

While I had been in South Africa circumstances had conspired to alter my prospects in life very greatly. Unanticipated freedoms and opportunities had come to me, and it was no longer out of the question for me to think of a parliamentary career. Our fortunes had altered. My father had ceased to be rector of Burnmore, and had become a comparatively wealthy man.

My second cousin, Reginald Stratton, had been drowned in Finland, and his father had only survived the shock of his death a fortnight; his sister, Arthur Mason's first wife, had died in giving birth to a stillborn child the year before, and my father found himself suddenly the owner of all that large stretch of developing downland and building land which old Reginald had bought between Shaddock and Golding on the south and West Esher station on the north, and in addition of considerable investments in northern industrials. It was an odd collusion of mortality; we had had only the coldest relations with our cousins, and now abruptly through their commercial and speculative activities, which we had always affected to despise and ignore, I was in a position to attempt the realization of my old political ambitions.

My cousins' house had not been to my father's taste. He had let it, and I came to a new home in a pleasant, plain red-brick house, a hundred and fifty years old perhaps, on an open and sunny hillside, sheltered by trees[Pg 125] eastward and northward, a few miles to the south-west of Guildford. It had all the gracious proportions, the dignified simplicity, the roomy comfort of the good building of that time. It looked sunward; we breakfasted in sunshine in the library, and outside was an old wall with peach trees and a row of pillar roses heavily in flower. I had a little feared this place; Burnmore Rectory had been so absolutely home to me with its quiet serenities, its ample familiar garden, its greenhouses and intimately known corners, but I perceived I might have trusted my father's character to preserve his essential atmosphere. He was so much himself as I remembered him that I did not even observe for a day or so that he had not only aged considerably but discarded the last vestiges of clerical costume in his attire. He met me in front of the house and led me into a wide panelled hall and wrung my hand again and again, deeply moved and very inexpressive. "Did you have a good journey?" he asked again and again, with tears in his eyes. "Did you have a comfortable journey?"

"I've not seen the house," said I. "It looks fine."

"*You're* a man," he said, and patted my shoulder. "Of course! It was at Burnmore."

"You're not changed," I said. "You're not an atom changed."

"How could I?" he replied. "Come—come and have something to eat. You ought to have something to eat."

We talked of the house and what a good house it was, and he took me out into the garden to see the peaches and grape vine and then brought me back without showing them to me in order to greet my cousin. "It's very like Burnmore," he said with his eyes devouring me, "very[Pg 126] like. A little more space and—no services. No services at all. That makes a gap of course. There's a little chap about here, you'll find—his name is Wednesday—who sorts my papers and calls himself my secretary.... Not necessary perhaps but—*I missed the curate.*"

He said he was reading more than he used to do now that the parish was off his hands, and he was preparing material for a book. It was, he explained later, to take the form of a huge essay ostensibly on Secular Canons, but its purport was to be no less than the complete secularization of the Church of England. At first he wanted merely to throw open the cathedral chapters to distinguished laymen, irrespective of their theological opinions, and to make each English cathedral a centre of intellectual activity, a college as it were of philosophers and writers. But afterwards his suggestions grew bolder, the Articles of Religion were to be set aside, the creeds made optional even for the clergy. His dream became more and more richly picturesque until at last he saw Canterbury a realized Thelema, and St. Paul's a new Academic Grove. He was to work at that remarkable proposal intermittently for many years, and to leave it at last no more than a shapeless mass of memoranda, fragmentary essays, and selected passages for quotation. Yet mere patchwork and scrapbook as it would be, I still have some thought of publishing it. There is a large human charity about it, a sun too broad and warm, a reasonableness too wide and free perhaps for the timid convulsive quality of our time, yet all good as good wine for the wise. Is it incredible that a day should come when our great grey monuments to the Norman spirit should cease to be occupied by narrow-witted parsons and [Pg 127]besieged by narrow-souled dissenters, the soul of our race in exile from the home and place our fathers built for it?...

If he was not perceptibly changed, I thought my cousin Jane had become more than a little sharper and stiffer. She did not like my uncle's own personal secularization, and still less the glimpses she got of the ampler intentions of his book. She missed the proximity to the church and her parochial authority. But she was always a silent woman, and made her comments with her profile and not with her tongue....

"I'm glad you've come back, Stephen," said my father as we sat together after dinner and her departure, with port and tall silver candlesticks and shining mahogany

between us. "I've missed you. I've done my best to follow things out there. I've got, I suppose, every press mention there's been of you during the war and since. I've subscribed to two press-cutting agencies, so that if one missed you the other fellow got you. Perhaps you'll like to read them over one of these days.... You see, there's not been a soldier in the family since the Peninsular War, and so I've been particularly interested.... You must tell me all the things you're thinking of, and what you mean to do. This last stuff—this Chinese business—it puzzles me. I want to know what you think of it—and everything."

I did my best to give him my ideas such as they were. And as they were still very vague ideas I have no doubt he found me rhetorical. I can imagine myself talking of the White Man's Burthen, and how in Africa it had seemed at first to sit rather staggeringly upon our under-trained shoulders. I spoke of slackness and planlessness.

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"I've come back in search of efficiency." I have no doubt I said that at any rate.

"We're trying to run this big empire," I may have explained, "with under-trained, under-educated, poor-spirited stuff, and we shall come a cropper unless we raise our quality. I'm still Imperialist, more than ever I was. But I'm an Imperialist on a different footing. I've no great illusions left about the Superiority of the Anglo-Saxons. All that has gone. But I do think it will be a monstrous waste, a disaster to human possibilities if this great liberal-spirited empire sprawls itself asunder for the want of a little gravity and purpose. And it's here the work has to be done, the work of training and bracing up and stimulating the public imagination...."

Yes, that would be the sort of thing I should have said in those days. There's an old *National Review* on my desk as I write, containing an article by me with some of those very phrases in it. I have been looking at it in order to remind myself of my own forgotten eloquence.

"Yes," I remember my father saying. "Yes." And then after reflection, "But those coolies, those Chinese coolies. You can't build up an imperial population by importing coolies."

"I don't like that side of the business myself," I said. "It's detail."

"Perhaps. But the Liberals will turn you out on it next year. And then start badgering public houses and looting the church.... And then this Tariff talk! Everybody on our side seems to be mixing up the unity of the empire with tariffs. It's a pity. Salisbury wouldn't have stood it. Unity! Unity depends on a common literature and a common

language and common[Pg 129] ideas and sympathies. It doesn't unite people for them to be forced to trade with each other. Trading isn't friendship. I don't trade with my friends and I don't make friends with my tradesmen. Natural enemies—polite of course but antagonists. Are you keen over this Tariff stuff, Steve?"

"Not a bit," I said. "That too seems a detail."

"It doesn't seem to be keeping its place as a detail," said my father. "Very few men can touch tariffs and not get a little soiled. I hate all this international sharpening, all these attempts to get artificial advantages, all this making poor people buy inferior goods dear, in the name of the flag. If it comes to that, damn the flag! Custom-houses are ugly things, Stephen; the dirty side of nationality. Dirty things, ignoble, cross, cunning things.... They wake you up in the small hours and rout over your bags.... An imperial people ought to be an urbane people, a civilizing people—above such petty irritating things. I'd as soon put barbed wire along the footpath across that field where the village children go to school. Or claim that our mushrooms are cultivated. Or prosecute a Sunday-Society Cockney for picking my primroses. Custom-houses indeed! It's Chinese. There are things a Great Country mustn't do, Stephen. A country like ours ought to get along without the manners of a hard-breathing competitive cad.... If it can't I'd rather it didn't get along.... What's the good of a huckster country?—it's like having a wife on the streets. It's no excuse that she brings you money. But since the peace, and that man Chamberlain's visit to Africa, you Imperialists seem to have got this nasty spirit all over you.... The Germans do it, you say!"

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My father shut one eye and regarded the color of his port against the waning light. "Let 'em," he said.... "Fancy!—quoting the *Germans*! When I was a boy, there weren't any Germans. They came up after '70. Statecraft from Germany! And statesmen from Birmingham! German silver and Electroplated Empires.... No."

"It's just a part of our narrow outlook," I answered from the hearthrug, after a pause. "It's because we're so—limited that everyone is translating the greatness of empire into preferential trading and jealousy of Germany. It's for something bigger than that that I've returned."

"Those big things come slowly," said my father. And then with a sigh: "Age after age. They seem at times—to be standing still. Good things go with the bad; bad things come with the good...."

I remember him saying that as though I could still hear him.

