more recondite one of "Flying Fox." ("Put two tanners on the 'orse 'e did, at odds on, an' won fruppence.") The backer of certainties had only been taken on that morning by the foreman after a week's waiting, and was probably in ill-humor at his enforced leisure. Either for this reason or some other a dispute arose in the bar of the George and Cushion, which was ended by Mr. Barker's shouldering his way out, with the expressed intention of pursuing his homeward way unaccompanied by any "bleedin' skrimshanker." Mr. Palamount was eager to detail the misunderstanding that had led to this cruel charge, but I checked him, and from this point the story took quite a leap forward.

"Parsin' Thomases 'Orsepittel, I see'd a crahd rahnd the cas'alty door, an' arst 'oo was 'urt. 'Bloke on the Embankmint,' they ses, 'knocked over by a motor-keb near Blackfriars: come aht of the fog like a cannon-ball,' they ses. I arst the nime, 'cos I was feelin' anxious 'baht Foxie; not drunk 'e wasn't, but I give you my word 'e'd 'ad some, and 'e wasn't a man as could 'old the booze. 'That's 'im, they ses — 'that's the party.

Ginger-*'*aired wiv freckles; answers to nime of Barker.' 'I'm a pal,' I ses, 'oo's in wiv 'im?' 'Man that fahnd 'im,' they ses — 'eddicated bloke: give 'im fust ide, and 'eld 'is 'cad in 'is lap in the tramcar.'

"They let me in w'en they 'eard I was a friend of the party wot was 'urt. Big room wiv benches: young tawfs in long w'ite coats — sawboneses I calls 'em — nurses too (my word, not 'alf givin' 'em the tale): blue jars, an' a smell wot mikes yer fice crack. 'Wotcher want?' the mitron ses to me. 'I fink I can identify the party, sister,' I ses, 'I'm a nighbor.' 'Wite 'ere,' she ses. 'They'll be bringin' 'im through in a minute.' So I sets dahn. A tall furrin' lookin' bloke was a settin' on a bench nigh me, wiv a beard. Werry thin an' fierce 'e wos and eyes a blazin' like coals. 'Crool business over there,' I ses, pointin' to the screen. 'Wife near 'er time, four nippers, an' only took on yesterday. Fust job since the spring.' 'I know abaht it,' 'e ses. I was a-goin' to arst 'im ow 'e knew, w'en the row begins from be'ind the screen. Just told 'im they 'ad as 'e was a free munfs' kise. 'I carn't do wiv it. I carn't do wiv it,' 'e was 'ollerin' over and over ag'in as they carries 'im through. 'My wife's near 'er time, and there ain't five shillin's in the 'ouse.' Tryin' to git up 'e was, and arstin' Gawd to strike 'im dead. 'Oo knows this man?' ses one of the doctors as was 'olding 'is arms. I was a-goin' to speak w'en the tall bloke jumps up and goin' over to the stretcher, bends dahn and w'ispers somethin' quick. Foxie stops strugglin' an' looks rahnd at 'im. 'Ow will yer?' 'e ses, and looks rahnd at 'im. 'Never you mind' ses the man. 'I didn't promust without knowin' 'ow. You wite,' 'e ses, 'and there'll be good news termorrer.' I fink Foxie was stunned like and let 'em carry 'im aw'y quiet. I was a wonderin' too w'ile they filled up 'is card for 'is missus, 'cos I never see destitootion so pline as on 'im.

"W'en we was ahtside: 'Nah then,' he ses, and 'e couldn't 'ave spoke brisker not if 'ed bin one of the doctors. 'Some-

thin's got to be done.' 'Yus,' I ses, lookin' at 'im 'ard. 'Done' I ses, like that. 'Tike me to 'is 'ome fust of all,' 'e ses. 'You know the w'y.' I'd mide up me mind be now as 'e was balmy, and I was a bit ashimed of 'im on the tram. But 'e pide 'is own fare and 'eld 'is jor. On'y w'en we wos gittin' near Camberwell: 'Wot sort of woman is this Mrs. Barker?' 'e arst me. 'I don't know much of 'er,' I told 'im. 'Keeps 'erself to 'erself she does. But sence she's bin doin' laundry work, my missus looks in and gives the kids their meals and a bit of a wash. Gimekeeper's daughter, she wos, in the country.' 'E looks dahn on to the Walworth Road w'ere some gels was a-dancin' to a organ. 'Gimekeeper's daughter!' 'e ses. 'In the country! My Gawd! 'Ow many kids?' 'Four,' I ses. 'Eldest is a van-boy earnin' five bob a week. T'other three's little gels. Don't see 'em in the street much. Mother keeps 'em indoors. Un'ealthy, I calls it.'

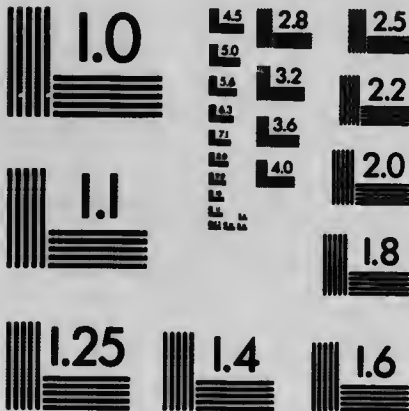
"Mrs. Barker must 'ave been listenin' for 'er man, 'cos she comes aht 'fore we'd got to the landin'. Tall, dark, 'an'some woman, wiv a diffrunt voice to most of the wimmin' dahn our w'y. Not so 'igh. 'Oh, Jim,' she ses. 'Wot mikes you so lite. 'Ave you forgot—?' and then stops short, seein' us two. 'You tell 'er,' I ses, keeping aht o' sight and nudgin' 'im. 'That's wot I come for,' 'e ses, and goes in and shets the door in me fice. I listened, expectin' to 'ear screaming, but there wos only talkin' — fust 'im very low, then 'er, and then more talkin', like prayin'. 'You can come in now,' 'e ses, throwin' open the door. She was settin' by the fire, cryin' to 'erself and young Ern, in 'is blue coat and brass buttons, blubbering into 'is coker, and two plites under the 'arth, one on top of the other, and grivy bubbling between the edges. The little gels wos in bed. On'y one room they 'ad.

"'Wot was Barker's job,' 'e asks. 'Road-making gang.' 'My old job,' 'e ses wiv a larf. 'Yus, I don't fink,' I ses, with a sidewise look at 'im. 'That'd be a better tale, matey, if there was a little more meat on your ribs.' 'I've mide roads,' 'e



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

ses, 'under a sun as'd melt you like a taller candle.' 'Wot kinder roads?' 'Millitery roads.' 'Oh,' I ses. 'You bin a soljer?' 'Yus,' 'e ses, 'the only real sort as is left. I never enlisted at eighteen to 'ave my 'ealth built up wiv 'ealthy food an' Swedish gymnastics, so be the time I was twenty I c'd go to Injer and sit in a verander durin' the 'eat of the d'y, flappin' the flies awf me fice w'ile a brown bag o' 'bones shined me buttons and kep' me rifle clean. I never bin a luxury seven years and a problem all the rest of me life. Gimme that poker!'

"Young Ern giv it 'im, staring like 'is eyes would drop aht. 'E took it up be the two ends and bent it double, then 'anded it to me. 'Staighthen it out,' 'e ses, wipin' 'is forehead. 'It's a knack,' I ses. 'E took it agen' and laid it out true, wiv a kind of a 'eave of 'is chest an' a groan. Next thing 'e did wos to put 'is 'ands over 'is fice and tumble in a 'eap on the floor.

"Wot a ter-do there was! Missis Barker bithing 'is 'ead wiv cold water, old Mrs. Conder from the nex' room tryin' to pour gin down 'is teef—"See wot it is,' she ses, 'to never be wivout a bottle'—young Ern 'ollering out to loosen 'is neck w'en there wasn't nothin' to loosen. 'Oh! is 'e dying?' ses Mrs. Barker to me. 'Dyin'!' I ses; 'not 'im. Acceleration is wot's the matter with 'im and nothing else.'"

Here my curiosity got the better of my anxiety. "What do you mean by acceleration?"