It must have been after dinner, for he was sitting, duskily indistinct, against the light, with a voice coming out to him. The candles had not been brought in, and the view one saw through the big plate glass window behind him was very clear and splendid. Those little Wealden hills in Surrey and Sussex assume at times, for all that by Swiss standards they are the merest ridges of earth, the dignity and mystery of great mountains. Now, the crests of Hindhead and Blackdown, purple black against the level gold of the evening sky, might have been some high-flung boundary chain. Nearer there gathered banks and pools of luminous lavender-tinted mist out of which hills of pinewood rose like islands out of [Pg 131] the sea. The intervening spaces were magnified to continental dimensions. And the closer lowlier things over which we looked, the cottages below us, were grey and black and dim, pierced by a few luminous orange windows and with a solitary street lamp shining like a star; the village might have been nestling a mountain's height below instead of a couple of hundred feet.

I left my hearthrug, and walked to the window to survey this.

"Who's got all that land stretching away there; that little blunted sierra of pines and escarpments I mean?"

My father halted for an instant in his answer, and glanced over his shoulder.

"Wardingham and Baxter share all those coppices," he remarked. "They come up to my corner on each side."

"But the dark heather and pine land beyond. With just the gables of a house among the trees."

"Oh? *that*," he said with a careful note of indifference. "That's—Justin. You know Justin. He used to come to Burnmore Park."

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## **CHAPTER THE SIXTH**

### **Lady Mary Justin**

#### **§ 1**

I did not see Lady Mary Justin for nearly seven months after my return to England. Of course I had known that a meeting was inevitable, and I had taken that very carefully into consideration before I decided to leave South Africa. But many things had

happened to me during those crowded years, so that it seemed possible that that former magic would no longer sway and distress me. Not only had new imaginative interests taken hold of me but—I had parted from adolescence. I was a man. I had been through a great war, seen death abundantly, seen hardship and passion, and known hunger and shame and desire. A hundred disillusioning revelations of the quality of life had come to me; once for example when we were taking some people to the concentration camps it had been necessary to assist at the premature birth of a child by the wayside, a startlingly gory and agonizing business for a young man to deal with. Heavens! how it shocked me! I could give a score of such grim pictures—and queer pictures....

And it wasn't only the earthlier aspects of the life about me but also of the life within me that I had been[Pg 133] discovering. The first wonder and innocence, the worshipping, dawn-clear passion of youth, had gone out of me for ever....

## § 2

We met at a dinner. It was at a house the Tarvilles had taken for the season in Mayfair. The drawing-room was a big white square apartment with several big pictures and a pane of plate glass above the fireplace in the position in which one usually finds a mirror; this showed another room beyond, containing an exceptionally large, gloriously colored portrait in pastel—larger than I had ever thought pastels could be. Except for the pictures both rooms were almost colorless. It was a brilliant dinner, with a predominating note of ruby; three of the women wore ruby velvet; and Ellersley was present just back from Arabia, and Ethel Manton, Lady Hendon and the Duchess of Clynes. I was greeted by Lady Tarville, spoke to Ellersley and Lady Hendon, and then discovered a lady in a dress of blue and pearls standing quite still under a picture in the opposite corner of the room and regarding me attentively. It was Mary. Some man was beside her, a tall grey man with a broad crimson ribbon, and I think he must have spoken of me to her. It was as if she had just turned to look at me.

Constantly during those intervening months I had been thinking of meeting her. None the less there was a shock, not so much of surprise as of deferred anticipation. There she stood like something amazingly forgotten that was now amazingly recalled. She struck me in that brief crowded instant of recognition as being exactly[Pg 134] the person she had been when we had made love in Burnmore Park; there were her eyes, at once frank and sidelong, the old familiar sweep of her hair, the old familiar tilt of the chin, the faint humor of her lip, and at the same time she seemed to be something altogether different from the memories I had cherished, she was something graver,

something inherently more splendid than they had recorded. Her face lit now with recognition.

I went across to her at once, with some dull obviousness upon my lips.

"And so you are back from Africa at last," she said, still unsmiling. "I saw about you in the papers.... You had a good time."

"I had great good luck," I replied.

"I never dreamt when we were boy and girl together that you would make a soldier."

I think I said that luck made soldiers.

Then I think we found a difficulty in going on with our talk, and began a dull little argument that would have been stupidly egotistical on my part if it hadn't been so obviously merely clumsy, about luck making soldiers or only finding them out. I saw that she had not intended to convey any doubt of my military capacity but only of that natural insensitiveness which is supposed to be needed in a soldier. But our minds were remote from the words upon our lips. We were like aphasiacs who say one thing while they intend something altogether different. The impulse that had brought me across to her had brought me up to a wall of impossible utterances. It was with a real quality of rescue that our hostess came between us to tell us our partners at the dinner-table, and [Pg 135] to introduce me to mine. "You shall have him again on your other side," she said to Lady Mary with a charming smile for me, treating me as if I was a lion in request instead of the mere outsider I was.

We talked very little at dinner. Both of us I think were quite unequal to the occasion. Whatever meetings we had imagined, certainly neither of us had thought of this very possible encounter, a long disconcerting hour side by side. I began to remember old happenings with an astonishing vividness; there within six inches of me was the hand I had kissed; her voice was the same to its lightest shade, her hair flowed off her forehead with the same amazingly familiar wave. Was she too remembering? But I perhaps had changed altogether....

"Why did you go away as you did?" she asked abruptly, when for a moment we were isolated conversationally. "Why did you never write?"

She had still that phantom lisp.

"What else could I do?"

She turned away from me and answered the man on her left, who had just addressed her....

When the mid-dinner change came we talked a little about indifferent things, making a stiff conversation like a bridge over a torrent of unspoken intimacies. We discussed something; I think Lady Tarville's flowers and the Cape Flora and gardens. She told me she had a Japanese garden with three Japanese gardeners. They were wonderful little men to watch. "Humming-bird gardeners," she called them. "They wear their native costume."

"We are your neighbors in Surrey," she said, going off abruptly from that. "We are quite near to your father."

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She paused with that characteristic effect of deliberation in her closed lips. Then she added: "I can see the trees behind your father's house from the window of my room."

"Yes," I said. "You take all our southward skyline."

She turned her face to me with the manner of a great lady adding a new acquaintance to her collection. But her eyes met mine very steadily and intimately. "Mr. Stratton," she said—it was the first time in her life she had called me that—"when we come back to Surrey I want you to come and see me and tell me of all the things you are going to do. Will you?"

### § 3

That meeting, that revival, must have been late in November or early in December. Already by that time I had met your mother. I write to you, little son, not to you as you are now, but to the man you are someday to be. I write to understand myself, and, so far as I can understand, to make you understand. So that I want you to go back with me for a time into the days before your birth, to think not of that dear spirit of love who broods over you three children, that wise, sure mother who rules your life, but of a young and slender girl, Rachel More, younger than you will be when at last this story comes into your hands. For unless you think of her as being a girl, if you let your present knowledge of her fill out this part in our story, you will fail to understand the proportions of these two in my life. So I shall write of her here as Rachel More, as if she were someone as [Pg 137] completely dissociated from yourself as Lady Mary; as if she were someone in the story of my life who had as little to do with yours.

I had met her in September. The house my father lived in is about twelve miles away from your mother's home at Ridinghanger, and I was taken over by Percy Restall in his motor-car. Restall had just become a convert to this new mode of locomotion, and he was very active with a huge, malignant-looking French car that opened behind, and

had a kind of poke bonnet and all sorts of features that have since disappeared from the automobile world. He took everyone that he could lay hands upon for rides,—he called it extending their range, and he called upon everyone else to show off the car; he was responsible for more introduction and social admixture in that part of Surrey than had occurred during the previous century. We punctured in the Ridinhanger drive, Restall did his own repairs, and so it was we stayed for nearly four hours and instead of a mere caller I became a familiar friend of the family.

Your mother then was still not eighteen, a soft white slip of being, tall, slender, brown-haired and silent, with very still deep dark eyes. She and your three aunts formed a very gracious group of young women indeed; Alice then as now the most assertive, with a gay initiative and a fluent tongue; Molly already a sun-brown gipsy, and Norah still a pig-tailed thing of lank legs and wild embraces and the pinkest of swift pink blushes; your uncle Sidney, with his shy lank moodiness, acted the brotherly part of a foil. There were several stray visitors, young men and maidens, there were always stray visitors in those days at Ridinhanger, and your grandmother, [Pg 138] rosy and bright-eyed, maintained a gentle flow of creature comforts and kindly but humorous observations. I do not remember your grandfather on this occasion; probably he wasn't there.

There was tea, and we played tennis and walked about and occasionally visited Restall, who was getting dirtier and dirtier, and crosser and crosser at his repairs, and spreading a continually more remarkable assemblage of parts and instruments over the grass about him. He looked at last more like a pitch in the Caledonian market than a decent country gentleman paying an afternoon call. And then back to more tennis and more talk. We fell into a discussion of Tariff Reform as we sat taking tea. Two of the visitor youths were strongly infected by the new teachings which were overshadowing the outlook of British Imperialism. Some mean phrase about not conquering Africa for the German bagman, some ugly turn of thought that at a touch brought down Empire to the level of a tradesman's advantage, fell from one of them, and stirred me to sudden indignation. I began to talk of things that had been gathering in my mind for some time.