He shifted uneasily in his chair. "Well, guv'nor, it's a word us people has got. 'Aven't you read in the pipers w'ere it ses, 'Vital Statistics. In London ten persons was found dead of starvition during the past year?' That's ten w'ere the corner couldn't think o' nothin' else. All the others is only 'acceleration.' Pneumonia accelerated be insufficient nourishment, brownchitis accelerated, 'ousemaid's knee, tennis elber — wotcher like, so long as it's on'y accelerated. Looks better and keeps the charitable people comfortabler in their minds. 'Acceleration,' I ses to 'er; 'and that's the meddicine 'e wants,' pointing to the plites under the fire. 'And, 'e wants it sharp.'

"'E come to 'isself presently, and seemed quite ashimed. Sed it wos 'is own fault, and that that poker trick didn't oughter be done on less than a 'ole roll once a d'y. We give 'im the tommy, and at first 'e tried to eat slow. But it wasn't no use. 'E just seemed to in'ale them beef and taters an' a 'ousehold loaf and four cups o' coker. Mrs. Barker ackcherally larfed as she cut the slices. Women is funny, guv'nor. She seemed to fergit 'er own trouble. Wouldn't 'ear of 'im goin' away that night, but mide 'im up a bed in the passidge.

"Before I come aw'y it was arranged wot we was to do. I was to call for 'im in the morning and bring a suit of corduroys. We wos to go dahn togevver and apply for Foxie's job fer 'im.

"There wasn't no trouble over that. I got dahn early and give my mites the tile, and though the foreman wagged 'is mahth a bit, 'e saw there was trouble comin' unless 'e give in. 'E went a bit slow the fust d'y or so; but arter that there wasn't a better 'and, and in three weeks' time the foreman give 'im charge of a gang on a job up Finchley w'y."

"And you became great friends, I suppose."

"Well, guv'nor, I won't s'y that. 'E wasn't a bloke you could tike lib'ties wiv. Not enough wot I calls give an' tike abaht 'im. One 'er two tried calling 'im 'the lodger' and was sorry. But we went 'ome togevver and dahn to 'orsepittle of a Sund'y, and after Mrs. Barker gone to Queen Charlotte my missus useter look in reglar. But I give you my word there wasn't much as she could do. 'Owver early she come round, there was the floor swep' an' the kids dressed and barfed — great on barfs, 'e was: fussy I calls it — and 'avin' their breakfast and 'im sluicin' 'isself in the passidge. Wonderful 'ow 'e could cook too. Useter mike soup outer milk and vegetables. Never seed sich a thing, nor my missus neither."

"When did he tell you his name?"

"I'm a-comin' to that. Fust night I arst 'im and 'e said 's nime was 'Bruvverhood.' Well, 'e might be; 'cos I worked for a firm 'o that nime at Deptford — engineers they was.



But one night soon after Barker's missus gone aw'y, I got a letter from 'im askin' me to call. Funny, I thought it, 'cos we'd come home togevvver that evening. 'Owver, I cleaned up and went rahnd. There 'e was in what 'e called the buzzum of 'is fam'ly. Pretty sight it was. Young Ern was gone to the cawfy concert at Syviour's Schools. There was 'im smokin' 'is pipe an' little Effel wiv 'er curls brushed out recitin' a pome 'baht the night afore Christmas, and anuvver little gel on 'is knee, and Gertie on the floor pl'yin' wiv piper chickens wot 'e'd cut out. Schools was shut on accahn' o' scarlet fever, and 'e'd bin teachin' them their lessons.

"'E jumped up and called in Mrs. Conder to put the kids to bed. 'Ammertoe,' 'e ses, w'en we was in the street — that's my nime with my mites — 'Ammertoe, I got to trust some one, and it's goin' ter be you.' 'E pulls a bit o' piper out of 'is wescutt pocket. 'Thi 'ere's a cheque,' 'e ses, 'an' I want you to go down termorrer and cash it at the bank.' Well, remembering 'ow I'd met 'im, you c'ud a knocked me over wiv a canary's wing fevver. 'You ain't done bad, matey,' I ses, 'out of two munfs' navvyin',' 'No, I 'aven't bin long putting a nest-egg by,' 'e ses, quietly. 'That's a fact,' I ses, very serious. 'What's your gime?' 'E 'anded me the bit o' piper and I read the nime at the bottom. 'Ullo,' I ses, 'you're the bloke they're advertisin' for — spoilin' some one's 'appiness — in the *Sund'y Herald*.' 'Yus,' 'e ses. 'And that's wot I'm trustin' you with. Not the money — that's nothin'.' 'But wot abaht it?' I ses. 'Will they give it me?' 'They may arst questions,' 'e ses. 'But you ain't to know too much. Say you've give consideration, and a workin' man ain't to be kep' out of 'is due. There's no one can give that talk better'n you, 'Ammertoe'. 'e ses, smilin.' 'And besides, I'll p'y you for your trouble.' 'Ere, guv'nor,' I ses, 'old ard! Your a eddicated bloke, but don't think a artesian ain't got feelin's. You 'ave pide me,' I ses. 'I'm pide by wot I jest see up in Barker's 'ome.'

"There wasn't no real trouble at the bank. 'E'd give me annuvver letter to put into the envelope 'e'd sent me, signed wiv the same name as was on the cheque. The cashier looked pretty 'ard at me, and two or three clurks puts their 'eads togevvver. 'Don't 'urry,' I ses. 'I'm pide be the year, and it don't matter w'ere I spend me time.' Cahnted the five quids free times, they did, to be sure two wasn't stuck togevvver. Non-prejooocers, that's wot I calls them.

"This 'appened so often that the clurks got to know me. One night, jest before Foxie comes 'ome, I couldn't 'elp openin' my mahth a bit, jest to 'im. 'Wotcher goin' to do wiv all the money I drewed to-d'y? Give Barker a surprise be gettin' their stuff out o' pawn? Rare lot's bin up the spaht,' I ses. 'No,' 'e ses. 'It ain't wuth while now.' 'W'y not?' 'Cos they ain't 'ere for long. I'm a goin' to emmygrite them, 'Ammertoe.' I was 'avin a drink at the time, an' I nearly choked. 'Yus,' 'e goes on, afore I could speak, lookin' at the ceilin', 'they're a goin' to God's promust land. Them kids is a goin' to grow up so new'eres they don't 'ave to be shut in a room for fear of wot they may see and 'ear. It's full of tigers and wolves, that street is,' 'e ses, pointin' aht the winder, w'ere Bill Shannon was a tryin' to git 'is missus 'ome wiv all her clothes on. 'They're a goin' to be wake up on the trine some mornin' to see the blessed sun come up under the prairie as big and red as the dome of Paul's. It ain't spoiled sence I seed it fust, nigh on to twenty-five years ago. I've fallen from there to 'eli,' 'e ses, 'and there ain't no return ticket the w'y I come. But if I can't go back meself, I can show uvvers the w'y to escape.'

"'And ain't you a-goin' now'eres?' I ses, noticin' for the fust time 'ow w'ite and ill 'e was lookin'. 'Oh, yus,' 'e ses. 'I got my journey to go too.' 'Crost the sea?' I arst 'im. 'Just a short w'y,' 'e ses. "Crost the sea to a big white furrin town I knows of, w'ere there's a tramcar w'itin', as'll tike me 'alf-w'y. Full of women in w'ite caps it'll be, goin'

'ome from marketin' wiv baskets in their laps, and maybe there'll be some like meself as found there wasn't no sale for the wares wot they carried in. And w'ere it stops there's a road up a 'ill that turns through a field w'ere they're stackin' 'ay this minnit, wiv steep clay banks on bofe sides, and a old farm w'ere ducks is a swimmin' in a pond and pigeons a slippin' and slidin' dahn the roof. And w'en I've reached that,' e ses, 'I'll rest a bit and look down on a gray village and miles and miles of sand, wiv the sea a-crawlin' and a-crinklin' beyond; 'cos I'll know,' e ses, 'as I've reached my journey's end at last. Think of it,' e ses, grippin' my shoulder 'ard. "Think of it,' e ses, 'man! Clean, soft, dry sand, warm from a 'ole day's sun, and the grass a-wavin' and the sea w'isperin' and the gulls mewin'. There's worse ends to a journey than that, and you and me's seen 'em.' I looks at 'im very 'ard indeed. 'If you tike my advice,' I ses, 'before you goes on any of them journeys you'll 'ave a rest and some one to look arter you.' 'I shall 'ave some one,' e ses. 'She'll be a w'itin' for me in that town I telled you of. She'll tike my 'and and won't never let go until — Tell me, 'Ammertoe,' e ses, breakin' off sudden, 'wotcher think of me? Man to man. Think I'm a good man, dontcher?' 'Yus,' I ses. 'Bit balmy all the sime.' 'I ain't balmy,' e ses, 'and I ain't good. I'm a very crooil man, 'Ammertoe, and the reason is I'm too sine; too clear in me ed. W'en a man's too clear in 'is mind, it's death and ruin for 'em as 'as to do wiv 'im. . . And nah, drink yer beer up. We're talkin' nonsense, and I must git back to my bybies."

"Did you never talk to him again about this plan of his?" It was curious how our voices had dropped. We had both risen, and were standing opposite one another with a curious effect of being on different sides of an open grave.

"Never, gov'nor. Flyin' Fox come 'ome nex' day, and wot with explainin' everything to 'im, and wot with n'ighbors droppin' in, some s'yin', 'It's the best thing could 'a

'appened,' and uvvers, 'mark my words, you'll rue the d'y.' There wasn't no chanst again not for private talk. Foxie was dized in 'is manner. Mrs. Barker and the kids they 'ad it all cut an' dried. It was too lite for 'im like to 'ave any s'y in the matter. 'Let 'im alone,' Mr. Bruvver'ood says — still called 'im that afore stringers, I did — 'let 'im alone. 'E'll come to 'isself on the steamer. With wot you got and wot a woman can earn cookin' and cleanin' w'ere you're goin', 'e can 'ave the fust year to git well and strong. It'll be a convalescent 'ome to 'm, Canada will.'

"I took a mornin' off to see 'em start. Wonderful sight it was! Near four 'undred on the one trine, singin' 'Old Lang Syne' and 'Gawd Sive the King,' and shykin' 'ands all rahnd, and the people left be'ind s'yin': 'Leave us in your will.' The nippers was very smart, all in new warm togs, and little Gladys wiv a Teddy bear wot my missus giv' 'er. Thought 'e was coming with 'em up to the end they did. Didn't dare to tell 'm no different. And at the end, as the guard was a-wavin' 'is flag, Mrs. Barker broke dahn and frows 'er arms round 'is neck and kisses 'im like 'e was another woman or praps more, cryin' like 'er 'eart would break. 'Good job for you, Foxie,' my missus ses, 'as you're leavin' the lodger behind.' We all larft at that, and then the w'istle blew and the trine went awf wiv 'ankerchiffs at all the winders. 'E stood a long time lookin' after it. W'en it was gone, 'e turns to me. 'Let's 'ave one more drink,' 'e ses. 'Wot ho,' I ses. 'But ain't you comin' to work? 'Cos we was on a job togever. 'Not to-d'y,' 'e ses. 'Tell the foreman I ain't up to the mark.' So we 'ad one drink and I goes off, ignorant as a blessed byby wot was in 'is 'ead. And w'en I got home in the evenin'——"

"Well ——?"

"Gawn, gov'nor. Took all 'is fings — not as there was much — and left no address. And I ain't set eyes on 'im from that day to this."

"Can you suggest anything?"

"Yus, I can. That's w'y I come here. I fink 'e's done something 'fore you knowed 'im or I knowed 'im, and is a-goin' to give 'isself up. You don't? Well, no matter. Wot-ever it is, I don't fink 'e'll likely tike any steps before 'e 'ears a word from the parties as is in Canada to know 'ow they gets on at fust. They 'ave 'is address, I'm sure o' that. Wotcher think? Don't that 'elp us a bit?"

"Can you give me theirs?"

Mr. Palamout had come well provided with documentary evidence. He drew a soiled and crumpled piece of print from another waistcoat pocket. It was only the name of the Canadian Pacific agent in Alberta. The straw was a very slender one.

"I'll cable them to-morrow, prepaid. And I'll see the lawyers first thing in the morning. Don't be afraid," for I thought I detected a slight look of anxiety on Mr. Palamout's battered face. "I'm after something better even than two hundred pounds."

## VI

### GENEALOGICAL

**T**HE first thing I did the next morning, after a sleepless night besieged by possibilities, was to send a pre-paid cable to Alberta; rather for the relief of my own feelings than because my promptitude could effect any possible good. Indeed, as the telegraph clerk was at pains to inform me, eight o'clock in England is three o'clock in western Canada, and the very earliest of alarm clocks had not yet delivered its nerve-racking message there. Also I was pacing up and down the passage outside Pollexfen and Allport's offices fully three quarters of an hour before their managing clerk ascended the linoleum-covered stairs, rattling his keys and warbling a morning carol, to open them for the day.

Mr. Pollexfen, the senior partner, was a spruce, well-preserved man, with white hair and moustache, but as little of parade in his manner as in his florid, supple skin. He swung round in his chair and listened to my story attentively, the tips of his fingers joined, and clicking his well-groomed nails as I talked.

"Well! well! well!" said he, with a commentary sigh, when I had ended. "It's a strange case: the strangest, I verily believe, that I've had to deal with in the whole course of my practice."

He pulled a drawer open and tossed something to me across the table.

"Do you know anything of this?"

"This" was a little book sumptuously bound in blue roan,

and bearing upon its cover, embossed and gilt, a coat-of-arms, and the following legend in old English lettering.

"Pedigree of the Ingram or Ingraham family of Lilburn, Mass."

It was the very pamphlet over which, more than two years ago now, Paul had joined me in rather shamefaced laughter.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "I saw it at his rooms. Look! there's his name at the bottom."

"It seems so strange to us," the lawyer mused. "So contrary to all preconceived notions of America. Here, in peer-governed, class-beridden England, we take these things so much more as a matter of course. Myself, as an instance. I believe we are a highly respectable landed family, somewhere in the Eastern Counties, but I'd be bothered to say what my great-grandmother's maiden name was, and, I assure you, except for some tangible reason, I would regard time spent in finding out as time sadly wasted. The very crest on my spoons and carriage is a matter of tradition. It's never occurred to me to regard it with any degree of complacency. But, indeed, I must own to a rather complete ignorance of America, though we manage a good deal of business for clients over there. My ignorance extended, until lately, to the very name of the city where all this money was made. Oshkosh? You're a journalist, I see. Can you truthfully say the name stirs any latent geographical idea?"

"Yes. I've heard Ingram mention it. It's a big grain-shipping place on the Lakes."

"Grain? — grain? Yes. That's how the dollars were made, I remember. Three quarters of a million of them. Over sixty thousand pounds. We had no idea of it. The plainest, driest little man. Stayed at one of those cheap Bloomsbury hotels, and lunched on an apple and a wheat biscuit."

"Do you mean to say all this money is left to my friend unconditionally?"

"Absolutely, sir. Lester Ingraham — he'd even gone back to the old spelling — seems to have spent the evening of his

days in compiling the little book you hold in your hand. That's how he came to be sent to us by our New York correspondents. They are big people, and seemed to think him very small fry indeed. It had become an absolute obsession with him. Used to bore Allport to death talking of the senior and the junior branches, and so sometimes it was all I could do to keep a straight face. His dream had been to buy the old homestead and die there, and he told me the discovery it had been pulled down robbed him of ten years' life. Then the idea occurred to him, since it had vanished and he had no near relatives, to leave his money to the last Ingram born within the old walls, the walls which, as he told me impressively, had had an Indian arrow-head sticking in them for two hundred and fifty years. He had seen that in the museum. Well, well — who says romance is dead?"

"Sixty thousand pounds!" All the time Mr. Pollexfen was speaking I kept writing the sum on the Ingram pedigree with my finger nail, calculating interest at, say, four per cent, and thinking of Paul as I had last seen him."

"I've told you everything, Mr. Pollexfen. What do you think of our chance of finding him again within the year that is stipulated?"

The lawyer hugged his shoulders. "Very slight indeed, I fear, even if the advertisement reaches his eye. You say he had over two hundred pounds in a bank at his disposal, and chose to run after cabs. Now, to me, that looks very like hallucination. No. If I was the reversionary legatee, I'd feel pretty comfortable."