I do not know what I said. It was in the vein of my father's talk no doubt. But I think that for once I may have been eloquent. And in the midst of my demand for ideals in politics that were wider and deeper than artful buying and selling, that looked beyond a vulgar aggression and a churl's dread and hatred of foreign things, while I struggled to say how great and noble a thing empire might be, I saw Rachel's face. This, it was manifest, was a new kind of talk to her. Her dark eyes were alight with a beautiful

enthusiasm for what I [Pg 139] was trying to say, and for what in the light of that glowing reception I seemed to be.

I felt that queer shame one feels when one is taken suddenly at the full value of one's utmost expressions. I felt as though I had cheated her, was passing myself off for something as great and splendid as the Empire of my dreams. It is hard to dissociate oneself from the fine things to which one aspires. I stopped almost abruptly. Dumbly her eyes bade me go on, but when I spoke again it was at a lower level....

That look in Rachel's eyes remained with me. My mind had flashed very rapidly from the realization of its significance to the thought that if one could be sure of that, then indeed one could pitch oneself high. Rachel, I felt, had something for me that I needed profoundly, without ever having known before that I needed it. She had the supreme gifts of belief and devotion; in that instant's gleam it seemed she held them out to me.

Never before in my life had it seemed credible to me that anyone could give me that, or that I could hope for such a gift of support and sacrifice. Love as I had known it had been a community and an alliance, a frank abundant meeting; but this was another kind of love that shone for an instant and promised, and vanished shyly out of sight as I and Rachel looked at one another.

Some interruption occurred. Restall came, I think, blackened by progress, to drink a cup of tea and negotiate the loan of a kitchen skewer. A kitchen skewer it appeared was all that was needed to complete his reconstruction in the avenue. Norah darted off for a kitchen skewer, while Restall drank. And then there was a drift to tennis, and Rachel and I were partners. All this time I was [Pg 140] in a state of startled attention towards her, full of this astounding impression that something wonderful and unprecedented had flowed out from her towards my life, full too of doubts now whether that shining response had ever occurred, whether some trick of light and my brain had not deceived me. I wanted tremendously to talk to her, and did not know how to begin in any serious fashion. Beyond everything I wanted to see again that deep onset of belief....

"Come again," said your grandmother to me, "come again!" after she had tried in vain to make Restall stay for an informal supper. I was all for staying, but Restall said darkly, "There are the Lamps."

"But they will be all right," said Mrs. More.

"I can't trust 'em," said Restall, with a deepening gloom. "Not after *that*." The motor-car looked self-conscious and uncomfortable, but said nothing by way of excuse, and Restall took me off in it like one whose sun has set for ever. "I wouldn't be surprised,"

said Restall as we went down the drive, "if the damned thing turned a somersault. It might do—anything." Those were the brighter days of motoring.

The next time I went over released from Restall's limitations, and stayed to a jolly family supper. I found remarkably few obstacles in my way to a better acquaintance with Rachel. You see I was an entirely eligible and desirable young man in Mrs. More's eyes....

#### § 4

When I recall these long past emotions again, I am struck by the profound essential difference between my[Pg 141] feelings for your mother and for Mary. They were so different that it seems scarcely rational to me that they should be called by the same name. Yet each was love, profoundly deep and sincere. The contrast lies, I think, in our relative ages, and our relative maturity; that altered the quality of all our emotions. The one was the love of a man of six-and-twenty, exceptionally seasoned and experienced and responsible for his years, for a girl still at school, a girl attractively beautiful, mysterious and unknown to him; the other was the love of coevals, who had been playmates and intimate companions, and of whom the woman was certainly as capable and wilful as the man.

Now it is exceptional for men to love women of their own age, it is the commoner thing that they should love maidens younger and often much younger than themselves. This is true more particularly of our own class; the masculine thirties and forties marry the feminine twenties, all the prevailing sentiment and usage between the sexes rises naturally out of that. We treat this seniority as though it were a virile characteristic; we treat the man as though he were a natural senior, we expect a weakness, a timid deference, in the girl. I and Mary had loved one another as two rivers run together on the way to the sea, we had grown up side by side to the moment when we kissed; but I sought your mother, I watched her and desired her and chose her, very tenderly and worshipfully indeed, to be mine. I do not remember that there was any corresponding intention in my mind to be hers. I do not think that that idea came in at all. She was something to be won, something playing an inferior and retreating part. And I[Pg 142] was artificial in all my attitudes to her, I thought of what would interest her, what would please her, I knew from the outset that what she saw in me to rouse that deep, shy glow of exaltation in her face was illusion, illusion it was my business to sustain. And so I won her, and long years had to pass, years of secret loneliness and hidden feelings, of preposterous pretences and covert perplexities, before we escaped from that crippling tradition of inequality and looked into one another's eyes with understanding and forgiveness, a woman and a man.

I made no great secret of the interest and attraction I found in Rachel, and the Mores made none of their entire approval of me. I walked over on the second occasion, and Ridinger opened out, a great flower of genial appreciation that I came alone, hiding nothing of its dawning perception that it was Rachel in particular I came to see.

Your grandmother's match-making was as honest as the day. There was the same salad of family and visitors as on the former afternoon, and this time I met Freshman, who was destined to marry Alice; there was tea, tennis, and, by your grandmother's suggestion, a walk to see the sunset from the crest of the hill. Rachel and I walked across the breezy moorland together, while I talked and tempted her to talk.

What, I wonder, did we talk about? English scenery, I think, and African scenery and the Weald about us, and the long history of the Weald and its present and future, and at last even a little of politics. I had never explored the mind of a girl of seventeen before; there was a surprise in all she knew and a delight in all she didn't know, and about herself a candor, a fresh simplicity of outlook [Pg 143] that was sweeter than the clear air about us, sweeter than sunshine or the rising song of a lark. She believed so gallantly and beautifully, she was so perfectly, unaffectedly and certainly prepared to be a brave and noble person—if only life would let her. And she hadn't as yet any suspicion that life might make that difficult....

I went to Ridinger a number of times in the spring and early summer. I talked a great deal with Rachel, and still I did not make love to her. It was always in my mind that I would make love to her, the heavens and earth and all her family were propitious, glowing golden with consent and approval, I thought she was the most wonderful and beautiful thing in life, and her eyes, the intonation of her voice, her hurrying color and a hundred little involuntary signs told me how she quickened at my coming. But there was a shyness. I loved her as one loves and admires a white flower or a beautiful child—some stranger's child. I felt that I might make her afraid of me. I had never before thought that to make love is a coarse thing. But still at high summer when I met Mary again no definite thing had been said between myself and Rachel. But we knew, each of us knew, that somewhere in a world less palpable, in fairyland, in dreamland, we had met and made our vows.

## § 5

You see how far my imagination had gone towards readjustment when Mary returned into my life. You see how strange and distant it was to meet her again, changed completely into the great lady she had intended [Pg 144] to be, speaking to me with the restrained and practised charm of a woman who is young and beautiful and prominent and powerful and secure. There was no immediate sense of shock in that resumption

of our broken intercourse, it seemed to me that night simply that something odd and curious had occurred. I do not remember how we parted that evening or whether we even saw each other after dinner was over, but from that hour forth Mary by insensible degrees resumed her old predominance in my mind. I woke up in the night and thought about her, and next day I found myself thinking of her, remembering things out of the past and recalling and examining every detail of the overnight encounter. How cold and ineffective we had been, both of us! We had been like people resuming a disused and partially forgotten language. Had she changed towards me? Did she indeed want to see me again or was that invitation a mere demonstration of how entirely unimportant seeing me or not seeing me had become?

Then I would find myself thinking with the utmost particularity of her face. Had it changed at all? Was it altogether changed? I seemed to have forgotten everything and remembered everything; that peculiar slight thickness of her eyelids that gave her eyes their tenderness, that light firmness of her lips. Of course she would want to talk to me, as now I perceived I wanted to talk to her.

Was I in love with her still? It seemed to me then that I was not. It had not been that hesitating fierceness, that pride and demand and doubt, which is passionate love, that had made all my sensations strange to me as I sat beside her. It had been something larger and finer, [Pg 145] something great and embracing, a return to fellowship. Here beside me, veiled from me only by our transient embarrassment and the tarnish of separation and silences, was the one person who had ever broken down the crust of shy insincerity which is so incurably my characteristic and talked intimately of the inmost things of life to me. I discovered now for the first time how intense had been my loneliness for the past five years. I discovered now that through all those years I had been hungry for such talk as Mary alone could give me. My mind was filled with talk, filled with things I desired to say to her; that chaos began to take on a multitudinous expression at the touch of her spirit. I began to imagine conversations with her, to prepare reports for her of those new worlds of sensation and activity I had discovered since that boyish parting.