I said I had told him everything, but, as a matter of fact, I had not told him what I had every reason to believe I knew, and that is, the source whence the money came which Ingram had been loath to touch. I wonder, if I had, whether he would have changed his estimate of my poor quixotic friend. Codes of honor must seem shadowy things to a man who has been instructing counsel for thirty years.



## VII

### THE WAITING-ROOM

**A**ND, after all, it happened so simply in the end. A brief note, lying on my table, when I got back, with an address at the top that was strange to me, asking me to call "when convenient, for a chat."

Imagine if I found it convenient. Is there in all the world a cleaner, purer joy than to be the bearer of such tidings as mine?

The house proved to be one of some shabby mouldering little stucco "gardens" near Chalk Farm. It suggested seediness rather than great poverty, and, with my abominable journalist's *flair* for the dramatic, I was almost sorry the contrast was not to be a more startling one. Perhaps I hardly realized how much misery a decorous exterior can conceal in modern London, until an old woman, bent, deaf and short-sighted almost to blindness, opened the door. The hall was more than bare; it was naked. Not a picture on the walls, not a strip of oilcloth on the boards. On the bottom stair a cheap glass lamp without a shade had been set down and filled the passage with wavering, smoky shadows. The air was penetrated with the raw smell of paraffin, the "*triple bouquet*" of poverty.

If the nakedness had repelled in the hall, its persistence in the room to which I was led and my way was shocking. No curtains nor blinds at the window; a low truckle bed, rather felt than seen in the shadow at one side; upon the uncarpeted floor a great, crooked parallelogram of moonlight. As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I made out further a chair by the bedside, with a flat candlestick and a paper-covered

book turned face downward, and a big china wash-basin close to the bedside. I don't know what made me look more curiously at this than at anything else, and shudder when I saw how dark its contents were. Next moment I had felt for his hand and grasped it in mine. Thank God! it was not cold and heavy as I had half dreaded. Life — feverish, parched, burning life, it is true, but still life, was in its contact.

He must have been sleeping, and it is eloquent of his utter abandonment that, before I uttered a word, he guessed who had awakened him.

"Clear away that candle and sit down," he said, in a drowsy, muffled voice. "No! don't light it please."

I sat down obediently, and looked around me again. Gradually, as I gazed, the full significance of the stripped room came home to me. It was the bareness of the station waiting-room — the room in which one chafes and frets, watching the hand crawl over the clock-face, with an ear strained to catch the faint whistle of the train that is to bear us away to where we would or should be. That was it. He had come here to wait. The poor faint voice spoke again.

"I'd been lying here a long time," it said, "watching the moon, and it must have sent me to sleep. Don't be rough, old man," feeling clumsily for the hand that was at my eyes. "It's easier for me than it would be for almost any one else. I often wonder what it was gave me such a conviction of the utter unreality of the world. I think it was the years I spent, month after month, alone on the great wastes. I used to come into the cities and see the people swarming under the arc-lights round the hotels and theatres, and think that's what they'd been doing all the while, night after night. One can't take a world seriously that can mean two such different things to different men. Hold that basin a minute, will you, Prentice? I've got to cough. I can't put it off any longer. Thanks! Yes, it was that last winter in London that broke the bowl and

loosed the golden cord. I thought I'd been through a lot and knew all life could do; but, by God! I never imagined anything like that. Stop snivelling, man. I tell you there's no pain at all now. Just something like a big yawn that gets worse while I speak. And I had a lot to say. Do you know, what you said rankled a bit: I mean about my not understanding the ethics of friendship. Why, old man, I've often said to myself that there'd have to be a God if only to thank Him for a friend like you. Now I'm going to discharge the debt. Where shall I begin?"

I told him what I knew already. I forget exactly what words I used. Poor broken ones, no doubt. I told him he was a hero, a saint: that just to have lived a life like his to the end was to have won the bays and gained the victory. He stopped me halfway.

"Nonsense, you sentimental old penny-a-liner! Any one would have done the same. You'd have done it yourself, and you'd have done it far better, because you'd have loved while you worked. That's where I break down. Try to see me as I am, Prentice. I like to have you sorry for me; but don't let illusion mingle with the regret. I hated them! yes, yes, I did. Hated them as a man like me hates anything warm and human that encumbers him and tangles his feet upon his own ruinous tragic course. Even while those angels sat on my knee and ate their bread and jam and asked for more fairy stories I was straining for escape — thinking out ways by which I could rid myself of them, once and for all. You know the way I took. I had to sell my honor for it — handle money that you'd have died before you touched. For I'd given my word to them, fool that I was. I'd eaten their bread, and there's only the one law among white men. Fumble round, Prentice — there's a tumbler full of water somewhere near your feet."

He drank and went on, at first in a calmer voice:

"It began by my going to the theatre where she was dancing. I'd gone to the door again and again, taken my place in the

queue and come away at the last moment. And one night I went on and sat up in the gallery, jammed tight, waiting for her. People were talking. I won't say what I heard. It may be true. They didn't know that what they were heaping up was only more damnation for the shabby, shame-faced brute that sat among them, biting his tongue, and keeping his fists deep in his pockets for fear he should curse them suddenly and strike them over their unclean mouths. And then — she came on the stage, Prentice, and kissed her hands, and the whole house got up and roared and cheered. But I hung my head. I didn't dare look at her for a long, long time. At last, when I knew the dance was over, I found the courage. She was curtsying and smiling up at us, and it happened my first glance went straight into her eyes."

He gripped my wrist.

"There's the shadow there, Prentice, what I told you of the night we walked home: the look I was afraid of when I sent you to meet her. None of you see it, because you didn't know her before. God! how it shocked me. I couldn't stand it. I jumped up and climbed out. Some of the men hit out at me. There's some sort of a chapel on the other side of the Circus. The door was open, and there were about twenty people listening to a man gabbling in a language that's like nothing in heaven or earth. I knelt down on a bench at the bottom of the church and prayed, the first time since I swore off — oh! twenty years ago. 'Don't let it touch her!' I kept on saying. 'It's up to my neck, it's over my mouth and down my loathing throat, but don't let it touch the hem of her dress! I give in, God! You have me beaten, eternal Father, all in, down and out. But oh, Jehovah, Jahveh! Shining One! don't hurt a slip of a girl.' A man touched me on the shoulder. Said I'd better go out and come back on an evidence night.

"So you see, Prentice, for all my cleverness, I've had to come to it at last. I've had to whine for mercy to the God that made the tiger and the cancer microbe. I am only an old

Puritan, after all. One lifetime's too short to get two centuries and a half of Massachusetts out of your blood. The only time a real codfish Yankee's out of mischief is when he's making the dollars. A hundred years ago I should have been a great preacher of the word, Prentice. One of the sort that the sight of a man rejoicing in his strength or a woman in her beauty goads to cruel madness. And wherever I'd have gone I'd have left bowed heads and chilled hearts and minds half-crazed with the fear of judgment to come. What joy I'd have taken in it! I'd have been so busy seeing death got its due, it never would have occurred to me life had any rights. But it's a hundred years too late for that. The world's grown wiser. It never will let that sort of deviltry get the upper hand again. They saw it in my work, Prentice. That's why they've kept me bottled up and let me kill myself inch by inch with my own poison. But if a man can't do ill broadcast, there's always a quiet place where mischief can be done. You can always take your revenge for the world's common sense on some trustful soul that's laid itself bare in your hands. . . . "

Then I think he ceased to talk coherently.

"— and so I said to myself: I'll go down to the sea, where I had my darling all my own, pure and loving, before the stain of the world reached her or evil tongues made busy with her name. She's there still, I know. She's haunting those lonely sands, crying and wringing her hands and kissing the old letters because I won't write her any new. But she must forgive me when I ask her pardon and show her my punishment, and when it's all told, we'll sit hand in hand and knee to knee and watch the sun foundering out at sea and when the last little red streak has gone — "

He broke off suddenly, and sat up in bed.

"Where are my clothes? Haven't they sent them yet? I can't — I can't be found like this, you know! It's a wretched little piece of vanity, but I can't. And now I'm getting so

weak, I can't go into town again. Perhaps I didn't tell them where to — send — the right number." . . . .

His voice died away in his throat, and he lay back, quite exhausted.

It was nearly two hours afterward before I left the house for the last time. A doctor had seen him, and a nurse was settling in an arm-chair to watch him for the night. We'd done what we could to that awful room. That wasn't much, but the train was nearly due now, so it didn't really matter. There was a lot of work before me on the morrow.

And it wasn't until I was halfway home that I remembered the sixty thousand pounds!

## VIII

### 'TWINX SHINE AND SHADE

**T**O BE young, to be beautiful, to be free; to radiate a charm which it is felt not ungracious alone but ridiculous to pretend to withstand, and to be paid for its exercise in the tangible form that renders all else possible; to wake one morning and discover that pleasure, change of scene, and gracious surroundings have become the anxious concern of good genii whose motives are too evident to make any demands upon gratitude: to find each day a fairy vista wherein, by a happy perversion of the gray old rule, fulfilment waits upon desire: in one word, to be "the vogue." Has life ever offered more than this? and is it not a mere question of time how long any memory of old defeat, any regret for a lost Eden, can resist an assault by happiness made from so many quarters?

I think, if the whole truth could be known, Fenella's state of mind during her two years of furore would be a curious psychological study. I have just been looking through a pile of *Sceptres* and *Prattlers*, the issue of those enchanted years. It is hardly an exaggeration to say her photograph appeared in one or the other every week.—Fenella at Ascot—"The Secret of Success. One favorite whispers it to another."—"Look pleasant, please! A recent snapshot of Lord Lulford's popular niece." (I forget who invented this phrase. It was rather done to death.) Here are more: "Commons idol among the 'backwoodsmen' at the Burbery point-to-point. Names from left to right: Miss Barbour, Sir Bryan Lumsden, et cetera, et cetera." "Will 'No. 8' go up to-night? After

a strenuous day with the North Herts, Miss Barbour has to hustle to catch the London train." I say, take out all the palpable poses, all the profitable winsomeness of poster or postcard — there must be one or two where she was taken off her guard — and then try to trace the shadow poor Paul fancied he saw. I can only say I have failed. Complete absorption in the business of the moment — that is all I ever found.

Of course I know that people in the world do not wear their hearts upon their sleeves, and that there are all sorts of dodges whereby if not happiness, at any rate the peace of mind necessary for due enjoyment of life, can be secured. The sad thought can be kept moving on a day ahead, an hour ahead; always in sight, as it were, but always out of one's mental reach. Even so, the question remains whether such a shifty process can be continued indefinitely, and if a day does not come when the harassed ghost, weary, like poor Joe, of incessant moving on, takes wing, once and for all, for the land of oblivion.

I was years making up my mind about Fenella. I sometimes fancied the dear lady knew it, and that that was the reason my brooding glances were never surprised. It would have been so easy to look up and catch them. "A penny for your thoughts, Mr. Prentice." And then — remember I'm a journalist, and used to seeing truth sold at the price — "I was wondering whether I wasn't only just in time, after all."

She did catch me at last. It was on that night, I fancy, that I passed once and for all from the sober status of "my husband's great friend" to the more vertiginous one of "my own." Paul was out at some committee meeting or another — he leaves her a good deal alone — and would not be in till late. I had been sitting silent a long while, watching the busy slender fingers and the sweet puckered brow. Knitting is rather a rite with Fenella, but I pity the naked she clothes if they had to wait on the work of her own hands. She had dropped a stitch. "One—two—three," she was counting under her breath — "*one and two and three!*" and then —



Oh, I protest, madam! it was an unfair advantage that you took. I forget what answer I stammered out. She stuck her needles into the wool, glanced at the clock and told me everything.

A long electric launch, whose stern was covered by a white awning lined with green, skimmed its way through the lines of moored yachts, and across the blue Solent, its prow held high like the breast of a diving sea-bird. Over the bows, from which two sheets of water spurted away, clear and convex as blown glass, a seaman sat, dressed in ducks, and holding a long boat-hook in his hand. Round the ribbon of his glazed hat, in letters of gold, the legend ran —

S.Y. *Castadiva*, R.Y.C.

Amidships a tall, broad-shouldered man in blue serge, very sunburnt, and wearing a peaked cap, sat, or rather sprawled, in conversation, probably technical, with the driver of the dynamo, whose head and shoulders only appeared above the half-deck. Under the awning a girl was sitting alone. Her furled parasol made a vivid splash of scarlet against her snowy dress.

Near the jetty of the yacht club the engine ceased to flutter, and the sailor, putting out his boat-hook, drew the launch to shore. The man in blue jumped out and, extending a long arm, helped the girl to land.

"Moor her where you can to-night, Mr. Weeks," he said to the head and shoulders. "I'll see the commodore to-morrow and find out why we're not given our usual berth."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"And, Weeks, have the launch sent back at three sharp, with the baggage on board. Becket needn't come. I'm going to Beverbrook immediately after lunch, and shall sleep there. Good-day, Weeks."

“Good day, Sir Bryan.”

Meantime, the girl, unfurling her parasol and balancing it daintily on her shoulder, walked toward the land, looking about her with a bright interest at the blue bay, the white sails of the yachts and the smartly dressed crowd loitering outside the yacht club enclosure. She wore a white linen princesse robe, its costly simplicity adorned only by a wide band of embroidery that ran from throat to hem, and a big gray straw hat trimmed with a wreath of what roses would look like if nature had had the good taste to make them the color of pansies — the roses that bloom in the Rue de la Paix.

Slowly as she walked, she had reached the hedge of the enclosure before her companion overtook her. Inside the lawn was not crowded. The big regatta had taken place the day before, and it was lunch hour. Such groups as were strolling up and down or sitting in little encampments of canopied arm-chairs stopped flirting or talking to stare and whisper. On some of the women's faces appeared the dubious admiration that is kept for social audacity in their sex. The girl seemed unconscious of the effect she was creating and looked about her indifferently. Espying some friends in a far corner, she signalled vigorously with her open parasol.

“Bryan, there's Lady Carphilly and Mrs. Rolf d'Oyley. I must go and talk to them. Will you come too, or wait?”

“I'll wait,” the man answered shortly. “I've sent in for my letters and I'll open them here. We ought to have lunch soon. Don't be long, Flash.”

A club waiter who had been standing in the offing with a pile of letters on a salver and an initialled leather dispatch case, approached and disposed them on a table near the chair into which the baronet had flung himself. Lumsden bestowed a casual glance upon the pile and looked toward the man's free hand.

“What have you got there?”

“A telegram for Miss Barbour, Sir Bryan.”

"Give it to me."

The man handed it over without demur. Bryan ripped it open and read the message through. He looked thoughtful.

"How long has this been here?"

"Two days, Sir Bryan."

"Didn't they try to get it through by wireless?"

"I can't say, Sir Bryan. I'll ask if you wish."

"No: it doesn't matter. Bring me a 'John Henry'."

He slipped the opened telegram into his coat pocket and, lighting a cigar, proceeded to read his mail through, systematically, but with a pre-occupied brow.

The past twelve months had dealt hardly with Bryan. There is probably in the life of most of us some day, or preferably some night, when fate chooses to pay us the arrears of years, in which the hours as they pass over our heads grizzle them, and our tears, if tears we can shed, are a corrosive acid that bite their record upon our cheeks for all time. No one honestly mistook Lumsden for a young man after his little son's death.

It may have been something in one of the letters he had just read — may be, who knows, something even in the telegram, that made him, after he had swept his correspondence, with various pencil scribblings on the margins, into the dispatch case, recall that night with rather more deliberation than he usually permitted himself, and stare gloomily at the group into which, with much embracing and chatter, pitched in a key of congratulatory envy, Fenella had been drawn.