But when at last that talk came it was altogether different from any of those I had invented.

She wrote to me when she came down into Surrey and I walked over to Martens the next afternoon. I found her in her own sitting-room, a beautiful characteristic apartment with tall French windows hung with blue curtains, a large writing-desk and a great litter of books. The room gave upon a broad sunlit terrace with a balustrading of yellowish stone, on which there stood great oleanders. Beyond was a flower garden

and then the dark shadows of cypresses. She was standing as I came in to her, as though she had seen me coming across the lawns and had been awaiting my entrance. "I thought you might come to-day," she said, and told the manservant to deny her to other callers. Again she produced that queer effect of being at once altogether the[Pg 146] same and altogether different from the Mary I had known. "Justin," she said, "is in Paris. He comes back on Friday." I saw then that the change lay in her bearing, that for the easy confidence of the girl she had now the deliberate dignity and control of a married woman—a very splendidly and spaciouly married woman. Her manner had been purged of impulse. Since we had met she had stood, the mistress of great houses, and had dealt with thousands of people.

"You walked over to me?"

"I walked," I said. "It is nearly a straight path. You know it?"

"You came over the heather beyond our pine wood," she confirmed. And then I think we talked some polite unrealities about Surrey scenery and the weather. It was so formal that by a common impulse we let the topic suddenly die. We stood through a pause, a hesitation. Were we indeed to go on at that altitude of cold civility? She turned to the window as if the view was to serve again.

"Sit down," she said and dropped into a chair against the light, looking away from me across the wide green space of afternoon sunshine. I sat down on a little sofa, at a loss also.

"And so," she said, turning her face to me suddenly, "you come back into my life." And I was amazed to see that the brightness of her eyes was tears. "We've lived—five years."

"You," I said clumsily, "have done all sorts of things. I hear of you—patronizing young artists—organizing experiments in village education."

"Yes," she said, "I've done all sorts of things. One[Pg 147] has to. Forced, unreal things for the most part. You I expect have done—all sorts of things also.... But yours have been real things...."

"All things," I remarked sententiously, "are real. And all of them a little unreal. South Africa has been wonderful. And now it is all over one doubts if it really happened. Like that incredulous mood after a storm of passion."

"You've come back for good?"

"For good. I want to do things in England."

"Politics?"

"If I can get into that."

Again a pause. There came the characteristic moment of deliberation that I remembered so well.

"I never meant you," she said, "to go away.... You could have written. You never answered the notes I sent."

"I was frantic," I said, "with loss and jealousy. I wanted to forget."

"And you forgot?"

"I did my best."

"I did my best," said Mary. "And now—— Have you forgotten?"

"Nothing."

"Nor I. I thought I had. Until I saw you again. I've thought of you endlessly. I've wanted to talk to you. We had a way of talking together. But you went away. You turned your back as though all that was nothing—not worth having. You—you drove home my marriage, Stephen. You made me know what a thing of sex a woman is to a man—and how little else...."

She paused.

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"You see," I said slowly. "You had made me, as people say, in love with you.... I don't know—if you remember everything...."

She looked me in the eyes for a moment.

"I hadn't been fair," she said with an abrupt abandonment of accusation. "But you know, Stephen, that night—— I meant to explain. And afterwards.... Things sometimes go as one hasn't expected them to go, even the things one has planned to say. I suppose—I treated you—disgustingly."

I protested.

"Yes," she said. "I treated you as I did—and I thought you would stand it. I *knew*, I knew then as well as you do now that male to my female you wouldn't stand it, but somehow—I thought there were other things. Things that could override that...."

"Not," I said, "for a boy of one-and-twenty."

"But in a man of twenty-six?"

I weighed the question. "Things are different," I said, and then, "Yes. Anyhow now—if I may come back penitent,—to a friendship."

We looked at one another gravely. Faintly in our ears sounded the music of past and distant things. We pretended to hear nothing of that, tried honestly to hear nothing of it. I had not remembered how steadfast and quiet her face could be. "Yes," she said, "a friendship."

"I've always had you in my mind, Stephen," she said. "When I saw I couldn't marry you, it seemed to me I had better marry and be free of any further hope. I thought we could get over that. 'Let's get it over,' I thought. Now—at any rate—we have got over that." Her eyes verified her words a little doubtfully. "And we can talk[Pg 149] and you can tell me of your life, and the things you want to do that make life worth living. Oh! life has been *stupid* without you, Stephen, large and expensive and aimless....Tell me of your politics. They say—Justin told me—you think of parliament?"

"I want to do that. I have been thinking—— In fact I am going to stand." I found myself hesitating on the verge of phrases in the quality of a review article. It was too unreal for her presence. And yet it was this she seemed to want from me. "This," I said, "is a phase of great opportunities. The war has stirred the Empire to a sense of itself, to a sense of what it might be. Of course this Tariff Reform row is a squalid nuisance; it may kill out all the fine spirit again before anything is done. Everything will become a haggle, a chaffering of figures.... All the more reason why we should try and save things from the commercial traveller. If the Empire is anything at all, it is something infinitely more than a combination in restraint of trade...."

"Yes," she said. "And you want to take that line. The high line."

"If one does not take the high line," I said, "what does one go into politics for?"

"Stephen," she smiled, "you haven't lost a sort of simplicity—— People go into politics because it looks important, because other people go into politics, because they can get titles and a sense of influence and—other things. And then there are quarrels, old grudges to serve."

"These are roughnesses of the surface."

"Old Stephen!" she cried with the note of a mother. "They will worry you in politics."

I laughed. "Perhaps I'm not altogether so simple."

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"Oh! you'll get through. You have a way of going on. But I shall have to watch over you. I see I shall have to watch over you. Tell me of the things you mean to do. Where are you standing?"

I began to tell her a little disjointedly of the probabilities of my Yorkshire constituency....

## **§ 6**

I have a vivid vignette in my memory of my return to my father's house, down through the pine woods and by the winding path across the deep valley that separated our two ridges. I was thinking of Mary and nothing but Mary in all the world and of the friendly sweetness of her eyes and the clean strong sharpness of her voice. That sweet white figure of Rachel that had been creeping to an ascendancy in my imagination was moonlight to her sunrise. I knew it was Mary I loved and had always loved. I wanted passionately to be as she desired, the friend she demanded, that intimate brother and confederate, but all my heart cried out for her, cried out for her altogether.

I would be her friend, I repeated to myself, I would be her friend. I would talk to her often, plan with her, work with her. I could put my meanings into her life and she should throw her beauty over mine. I began already to dream of the talk of to-morrow's meeting....

## **§ 7**

And now let me go on to tell at once the thing that changed life for both of us altogether, that turned us [Pg 151] out of the courses that seemed set for us, our spacious, successful and divergent ways, she to the tragedy of her death and I from all the prospects of the public career that lay before me to the work that now, toilsomely, inadequately and blunderingly enough, I do. It was to pierce and slash away the appearances of life for me, it was to open my way to infinite disillusionment, and unsuspected truths. Within a few weeks of our second meeting Mary and I were passionately in love with one another; we had indeed become lovers. The arrested attractions of our former love released again, drew us inevitably to that. We tried to seem outwardly only friends, with this hot glow between us. Our tormented secret was half discovered and half betrayed itself. There followed a tragi-comedy of hesitations and disunited struggle. Within four months the crisis of our two lives was past....

It is not within my purpose to tell you, my son, of the particular events, the particular comings and goings, the chance words, the chance meetings, the fatal momentary misunderstandings that occurred between us. I want to tell of something more

general than that. This misadventure is in our strain. It is our inheritance. It is a possibility in the inheritance of all honest and emotional men and women. There are no doubt people altogether cynical and adventurous to whom these passions and desires are at once controllable and permissible indulgences without any radiation of consequences, a secret and detachable part of life, and there may be people of convictions so strong and simple that these disturbances are eliminated, but we Strattons are of a quality neither so low nor so high, we stoop and rise, we are not [Pg 152] convinced about our standards, and for many generations to come, with us and with such people as the Christians, and indeed with most of our sort of people, we shall be equally desirous of free and intimate friendship and prone to blaze into passion and disaster at that proximity.

This is one of the essential riddles in the adaptation of such human beings as ourselves to that greater civilized state of which I dream. It is the gist of my story. It is one of the two essential riddles that confront our kind. The servitude of sex and the servitude of labor are the twin conditions upon which human society rests to-day, the two limitations upon its progress towards a greater social order, to that greater community, those uplands of light and happy freedom, towards which that Being who was my father yesterday, who thinks in myself to-day, and who will be you to-morrow and your sons after you, by his very nature urges and must continue to urge the life of mankind. The story of myself and Mary is a mere incident in that gigantic, scarce conscious effort to get clear of toils and confusions and encumbrances, and have our way with life. We are like little figures, dots ascendant upon a vast hillside; I take up our intimacy for an instant and hold it under a lens for you. I become more than myself then, and Mary stands for innumerable women. It happened yesterday, and it is just a part of that same history that made Edmond Stratton of the Hays elope with Charlotte Anstruther and get himself run through the body at Haddington two hundred years ago, which drove the Laidlaw-Christians to Virginia in '45, gave Stratton Street to the moneylenders when George IV. was Regent, and broke the heart of Margaret Stratton in the days when Charles the First was king. With [Pg 153] our individual variations and under changed conditions the old desires and impulses stirred us, the old antagonisms confronted us, the old difficulties and sloughs and impassable places baffled us. There are times when I think of my history among all those widespread repeated histories, until it seems to me that the human Lover is like a creature who struggles for ever through a thicket without an end....

There are no universal laws of affection and desire, but it is manifestly true that for the most of us free talk, intimate association, and any real fellowship between men and women turns with an extreme readiness to love. And that being so it follows that under

existing conditions the unrestricted meeting and companionship of men and women in society is a monstrous sham, a merely dangerous pretence of encounters. The safe reality beneath those liberal appearances is that a woman must be content with the easy friendship of other women and of one man only, letting a superficial friendship towards all other men veil impassable abysses of separation, and a man must in the same way have one sole woman intimate. To all other women he must be a little blind, a little deaf, politely inattentive. He must respect the transparent, intangible, tacit purdah about them, respect it but never allude to it. To me that is an intolerable state of affairs, but it is reality. If you live in the spirit of any other understanding you will court social disaster. I suppose it is a particularly intolerable state of affairs to us Strattons because it is in our nature to want things to seem what they are. That translucent yet impassible purdah outrages our veracity. And it is plain to me that our social order cannot stand and is not standing the tensions it creates.[Pg 154] The convention that passions and emotions are absent when they are palpably present broke down between Mary and myself, as it breaks down in a thousand other cases, as it breaks down everywhere. Our social life is honeycombed and rotten with secret hidden relationships. The rigid, the obtuse and the unscrupulously cunning escape; the honest passion sooner or later flares out and destroys.... Here is a difficulty that no bullying imposition of arbitrary rules on the one hand nor any reckless abandonment of law on the other, can solve. Humanity has yet to find its method in sexual things; it has to discover the use and the limitation of jealousy. And before it can even begin to attempt to find, it has to cease its present timid secret groping in shame and darkness and turn on the light of knowledge. None of us knows much and most of us do not even know what is known.

## § 8

The house is very quiet to-day. It is your mother's birthday, and you three children have gone with her and Mademoiselle Potin into the forest to celebrate the occasion. Presently I shall join you. The sunlit garden, with its tall dreaming lilies against the trellised vines upon the wall, the cedars and the grassy space about the sundial, have that distinguished stillness, that definite, palpable and almost outlined emptiness which is so to speak your negative presence. It is like a sheet of sunlit colored paper out of which your figures have been cut. There is a commotion of birds in the jasmine, and your Barker reclines with an infinite tranquillity, a masterless[Pg 155] dog, upon the lawn. I take up this writing again after an interval of some weeks. I have been in Paris, attending the Sabotage Conference, and dealing with those intricate puzzles of justice and discipline and the secret sources of contentment that have to be solved if

sabotage is ever to vanish from labor struggles again. I think a few points have been made clearer in that curious riddle of reconciliations....

Now I resume this story. I turn over the sheets that were written and finished before my departure, and come to the notes for what is to follow.

Perhaps my days of work in Paris have carried my mind on beyond the point at which I left the narrative. I sit as it were among a pile of memories that are now all disordered and mixed up together, their proper sequences and connexions lost. I cannot trace the phases through which our mutual passion rode up through the restrained and dignified intentions of our friendship. But I know that presently we were in a white heat of desire. There must have been passages that I now altogether forget, moments of tense transition. I am more and more convinced that our swiftest, intensest, mental changes leave far less vivid memories than impressions one receives when one is comparatively passive. And of this phase in my life of which I am now telling I have clear memories of a time when we talked like brother and sister, or like angels if you will, and hard upon that came a time when we were planning in all our moments together how and when and where we might meet in secret and meet again.

Things drift with a phantom-like uncertainty into my mind and pass again; those fierce motives of our [Pg 156]transition have lost now all stable form and feature, but I believe there was a curious tormenting urgency in our jealousy of those others, of Justin on my part and of Rachel on hers. At first we had talked quite freely about Rachel, had discussed my conceivable marriage with her. We had indeed a little forced that topic, as if to reassure ourselves of the honesty of our new footing. But the force that urged us nearer pervaded all our being. It was hard enough to be barred apart, to snatch back our hands from touching, to avoid each other's eyes, to hurry a little out of the dusk towards the lit house and its protecting servants, but the constant presence and suggestion of those others from whom there were no bars, or towards whom bars could be abolished at a look, at an impulse, exacerbated that hardship, roused a fierce insatiable spirit of revolt within us. At times we grew angry with each other's formalism, came near to quarrelling....

I associate these moods with the golden stillnesses of a prolonged and sultry autumn, and with slowly falling leaves....

I will not tell you how that step was taken, it matters very little to my story, nor will I tell which one of us it was first broke the barriers down.

But I do want to tell you certain things. I want to tell you them because they are things that affect you closely. There was almost from the first a difference between Mary and myself in this, that I wanted to be public about our love, I wanted to be open and defiant,[Pg 157] and she—hesitated. She wanted to be secret. She wanted to keep me; I sometimes think that she was moved to become my mistress because she wanted to keep me. But she also wanted to keep everything else in her life,—her position, her ample freedoms and wealth and dignity. Our love was to be a secret cavern, Endymion's cave. I was ready enough to do what I could to please her, and for a time I served that secrecy, lied, pretended, agreed to false addresses, assumed names, and tangled myself in a net-work of furtive proceedings. These are things that poison and consume honest love.

You will learn soon enough as you grow to be a man that beneath the respectable assumptions of our social life there is an endless intricate world of subterfuge and hidden and perverted passion,—for all passion that wears a mask is perversion—and that thousands of people of our sort are hiding and shamming about their desires, their gratifications, their true relationships. I do not mean the open offenders, for they are mostly honest and gallant people, but the men and women who sin in the shadows, the people who are not clean and scandalous, but immoral and respectable. This underworld is not for us. I wish that I who have looked into it could in some way inoculate you now against the repetition of my misadventure. We Strattons are daylight men, and if I work now for widened facilities of divorce, for an organized freedom and independence of women, and greater breadth of toleration, it is because I know in my own person the degradations, the falsity, the bitterness, that can lurk beneath the inflexible pretensions of the established code to-day.

And I want to tell you too of something altogether[Pg 158] unforeseen that happened to us, and that was this, that from the day that passion carried us and we became in the narrower sense of the word lovers, all the wider interests we had in common, our political intentions, our impersonal schemes, began to pass out of our intercourse. Our situation closed upon us like a trap and hid the sky. Something more intense had our attention by the feet, and we used our wings no more. I do not think that we even had the real happiness and beauty and delight of one another. Because, I tell you, there is no light upon kiss or embrace that is not done with pride. I do not know why it should be so, but people of our race and quality are a little ashamed of mere gratification in love. Always we seem in my memory to have been whispering with flushed cheeks, and discussing interminably—*situation*. Had something betrayed us, might something betray, was this or that sufficiently cunning? Had we perhaps left a footmark or failed to burn a note, was the second footman who was detailed as my

valet even now pausing astonished in the brushing of my clothes with our crumpled secret in his hand? Between myself and the clear vision of this world about me this infernal net-work of precautions spread like a veil.

And it was not only a matter of concealments but of positive deceptions. The figure of Justin comes back to me. It is a curious thing that in spite of our bitter antagonism and the savage jealousy we were to feel for one another, there has always been, and there remains now in my thought of him, a certain liking, a regret at our opposition, a quality of friendliness. His broad face, which the common impression and the caricaturist make so powerful and eagle-like, is really not a brutal or heavy [Pg 159] face at all. It is no doubt aquiline, after the fashion of an eagle-owl, the mouth and chin broad and the eyes very far apart, but there is a minute puckering of the brows which combines with that queer streak of brown discoloration that runs across his cheek and into the white of his eyes, to give something faintly plaintive and pitiful to his expression, an effect enhanced by the dark softness of his eyes. They are gentle eyes; it is absurd to suppose them the eyes of a violently forceful man. And indeed they do not belie Justin. It is not by vehemence or pressure that his wealth and power have been attained; it is by the sheer detailed abundance of his mind. In that queer big brain of his there is something of the calculating boy and not a little of the chess champion; he has a kind of financial gift, he must be rich, and grows richer. What else is there for him to do? How many times have I not tried to glance carelessly at his face and scrutinize that look in his eyes, and ask myself was that his usual look, or was it lit by an instinctive jealousy? Did he perhaps begin to suspect? I had become a persistent visitor in the house, he might well be jealous of such minor favors as she showed me, for with him she talked but little and shared no thoughts. His manner with her was tinged by an habituated despair. They were extraordinarily polite and friendly with one another....