How she had changed! How she had changed since then! To-day as for many a day past, it was in nothing more precise than this loose mental phrase that his ill-defined dissatisfaction could find vent. Beyond it he seemed unable to go, and was even forced to admit a certain flimsiness in a charge out of which no better indictment could be framed. Because, whatever strain upon his finer perceptions had made the year of probation the torture it had undoubtedly been, he could not

deny that she had remained true as steel to the bargain made with him in the house of death — a bargain so vague that scarcely any pretext would have been too tawdry to discharge her from it had she wished. She had sacrificed her good repute to him forthwith; had even seemed eager for circumstances that, as far as the world was concerned, should put the sacrifice past doubt, and if, of late, it had been coming back to her, as most women's is conveyed from them, in whispers, the rehabilitation was not of her own devising, but rather part of the observed tendency of murder and other violations of established usage to "out." Strangely enough, her fame fared better at women's hands than at men's, and worse among those who were convinced of her technical integrity (the phrase was even invented for her) than with those who inclined to give the ominous face of appearances its full value. I don't know why this should have been so. Perhaps vice has its own hypocrisies and canting code of law, and her resistance to the spirit after the letter had been so admirably fulfilled was held an outrage. At least she gave him no anxiety, although he knew that temptation had reached her, once from a quarter so exalted that it is not usually taken into account — even suspected one wooing as honorable as perfunctory, and although all his money and all his good will could not make him as young as the hot blood that besieged her. Her house was always open to him, at hours which his own forbearance was trusted to keep within the limits set by decorum; she kept whisky and cigars for him in her sideboard, with even the little sprig of vanilla in the cigar cabinet that she must have seen and taken note of in his own rooms. She never denied him her company nor discovered affinities among his friends; she even seemed to have a tender conscience in this regard, and looked round anxiously for him whenever the ripple of her little triumphs carried her temporarily out of hail. Whence then his secret dissatisfaction? Oh, this termless war of attainment with desire, old in human story as the history of David's unruly

sons! Was Bryan the first to set a snare and grudge the plumage he had coveted for the marks of his own springe it?

She was a great success, socially. She entered the world, it is true, under his auspices, and because he was s if she was not asked to the same houses, and because it important to a good many people that Bryan Lumsden say nothing of Calvert & Co., should be kept in good hu But, once in, her own talents were quite competent to keep in the place he had made for her. She had even reached a p now where her successes were her own, and no longer were to throw reflected lustre upon her sponsor. She fitted qui and easily into what, after all, was her own class. In a she rode hard and straight and had developed a heady hitherto successful system of tactics at bridge. Bryan longer got the credit of her clothes, but it was generally un stood she was frightfully in debt and would marry him w her creditors delivered their ultimatum. She had an infar wit and a faculty for what the French term *choses ino* One of her riddles became proverbial.

"What did the fishes say to Noah when he asked them the ark?" "No tanks."

I subjoin a few more specimens, not with any hope their charm will subsist in print, but just to show with w things, on pretty lips, the weary old world is prepared to amused.

Once she was trying to collect money for some charity no one had change. This happens sometimes even in sn society. "Oh, dear," sighed Fenella, "everybody has hand-to-mouth disease."

She was slightly angered at a restraining clause in one of contracts, discovered when too late.

"You're a bad man," she told the flustered manager, "you deserve to come to a nasty sticky end."

To Rock, of ill odor in the Park, after his senile advan

had been rebuffed by a snobby little Pekinese: "Don't whine, *dee-ar!* I don't believe that kind of dog knows whether it's a dog or a poll-parrot or an insect."

"Bryan's caught cold, I think," she said one morning. "He keeps calling for 'Letitia'."

If these are fair samples of the parts she put at the disposal of her new friends, her reputation is not the surprise it might be to a man who knows that the dear lady to this day conducts her conversation upon an economical little vocabulary of about three hundred words.

Maybe the conscience we have spoken of had been pricking her, for when Lumsden raised his head from his reverie the world had gone red, and he was looking at the sun through her parasol.

"You look glum, old man," said Fenella. "What's the matter? Do you want your lunch?"

Lumsden got up and stretched. He had been pulling at his moustache, and one hair — a white one — was on the shoulder of his blue reefer. She picked it off, held it up to the light, looked unfathomably at him and blew it daintily into the air.

"Perhaps we'd best have lunch now," she said. "I want to get to Beverbrook soon and see what arrangements they've made. Do you remember Edmaston, Bryan, where they put that dreadful polish down — Takko or Stikko or something — and when my foot stuck I buzzed and every one laughed?"

"Don't you feel nervous, Flash?"

"Just a teeny. When do *They* come?"

"Oh, to dinner; but you won't be introduced till you've danced. And remember, Flash, you must only speak when you're spoken to by Them. Just answer questions."

"I'll try not to disgrace you," she said airily, and led the way to the pavilion.

## IX

### BEATEN AT THE POST

**S**HE was very gay and flippant during lunch, and while crossing the bay, and in the motor on the way to the great ducal house, where she was going, if not to sing for her supper, at least to dance for her dinner. She was very serious and a little dictatorial on the stage, but immediately after tea took the owner of the Chaste Goddess and so much else by the arm, and proceeded to drag him on a prolonged tour of inspection, through the stables, round the noble Italian gardens — at whose lichened fawns and satyrs she made faces, expressive of the utmost scorn and defiance, but which only succeeded in being charming, and the English garden — where the leader shepherdesses were pronounced “ducks”; into the aviary to drive four macaws to frenzy with a long straw, and back by orchid houses and hothouses to the terrace again. She picked a good many flowers and ate a quantity of fruit.

It was while she was picking grapes in the vine house that Lumsden took heart and disburthened himself of a little of his recent chagrin.

“Flash! I’m going to scold you?”

“Oh, Bryan! what for? For culling all these grapes? I like ‘cull,’ it sounds less greedy than ‘pick.’ I cull, thou culleth — no, *cullest* — she culls.”

“Flash! out of all the world what made you pick on those two Jezebels to speak to on the lawn?”

“What’s the matter with them besides ‘jezziness’?”

“You know well enough. They’re not nice women.”

"Really nice women don't have much to say to me? Have you noticed it, skipper?"

"They would if — Oh! stop eating all those grapes. You'll make yourself sick."

"If what, please?"

"If you'd only do the straight thing?"

"What do you mean? Go into a refuge?"

"A refuge! What abominable twaddle you can talk when you like."

She laid a sticky finger over his mouth. "Tut-tut-tut! Come outside if you're going to scold. It's too fuzzy in here. You'll get a rush of brains to the head."

Outside, the garden was deserted. The centre of interest seemed to have shifted to the upper terrace. A large horny beetle was pursuing his homeward or outward way over the pounded shell of the walk. Fenella assisted him with the point of her parasol, and did not relax her good offices until he was in dazed safety upon the border. Then she looked up.

"Flash! why don't you marry me and have done with it?"

She punched six holes in the path before replying.

"What do you want to 'have done with?' Why can't we go on as we are a little longer?"

"Because it's — unnatural. There are other reasons, but that's enough."

"It isn't, if you don't let it worry you — Oh! what am I saying? Bryan, do you think we'd care as much for one another if — if I did as you say."

"Of course we should — more every day."

"Why didn't you keep getting fonder and fonder of those others, then?"

"I think that question most unseemly. You don't seem to realize I'm asking you to be my wife."

"M-m! It is hard to."

"Oh, don't be clever. Every one's clever. What are you waiting for?"



No answer.

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you think you know, dear."

"You're waiting until there's not one little bit left of the girl I fell in love with, the girl who tried to hide her bare arms under Perse's ruffle in the hall at Lulford, and who cried by the cot where my poor little urchin was dying. You've never forgiven me that cursed night in Mount Street."

"Dear! I've never mentioned it from that day to this."

"Well, it's behind everything you say. It's behind your eyes when they look at me. Can't you understand I wasn't myself."

"You were a little — eh? Weren't you, dear? Not much; just a gentlemanly glow."

"And it's your way of taking revenge for it. And a d — d cruel woman's way it is."

She laid her hand on his arm. "Bryan, don't worry me now. I've got a lot to go through to-night. It's harder than anybody thinks. There's some sense in what you say. But we can talk about it some other time. . . . Oh! look up there! What's happening?"

A big brown-red closed motor-car rolled along the upper terrace and stopped at the great doorway. In a moment servants — visitors seemed to run together, to range themselves in two lines, one on each side of the wide curved steps. Framed in the dark gothic arch, the Lord of Beverbrook appeared, noble, white of hair and moustache, with a serene and lofty humility in his bent head that was strangely impressive. The rest is Apotheosis. Before it we veil our dazzled eyes.

He had not gone to bed at two o'clock the next morning. He sat, completely dressed, smoking and looking out his bedroom window over the silvering terraces and park. The great gay house was abed: the night very still. Only to his left,

above the low quadrangle of some stables or outhouses, could be seen a dim shaft of light. A murmur of voices, the sound of water running and splashing about a hose-pipe, seemed to come from that direction.