I tried a hundred sophistications of my treachery to him. I assured myself that a modern woman is mistress and owner of herself; no chattel, and so forth. But he did not think so, and neither she nor I were behaving as though we thought so. In innumerable little things we were doing our best tacitly to reassure him. And so you [Pg 160] see me shaking hands with this man, affecting an interest in his topics and affairs, staying in his house, eating his food and drinking his wine, that I might be the nearer to his wife. It is not the first time that has been done in the world, there are esoteric codes to justify all I did; I perceive there are types of men to whom such relationships are attractive by the very reason of their illicit excitement. But we Strattons are honest people, there is no secretive passion in our blood; this is no game for us; never you risk the playing of it, little son, big son as you will be when you read

this story. Perhaps, but I hope indeed not, this may reach you too late to be a warning, come to you in mid-situation. Go through with it then, inheritor of mine, and keep as clean as you can, follow the warped honor that is still left to you—and if you can, come out of the tangle....

It is not only Justin haunts the memories of that furtive time, but Rachel More. I see her still as she was then, a straight, white-dressed girl with big brown eyes that regarded me now with perplexity, now with a faint dismay. I still went over to see her, and my manner had changed. I had nothing to say to her now and everything to hide. Everything between us hung arrested, and nothing could occur to make an end.

I told Mary I must cease my visits to the Mores. I tried to make her feel my own sense of an accumulating cruelty to Rachel. "But it explains away so much," she said. "If you stop going there—everyone will talk. Everything will swing round—and point here."

"Rachel!" I protested.

"No," she said, overbearing me, "you must keep on going to Ridinghanger. You must. You must..."

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For a long time I had said nothing to Mary of the burthen these pretences were to me; it had seemed a monstrous ingratitude to find the slightest flaw in the passionate love and intimacy she had given me. But at last the divergence of our purposes became manifest to us both. A time came when we perceived it clearly and discussed it openly. I have still a vivid recollection of a golden October day when we had met at the edge of the plantation that overlooks Bearshill. She had come through the gardens into the pine-wood, and I had jumped the rusty banked stream that runs down the Bearshill valley, and clambered the barbed wire fence. I came up the steep bank and through a fringe of furze to where she stood in the shade; I kissed her hand, and discovered mine had been torn open by one of the thorns of the wire and was dripping blood. "Mind my dress," she said, and we laughed as we kissed with my arm held aloof.

We sat down side by side upon the warm pine needles that carpeted the sand, and she made a mothering fuss about my petty wound, and bound it in my handkerchief. We looked together across the steep gorge at the blue ridge of trees beyond. "Anyone," she said, "might have seen us this minute."

"I never thought," I said, and moved a foot away from her.

"It's too late if they have," said she, pulling me back to her. "Over beyond there, that must be Hindhead. Someone with a telescope——!"

"That's less credible," I said. And it occurred to me that the grey stretch of downland beyond must be the ridge to the west of Ridingerhanger.

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"I wish," I said, "it didn't matter. I wish I could come and go and fear nobody—and spend long hours with you—oh! at our ease."

"Now," she said, "we spend short hours. I wonder if I would like—— It's no good, Stephen, letting ourselves think of things that can't be. Here we are. Kiss that hand, my lover, there, just between wrist and thumb—the little hollow. Yes, exactly there."

But thoughts had been set going in my mind. "Why," I said presently, "should you always speak of things that can't be? Why should we take all this as if it were all that there could be? I want long hours. I want you to shine all the day through on my life. Now, dear, it's as if the sun was shown ever and again, and then put back behind an eclipse. I come to you half-blinded, I go away unsatisfied. All the world is dark in between, and little phantom *yous* float over it."

She rested her cheek on her hand and looked at me gravely.

"You are hard to satisfy, brother heart," she said.

"I live in snatches of brightness and all the rest of life is waiting and thinking and waiting."

"What else is there? Haven't we the brightness?"

"I want you," I said. "I want *you* altogether."

"After so much?"

"I want the more. Mary, I want you to come away with me. No, listen! this life—don't think I'm not full of the beauty, the happiness, the wonder—— But it's a suspense. It doesn't go on. It's just a dawn, dear, a splendid dawn, a glory of color and brightness and freshness and hope, and—no sun rises. I want the day. Everything else has stopped with me and stopped with [Pg 163] you. I do nothing with my politics now,—I pretend. I have no plans in life except plans for meeting you and again meeting you. I want to go on, I want to go on with you and take up work and the world again—you beside me. I want you to come out of all this life—out of all this immense wealthy emptiness of yours——"

"Stop," she said, "and listen to me, Stephen."

She paused with her lips pressed together, her brows a little knit.

"I won't," she said slowly. "I am going on like this. I and you are going to be lovers—just as we are lovers now—secret lovers. And I am going to help you in all your projects, hold your party together—for you will have a party—my house shall be its centre——"

"But Justin——"

"He takes no interest in politics. He will do what pleases me."

I took some time before I answered. "You don't understand how men feel," I said.

She waited for what else I had to say. I lay prone, and gathered together and shaped and reshaped a little heap of pine needles. "You see—— I can't do it. I want you."

She gripped a handful of my hair, and tugged hard between each word. "Haven't you got me?" she asked between her teeth. "What more *could* you have?"

"I want you openly."

She folded her arms beneath her. "No," she said.

For a little while neither of us spoke.

"It's the trouble of the deceit?" she asked.

"It's—the deceit."

"We can stop all that," she said.

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I looked up at her face enquiringly.

"By having no more to hide," she said, with her eyes full of tears. "If it's nothing to you——"

"It's everything to me," I said. "It's overwhelming me. Oh Mary, heart of my life, my dear, come out of this! Come with me, come and be my wife, make a clean thing of it! Let me take you away, and then let me marry you. I know it's asking you—to come to a sort of poverty——"

But Mary's blue eyes were alight with anger. "Isn't it a clean thing *now*, Stephen?" she was crying. "Do you mean that you and I aren't clean now? Will you never understand?"

"Oh clean," I answered, "clean as Eve in the garden. But can we keep clean? Won't the shadow of our falsehoods darken at all? Come out of it while we are still clean. Come with me. Justin will divorce you. We can stay abroad and marry and come back."

Mary was kneeling up now with her hands upon her knees.

"Come back to what?" she cried. "Parliament?—after that? You *boy!* you sentimentalist! you—you duffer! Do you think I'd let you do it for your own sake even? Do you think I want you—spoilt? We should come back to mope outside of things, we should come back to fret our lives out. I won't do it, Stephen, I won't do it. End *this* if you like, break our hearts and throw them away and go on without them, but to turn all our lives into a scandal, to give ourselves over to the mean and the malicious, a prey to old women—and *you* damned out of everything! A man partly forgiven! A man who went wrong for a woman! *No!*"

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She sprang lightly to her feet and stood over me as I knelt before her. "And I came here to be made love to, Stephen! I came here to be loved! And you talk that nonsense! You remind me of everything—wretched!"

She lifted up her hands and then struck down with them, a gesture of infinite impatience. Her face as she bent to me was alive with a friendly anger, her eyes suddenly dark. "You *duffer!*" she repeated....

## § 10

Discovery followed hard upon that meeting. I had come over to Martens with some book as a pretext; the man had told me that Lady Mary awaited me in her blue parlor, and I went unannounced through the long gallery to find her. The door stood a little ajar, I opened it softly so that she did not hear me, and saw her seated at her writing-desk with her back to me, and her cheek and eyebrow just touched by the sunlight from the open terrace window. She was writing a note. I put my hand about her shoulder, and bent to kiss her as she turned. Then as she came round to me she started, was for a moment rigid, then thrust me from her and rose very slowly to her feet.

I turned to the window and became as rigid, facing Justin. He was standing on the terrace, staring at us, with a face that looked stupid and inexpressive and—very white. The sky behind him, appropriately enough, was full of the tattered inky onset of a thunderstorm. So we remained for a lengthy second perhaps, a trite[Pg 166] *tableau*

*vivant*. We two seemed to hang helplessly upon Justin, and he was the first of us to move.

He made a queer, incomplete gesture with one hand, as if he wanted to undo the top button of his waistcoat and then thought better of it. He came very slowly into the room. When he spoke his voice had neither rage nor denunciation in it. It was simply conversational. "I felt this was going on," he said. And then to his wife with the note of one who remarks dispassionately on a peculiar situation. "Yet somehow it seemed wrong and unnatural to think such a thing of you."

His face took on something of the vexed look of a child who struggles with a difficult task. "Do you mind," he said to me, "will you go?"

I took a moment for my reply. "No," I said. "Since you know at last—— There are things to be said."

"No," said Mary, suddenly. "Go! Let me talk to him."

"No," I said, "my place is here beside you."

He seemed not to hear me. His eyes were fixed on Mary. He seemed to think he had dismissed me, and that I was no longer there. His mind was not concerned about me, but about her. He spoke as though what he said had been in his mind, and no doubt it had been in his mind, for many days. "I didn't deserve this," he said to her. "I've tried to make your life as you wanted your life. It's astonishing to find—I haven't. You gave no sign. I suppose I ought to have felt all this happening, but it comes upon me surprisingly. I don't know what I'm to do." He became aware of me again. "And *you!*" he said. "What am I to do? To think that you—while I have been treating her like some sacred thing...."

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The color was creeping back into his face. Indignation had come into his voice, the first yellow lights of rising jealousy showed in his eyes.

"Stephen," I heard Mary say, "will you leave me to talk to my husband?"

"There is only one thing to do," I said. "What is the need of talking? We two are lovers, Justin." I spoke to both of them. "We two must go out into the world, go out now together. This marriage of yours—it's no marriage, no real marriage...."

I think I said that. I seem to remember saying that; perhaps with other phrases that I have forgotten. But my memory of what we said and did, which is so photographically clear of these earlier passages that I believe I can answer for every gesture and nearly

every word that I have set down, becomes suddenly turbid. The high tension of our first confrontation was giving place to a flood of emotional impulse. We all became eager to talk, to impose interpretations and justifications upon our situation. We all three became divided between our partial attention to one another and our urgent necessity to keep hold of our points of view. That I think is the common tragedy of almost all human conflicts, that rapid breakdown from the first cool apprehension of an issue to heat, confusion, and insistence. I do not know if indeed we raised our voices, but my memory has an effect of raised voices, and when at last I went out of the house it seemed to me that the men-servants in the hall were as hushed as beasts before a thunderstorm, and all of them quite fully aware of the tremendous catastrophe that had come to Martens. And moreover, as I recalled afterwards with astonishment, I went past them and out[Pg 168] into the driving rain unprotected, and not one of them stirred a serviceable hand....

What was it we said? I have a vivid sense of declaring not once only but several times that Mary and I were husband and wife "in the sight of God." I was full of the idea that now she must inevitably be mine. I must have spoken to Justin at times as if he had come merely to confirm my view of the long dispute there had been between us. For a while my mind resisted his extraordinary attitude that the matter lay between him and Mary, that I was in some way an interloper. It seemed to me there was nothing for it now but that Mary should stand by my side and face Justin with the world behind him. I remember my confused sense that presently she and I would have to go straight out of Martens. And she was wearing a tea-gown, easy and open, and the flimsiest of slippers. Any packing, any change of clothing, struck me as an incredible anti-climax. I had visions of our going forth, hand in hand. Outside was the souging of a coming storm, a chill wind drove a tumult of leaves along the terrace, the door slammed and yawned open again, and then came the rain. Justin, I remember, still talking, closed the door. I tried to think how I could get to the station five miles away, and then what we could do in London. We should seem rather odd visitors to an hotel—without luggage. All this was behind my valiant demand that she should come with me, and come now.

And then my mind was lanced by the thin edge of realization that she did not intend to come now, and that Justin was resolved she should not do so. After the first shock of finding herself discovered she had stood pale but uncowed before her bureau, with her eyes[Pg 169] rather on him than on me. Her hands, I think, were behind her upon the edge of the writing flap, and she was a little leaning upon them. She had the watchful alert expression of one who faces an unanticipated but by no means overwhelming situation. She cast a remark to me. "But I do not want to come with

you," she said. "I have told you I do not want to come with you." All her mind seemed concentrated upon what she should do with Justin. "You must send him away," he was saying. "It's an abominable thing. It must stop. How can you dream it should go on?"

"But you said when you married me I should be free, I should own myself! You gave me this house——"

"What! To disgrace myself!"

I was moved to intervene.

"You must choose between us, Mary," I cried. "It is impossible you should stay here! You cannot stay here."

She turned upon me, a creature at bay. "Why shouldn't I stay here? Why must I choose between two men? I want neither of you. I want myself. I'm not a thing. I'm a human being. I'm not your thing, Justin—nor yours, Stephen. Yet you want to quarrel over me—like two dogs over a bone. I am going to stay here—in my house! It's my house. I made it. Every room of it is full of me. Here I am!"

She stood there making this magnificently extravagant claim; her eyes blazing blue, her hair a little dishevelled with a strand across her cheek.

Both I and Justin spoke together, and then turned in helpless anger upon one another. I remember that with the clumsiest of weak gestures he bade me begone from [Pg 170] the house, and that I with a now rather deflated rhetoric answered I would go only with Mary at my side. And there she stood, less like a desperate rebel against the most fundamental social relations than an indignant princess, and demanded of us and high heaven, "Why should I be fought for? Why should I be fought for?"

And then abruptly she gathered her skirts in her hand and advanced. "Open that door, Stephen," she said, and was gone with a silken whirl and rustle from our presence.

We were left regarding one another with blank expressions.

Her departure had torn the substance out of our dispute. For the moment we found ourselves left with a new situation for which there is as yet no tradition of behavior. We had become actors in that new human comedy that is just beginning in the world, that comedy in which men still dispute the possession and the manner of the possession of woman according to the ancient rules, while they on their side are determining ever more definitely that they will not be possessed....

We had little to say to one another,—mere echoes and endorsements of our recent declarations. "She must come to me," said I. And he, "I will save her from that at any cost."

That was the gist of our confrontation, and then I turned about and walked along the gallery towards the entrance, with Justin following me slowly. I was full of the wrath of baffled heroics; I turned towards him with something of a gesture. Down the perspective of the white and empty gallery he appeared small and perplexed. The panes of the tall French windows were slashed with rain....

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## § 11

I forget now absolutely what I may have expected to happen next. I cannot remember my return to my father's house that day. But I know that what did happen was the most unanticipated and incredible experience of my life. It was as if the whole world of mankind were suddenly to turn upside down and people go about calmly in positions of complete inversion. I had a note from Mary on the morning after this discovery that indeed dealt with that but was otherwise not very different from endless notes I had received before our crisis. It was destroyed, so that I do not know its exact text now, but it did not add anything material to the situation, or give me the faintest shadow to intimate what crept close upon us both. She repeated her strangely thwarting refusal to come away and live with me. She seemed indignant that we had been discovered—as though Justin had indulged in an excess of existence by discovering us. I completed and despatched to her a long letter I had already been writing overnight in which I made clear the hopeless impossibility of her attitude, vowed all my life and strength to her, tried to make some picture of the happiness that was possible for us together, sketched as definitely as I could when and where we might meet and whither we might go. It must have made an extraordinary jumble of protest, persuasion and practicality. It never reached her; it was intercepted by Justin.

I have gathered since that after I left Martens he sent telegrams to Guy and Philip and her cousin Lord Tarville. He was I think amazed beyond measure at this revelation [Pg 172] of the possibilities of his cold and distant wife, with a vast passion of jealousy awaking in him, and absolutely incapable of forming any plan to meet the demands of his extraordinary situation. Guy and Philip got to him that night, Tarville came down next morning, and Martens became a debate. Justin did not so much express views and intentions as have them extracted from him; it was manifest he was prepared for the amplest forgiveness of his wife if only I could be obliterated from their world. Confronted with her brothers, the two men in the world who could be frankly brutal to

her, Mary's dignity suffered; she persisted she meant to go on seeing me, but she was reduced to passionate tears.

Into some such state of affairs I came that morning on the heels of my letter, demanding Lady Mary of a scared evasive butler.

Maxton and Tarville appeared: "Hullo, Stratton!" said Tarville, with a fine flavor of an agreeable chance meeting. Philip had doubts about his greeting me, and then extended his reluctant hand with a nervous grin to excuse the delay.

"I want to see Lady Mary," said I, stiffly.

"She's not up yet," said Tarville, with a hand on my shoulder. "Come and have a talk in the garden."

We went out with Tarville expanding the topic of the seasons. "It's a damned good month, November, say what you like about it." Philip walked grimly silent on my other hand.

"And it's a damned awkward situation you've got us into, Stratton," said Tarville, "say what you like about it."

"It isn't as though old Justin was any sort of beast,"[Pg 173] he reflected, "or anything like that, you know. He's a most astonishing decent chap, clean as they make them."

"This isn't a beastly intrigue," I said.

"It never is," said Tarville genially.

"We've loved each other a long time. It's just flared out here."