His thoughts were busy, but not directly with the girl whose interests and his own were by now tacitly associated. The night had been a new triumph for her — in a way the crown upon all the rest — but such triumphs by now were discounted in advance, felt almost to be in the order of nature. No. It was the telegram he was thinking of, the telegram that he had intercepted on the lawn at Cowes. He had not so much forgotten it till now as mentally pigeon-holed it for future consideration. This habit, acquired in business, he unconsciously followed in all the concerns of life.

Who was making himself this beggar's advocate in London. Who was "Prentice." Curse him! whoever he was. Few though the words had been, they contained a hint of some previous understanding or rendezvous. Who were the conspirators that wanted to drag a girl away from the light and laughter that was her due, (influences so desirable from every point of view) into the chill shadow of a hospital death-bed. He had long ceased to be jealous of Ingram, as of a man whom the world that was his friend had taken in hand and beaten handsomely, but there is no hatred so merciless and lawless as that with which contempt is mingled. The suppression of the telegram never struck him as dishonor, although he was not a cruel or a treacherous man. He counted it a fair counter-stroke to what he esteemed a blow in the dark, a stab from behind. Letter by letter and word for word the hateful thing was printed on his brain, but who does not know the instinct of return to a message in which substance and significance are so inversely proportioned? To have read nine times is no reason for not reading a tenth. The screed has not changed, but the mood may have; and, with the new mood, who knows what fresh meaning may not leap at us.

He got up, opened the wardrobe, and felt in the pockets of his blue coat. It was not in either of them. He considered awhile. Had he packed it, with the letters, into his dispatch case? If so, it had gone aboard to his secretary, which didn't matter much. But — no. He distinctly remembered feeling it in his pocket during the crossing to the mainland. Plainly gone, then. But where?

He took the coat off the rack and looked at it as though he would read its history since dinner. His own man was not with him, but he had stopped at Beverbrook before and knew the valeting was a little overdone. R — was so natty himself. He had flung it on the bed when he dressed. Whoever did the room had taken it to be brushed or pressed, and the telegram had fallen out of the pocket. How could he be sure? Oh! he knew. There had been a tiny smear of white paint under the left cuff. If the coat had been taken away — He took it to the light. The white smudge was gone.

He was not pleased at the accident, but decided to dismiss the matter for the night. The faculty to do so, and to fall asleep on some pleasant thought, was part of his life's sound régime. He began to think of her again. How prettily she had carried off her success. He recalled the little bob-curtsey in the Presence, so in character after the hoydenish dance — the gleam of sub-audacity that accompanied it, which every charming woman knows she can permit herself in company, however august, where her charm is likely to be felt. But who would have done it so gracefully? He had stood aloof (it seemed more decent to), but he remembered how long she had been kept in the circle, and how every one had laughed from time to time. Her competence, her amazing competence — that was what he was never done marvelling at. Nothing seemed to scare her, nothing to dazzle her. What a genius there can be in school nicknames! And then, that chin and jaw of turned ivory, and the hair, dark and fragrant as a

West India night, and the diamond twinkling in the little fleshy ear.

Suddenly he stood quite still, with his hair-brushes in his hand, listening intently. Some one was scratching stealthily on the upper panel of his bedroom door. Remember the hour — the stillness — the man's old experience, and of what his imagination was full. His heart seemed to miss two or three beats, and to resume its function thickly and heavily in his throat. The last traces of anger and dissatisfaction died away. Women had called Bryan Lumsden's face beautiful before. They might have called it so now again.

He walked to the door and opened it softly. It was she; but dressed, with her hat and veil, and with the telegram in her hand.

"Bryan! — Bryan!" she said under her breath, and then stopped. Her agitation was so great that she could not go on. He drew her gently into his room and closed the door.

"You must be careful, Flash," he said gravely. "This isn't an ordinary visit like Lulford, you know. It won't do to have any scandal here."

"Bryan, can I speak to you a minute?"

"Go on."

"You know what you asked me this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"I will, I will, I *will*; any time you like."

He looked at the telegram and his face hardened.

"If —?"

"Yes. If you get me to London to-night."

"Flash! it's absurd. Think of the hour! Can't you wait till morning?"

"No. I shall go mad."

"But even if the station is open, it will take hours to get a special."

"You have your car."

"Yes; but every one's in bed, and the garage probably locked up. Be reasonable."

"Oh, no they're not," she said eagerly. "I can hear them from my window. They have lamps and they're washing the cars with a hose."

"What has happened?"

She handed him the telegram quite simply. "I found this on my table. It's been opened. I don't understand ——"

He read it through again and folded it quite small and evenly.

"Where's your room? You can't wait here."

"At the other end of the corridor — Oh, Bryan! God bless you!"

"*S-sh!* How will I know it? It won't do to make a mistake."

"Can't I hang a stocking over the knob?"

He looked at her askance a moment, then put on his jacket and walked away into the darkness. After what must have seemed more, and was probably less, than half an hour, he tapped softly at her door. He was wearing the big coat she knew so well. He had wrapped her in it more than once.

"I've arranged it," he said, in a low voice, strangely gentle. "Follow me, and walk quietly."

X

A YEAR AND A DAY

**W**E GOT Paul out of that dreadful lodging and into a private ward at St. Faith's. I'll never forget the way Smeaton helped. We had the very best advice, but all the doctors shook their heads over him. Some old adhesion of the lung, they said, that, under normal conditions, he might have lived till eighty and never suspected, but which privation, or a chill, or a blow, or perhaps all three, had fretted to malignity. There'd have to be an operation. It wasn't what is called a desperate one, was well within the competence of modern surgery in an ordinary case, but everything was against poor Ingram. Webber, who was watching the general condition, took no responsibility for the operation, and Tuckey, who was to do the cutting, took no responsibility for the result. As a division of responsibility, it was the neatest piece of work, I think, I have ever seen.

"It's not really strength he lacks," said Webber, after his last visit before the critical morning. "It's the *vivida vis*, the desire of life, that isn't there. Two trains of hope would be worth all the oxygen and beef-juice and brandy we could pump into him in a month."

I didn't confide to Webber that I'd already told Paul sixty thousand pounds was waiting till he was well enough to claim it, without seeing one shade of pleasurable emotion come into the tired, drooping eyes. As for Fenella, her name was never mentioned between us. I don't think he had any idea how much he had told me in that dark room at Chalk Farm, and I did not remind him. I had reason, soon enough,

to bless my forbearance, for day followed day, and no answer to my telegram reached me. At Park Row I had found a sullen reluctance to give any information at all. She was travelling — she was on the sea — had left no instructions for forwarding. But a journalist is not to be thrown off the scent by a sulky and probably venal little slavey. Two telephone calls put me into possession of Lumsden's probable movements, and I knew I had not gone very far astray in sending the telegram to his care at Cowes. I never doubted for an instant that it had reached her hands. No; she had sought advice where advice, perhaps, was already backed by natural authority, and had decided that, under the circumstances — You see what I mean? It is true she might have written or wired asking for news. But trying to repair life's errors is a thankless task. Through the breach we are patching up the whole salt, dark ocean of destiny comes pouring and thundering about our stunned ears.

I slept little on the night before Paul's operation, and was up and moving restlessly about my rooms before the sun had risen. Who is it says, "Help cometh with the morning?" The Bible, probably. Anyway, I know I was heartened by seeing the rosy glow on the curtained windows opposite. It is a strange thing that I, who was to have no share in the day's great business, was probably up the first. Paul, I hope, was asleep, and I am sure Tuckey and Webber were. How far easier is work than waiting! The one has its seasons — a life may be wasted in the other.

I was looking out my sitting-room window, thinking this and many a deep solemn thought besides, when a big car, covered so thickly with mud and dust that its color could not be distinguished, and with the unmistakable appearance of having been driven far and furiously, swung — one might almost say dropped — into the crescent. I knew it was she. Oh, how I loathed myself for my doubt! I had the door open before she could put her foot on the steps.

She flashed into my face one mute, awful question in which I could tell the anguish of hours was concentrated, and I gave her the mute reply which says, "Not yet."

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" she said, and clasped her hands across her breast. The man in the car, stooped above the steering-wheel, did not move once nor look round.

"Can I see him now? Will he know me?"

"You won't be let see him till nine. The operation is at eleven, and there's hope. He was conscious last night but very weak. I can tell you no more."

If I sound harsh or cold, lay it to the charge of the man at the wheel.

I went on. "Shall I arrange for you to see him at nine?"

"Is it far?"

"Just across the river."

"I'll call back at quarter to nine, and you must take me."

She climbed into the car without looking at me again, and next moment was gone. Across the road I counted six blinds drawn to one side.

Lumsden never asked whether the man he had brought her a hundred and thirty miles to see was dead or alive. His face was set like a stone. In the main road he turned it to her, a mere dusty mask.

"Where do you want to go now?"

"Go to my house. I'll get you a drink and some breakfast. You must be half dead."

He headed the car for Knightsbridge without a word, and while Frances, sleep struggling with surprise in her bemused brain, was fulfilling her humble rôle in the romance by poaching two eggs over the electric stove, they sat in the dining-room on opposite sides of the table. She had filled a long, thin glass with the beverage his heart loved, but he only sipped it, which was not like Bryan, and turned the tumbler thoughtfully round and round. He avoided her eyes. He had seemed to avoid them all the way up.



"Will you come with me to — to the hospital?" she asked, when the silence had begun to weigh upon her.

"No. I don't want to see him."

"Bryan, since we're to be married, I think I'd best tell you what I wouldn't tell that night at Mount Street. Do you remember?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Dear, there's no reason, when you see him, you should feel anything but just a great, deep pity for all his unhappiness. I don't know why I didn't tell you this before. I think it was your doubting him drove me mad. And you're quite right in saying I've changed myself on purpose. It was because, after I learned the world a bit, I saw what a fraud I really was. All those little girl's ways you liked so much — they're very pretty, I dare say, but they're shams for me, anywhere off the stage. I had no right to them. I'm only what the world calls a 'good girl' — I'm only a girl at all, because he was merciful and — spared me. He must have been a very good man."

"Or a very cold one? Which?"

"Well. I'm not going to try to answer that, Bryan. It's what you call yourself an 'unseemly question'."

"You're a strange creature."

"Oh no, I'm not, Bryan. Not a bit different really to heaps and heaps of other women. I used to think I was once, at Sharland, because I didn't seem to have the other girls' ways or their curiosity. But I know better now. Do you remember Lord — the old lawyer beast that we went to the White City with? He took me on the launches, and when we were alone, he leaned over and told me — oh, something I can't even tell you, Bryan — now. He said it in French first and then, in case I didn't know what it was in French, he translated it into English. Those are the things that make us *loathe* you, Bryan — deep, deep, deep, down in the little bit of us you never reach. But I only giggled, as any other girl

would have done, any other girl who felt the same as me. And now he'll always remember me as — the woman who laughed."

"You're all a mystery."

"Not half as much as is pretended, Bryan. The mystery comes about because we don't tell the truth. Married women don't tell it, even, to one another, and it's thought shocking to tell a girl things that the first man she meets will tell her if she lets him. I hear more than most, 'cos I'm not one thing nor the other, and every one thinks I'll tell them things back, and then they'll find out what's puzzling them about us two. And we never tell you. How dare we? We find a set of rules ready made for us — by you. You take the men we really want from us because you're stronger than they are, or richer, or even braver than they are, and since it's the way you settle things among yourselves, and since you're satisfied with what you get by it, we pretend we're satisfied too. But it's one thing to conquer them, Bryan, and it's another thing to conquer us. I'll tell you a little woman's secret: No nice girl ever gives herself up quite to a man unless there's a little of *her mother* in him. There was an awful lot in Paul. I found it out."

"A bit of an old woman, in fact?"

"Oh! I see I can't teach you. It doesn't matter. So you see, dear," in a different voice and raising her head, "there's not much left for you. But what there is I'd rather you had than any one else. I *like* you, Bryan — I like you *so*."

"And you think I ought to be satisfied with that?"

"Well, you know what you said a year ago."

"Yes — a year ago, but not now. Yesterday perhaps, but not this morning. It's the old Scots law limit — a year and a day. Often the wisdom that doesn't come in the year comes in a night. You're too deadly wise, Flash; too utterly disillusioned. I never could stand it. There'd be nothing to teach you; nothing to break down. You believe you've taken my measure, and every time I tried to lift our lives out

of the mud, I'd feel you were laughing at me — down in that little bit you've just told me of. It may be as you say, all a make-believe, but, by G—d! it doesn't do to have both know it. What do you want most, really? Your liberty?"

She did not answer or raise her head.

"Well, you can have it." He got up and took his cap off the table. "Good-bye."

She didn't speak until he had his hand on the handle of the door. And then —

"Bryan, I've never let you kiss me. You can now if you like."

He spun round on his heel, as though some one had given him a blow between the shoulders. For a moment she thought he was going to strike her, or humble her pride to death. A foul name seemed to be actually forming itself on his lips. But he came across the room, and took her in his arms, and held her a long while.

"Take care, please," she said, breathlessly, "you're hurting me — a little."

Then he let her go.

"Oh, Flash!" he said hoarsely. "Doesn't that mean anything to you? Doesn't that tell you something?"

She was looking in the mirror at a little red mark where he had pressed the earring into her neck.

"Good-bye," he said again, and she heard the hall door slam. And then the throb of the motor began to rattle the windows in their frames.

She fell upon her knees and buried her face in her hands.

## XI

### TWO GRAINS OF HOPE

**I**F THAT early morning call at half-past five had been my only meeting with Fenella, I don't think I should have known her when she came back at nine. All the weariness had gone out of her face. Under her light cloak she was freshly and beautifully dressed. Her eyes seemed to brim with a sort of wistful happiness. I hated the task; but knowing what she was about to see, I *had* to try and prepare her. But I soon saw I was having my trouble for nothing. I think she hardly heard me. Her heart, it was plain, was full of that brave, sane hope that, even when it is brought to nothing, I think bears sorrow best. Webber had just paid his morning visit, but she did not wait for his report. I fancy from the look he gave me that he took in the situation at a glance. I smiled back at him a little nervously. He had prescribed two grains of hope, and I was conscious of bringing an overdose.

In the private ward my impulsive companion took no notice of doctors or nurses, but went straight over to the bed on whose snowy pillow the poor wasted face lay like a gray shadow. She gave a little moan at the first sight of it: that was all. His eyes were closed. She knelt down, and passing her arm ever so gently underneath his neck, threw back her cloak, and laid the shadowy face upon the warmth, and the fragrance, and the softness beneath.

"Paul," she said at his ear, low, but so distinctly that we all heard. "Don't you know me, dear? It's Nelly, come back to take care of you, and look after you and love you all the rest

of your life. You're going to get well, aren't you, dear, for her sake? 'Cos you mustn't break her heart a second time, you know. And, dear, she doesn't want you to talk; but won't you just open your poor tired eyes once, a teeny second, to show you know whose arm is round you? Because she's been waiting, waiting — oh, such a weary time! just waiting, dear, till you sent for her."

There was silence for a few seconds, broken only by the unrestrained sobbing of the little day nurse at the foot of the bed. Then Ingram opened his eyes.

"I don't know whether he's going to die or get well," said, some hours later. I was trying to swallow *chateaubrian* and champagne and unmanly emotion all at the same time which doesn't help lucidity. But I'd been supporting an anxious day on a tin and a half of cigarettes, and the champagne was old Smeaton's fault, so perhaps I shall be forgiven. "I don't know whether he's going to get well or die. I can't feel it matters much, to-night. You'd know what I mean if you'd seen his face. Oh! it was wonderful. I think I know now how a man looks when he wakes in heaven and knows he's very nearly missed it. And the Barbour woman, crooning and cooing over him, and the nurses snivelling, and all those doctors trying to pull the poor devil back to life! Yes, you can laugh if you like, Smeaton. But I say it's a damned fine old world, and I'm glad to have a place where I can sit and watch it — even if it is only a second-floor front and back in Pimlico."

ar, for her  
time, you  
ut won't  
econd, to  
he's been  
ing, dear,

y the un-  
f the bed.

well," I  
*leaubriand*  
me time,  
g an anx-  
ampagne  
ven. "I  
I can't  
I meant  
k I know  
knows he  
crooning  
all those  
, you can  
l fine old  
nd watch  
Pimlico."