"No doubt of that," said Tarville. "It's been like a beacon to all Surrey."

"It's one of those cases where things have to be readjusted. The best thing to do is for Mary and me to go abroad——"

"Yes, but does Mary think so?"

"Look here!" said Philip in a voice thick with rage. "I won't have Mary divorced. I won't. See? I won't."

"What the devil's it got to do with *you*?" I asked with an answering flash of fury.

Tarville's arm ran through mine. "Nobody's going to divorce Mary," he said reassuringly. "Not even Justin. He doesn't want to, and nobody else can, and there you are!"

"But we two——"

"You two have had a tremendously good time. You've got found out—and there you are!"

"This thing has got to stop absolutely now," said Philip and echoed with a note of satisfaction in his own phrasing, "absolutely *now*."

"You see, Stratton," said Tarville as if he were expanding Philip's assertion, "there's been too many divorces in society. It's demoralizing people. It's discrediting us. It's setting class against class. Everybody is saying why don't these big people either set about respecting the[Pg 174] law or altering it. Common people are getting too infernally clear-headed. Hitherto it's mattered so little.... But we can't stand any more of it, Stratton, now. It's something more than a private issue; it's a question of public policy. We can't stand any more divorces."

He reflected. "We have to consider something more than our own personal inclinations. We've got no business to be here at all if we're not a responsible class. We owe something—to ourselves."

It was as if Tarville was as concerned as I was for this particular divorce, as if he struggled with a lively desire to see me and Mary happily married after the shortest possible interval. And indeed he manifestly wasn't unsympathetic; he had the strongest proclivity for the romantic and picturesque, and it was largely the romantic picturesqueness of renunciation that he urged upon me. Philip for the most part maintained a resentful silence; he was a clenched anger against me, against Mary, against the flaming possibilities that threatened the sister of Lord Maxton, that most promising and distinguished young man.

Of course their plans must have been definitely made before this talk, probably they had made them overnight, and probably it was Tarville had given them a practicable shape, but he threw over the whole of our talk so satisfying a suggestion of arrest and prolonged discussion that it never occurred to me that I should not be able to come again on the morrow and renew my demand to see Mary. Even when next day I turned my face to Martens and saw the flag had vanished from the flagstaff, it seemed merely a token of that household's perturbation. I thought the house looked oddly blank[Pg 175] and sleepy as I drew near, but I did not perceive that this was because all the blinds were drawn. The door upon the lawn was closed, and presently the butler came to open it. He was in an old white jacket, and collarless. "Lady Mary!" he said. "Lady Mary has gone, sir. She and Mr. Justin went yesterday after you called."

"Gone!" said I. "But where?"

"I *think* abroad, sir."

"Abroad!"

"I *think* abroad."

"But—— They've left an address?"

"Only to Mr. Justin's office," said the man. "Any letters will be forwarded from there."

I paused upon the step. He remained stiffly deferential, but with an air of having disposed of me. He reproved me tacitly for forgetting that I ought to conceal my astonishment at this disappearance. He was indeed an admirable man-servant.

"Thank you," said I, and dropped away defeated from the door.

I went down the broad steps, walked out up the lawn, and surveyed house and trees and garden and sky. To the heights and the depths and the uttermost, I knew now what it was to be amazed....

## § 12

I had felt myself an actor in a drama, and now I had very much the feeling an actor would have who answers to a cue and finds himself in mid-stage with the scenery and the rest of the cast suddenly vanished behind him. By that mixture of force and persuasion which avails[Pg 176] itself of a woman's instinctive and cultivated dread of disputes and raised voices and the betrayal of contention to strangers, by the sheer tiring down of nerves and of sleepless body and by threats of an immediate divorce and a campaign of ruin against me, these three men had obliged Mary to leave Martens and go with them to Southampton, and thence they took her in Justin's yacht, the *Water-Witch*, to Waterford, and thence by train to a hired house, an adapted old castle at Mirk near Crogham in Mayo. There for all practical purposes she was a prisoner. They took away her purse, and she was four miles from a pillar-box and ten from a telegraph office. This house they had taken furnished without seeing it on the recommendation of a London agent, and in the name of Justin's solicitor. Thither presently went Lady Ladislav, and an announcement appeared in the *Times* that Justin and Lady Mary had gone abroad for a time and that no letters would be forwarded.

I have never learnt the particulars of that abduction, but I imagine Mary astonished, her pride outraged, humiliated, helpless, perplexed and maintaining a certain outward dignity. Moreover, as I was presently to be told, she was ill. Guy and Philip were, I believe, the moving spirits in the affair; Tarville was their apologetic accomplice, Justin took the responsibility for what they did and bore the cost, he was bitterly

ashamed to have these compulsions applied to his wife, but full now of a gusty fury against myself. He loved Mary still with a love that was shamed and torn and bleeding, but his ruling passion was that infinitely stronger passion than love in our poor human hearts, jealousy. He was prepared to fight for her now as men fight for a flag,[Pg 177] tearing it to pieces in the struggle. He meant now to keep Mary. That settled, he was prepared to consider whether he still loved her or she him....

Now here it may seem to you that we are on the very verge of romance. Here is a beautiful lady carried off and held prisoner in a wild old place, standing out half cut off from the mainland among the wintry breakers of the west coast of Ireland. Here is the lover, baffled but insistent. Here are the fierce brothers and the stern dragon husband, and you have but to make out that the marriage was compulsory, irregular and, on the ground of that irregularity, finally dissoluble, to furnish forth a theme for Marriott Watson in his most admirable and adventurous vein. You can imagine the happy chances that would have guided me to the hiding-place, the trusty friend who would have come with me and told the story, the grim siege of the place—all as it were *sotto voce* for fear of scandal—the fight with Guy in the little cave, my attempted assassination, the secret passage. Would to heaven life had those rich simplicities, and one could meet one's man at the end of a sword! My siege of Mirk makes a very different story from that.

In the first place I had no trusted friend of so extravagant a friendship as such aid would demand. I had no one whom it seemed permissible to tell of our relations. I was not one man against three or four men in a romantic struggle for a woman. I was one man against something infinitely greater than that, I was one man against nearly all men, one man against laws, traditions, instincts, institutions, social order. Whatever my position had been before, my continuing pursuit of Mary was open social rebellion. And I was in a state of extreme uncertainty[Pg 178] how far Mary was a willing agent in this abrupt disappearance. I was disposed to think she had consented far more than she had done to this astonishing step. Carrying off an unwilling woman was outside my imaginative range. It was luminously clear in my mind that so far she had never countenanced the idea of flight with me, and until she did I was absolutely bound to silence about her. I felt that until I saw her face to face again, and was sure she wanted me to release her, that prohibition held. Yet how was I to get at her and hear what she had to say? Clearly it was possible that she was under restraint, but I did not know; I was not certain, I could not prove it. At Guildford station I gathered, after ignominious enquiries, that the Justins had booked to London. I had two days of nearly frantic inactivity at home, and then pretended business that took me to London, for fear that I should break out to my father. I came up revolving a dozen

impossible projects of action in my mind. I had to get into touch with Mary, at that my mind hung and stopped. All through the twenty-four hours my nerves jumped at every knock upon my door; this might be the letter, this might be the telegram, this might be herself escaped and come to me. The days passed like days upon a painful sick-bed, grey or foggy London days of an appalling length and emptiness. If I sat at home my imagination tortured me; if I went out I wanted to be back and see if any communication had come. I tried repeatedly to see Tarville. I had an idea of obtaining a complete outfit for an elopement, but I was restrained by my entire ignorance of what a woman may need. I tried to equip myself for a sudden crisis by the completest preparation of every possible aspect. I did some[Pg 179] absurd and ill-advised things. I astonished a respectable solicitor in a grimy little office behind a queer little court with trees near Cornhill, by asking him to give advice to an anonymous client and then putting my anonymous case before him. "Suppose," said I, "it was for the plot of a play." He nodded gravely.

My case as I stated it struck me as an unattractive one.

"Application for a Writ of Habeas Corpus," he considered with eyes that tried to remain severely impartial, "by a Wife's Lover, who wants to find out where she is.... It's unusual. You will be requiring the husband to produce her Corpus.... I don't think—speaking in the same general terms as those in which you put the circumstances, it would be likely to succeed.... No."

Then I overcame a profound repugnance and went to a firm of private detectives. It had occurred to me that if I could have Justin, Tarville, Guy or Philip traced I might get a clue to Mary's hiding-place. I remember a queer little office, a blustering, frock-coated creature with a pock-marked face, iron-grey hair, an eyeglass and a strained tenor voice, who told me twice that he was a gentleman and several times that he would prefer not to do business than to do it in an ungentlemanly manner, and who was quite obviously ready and eager to blackmail either side in any scandal into which spite or weakness admitted his gesticulating fingers. He alluded vaguely to his staff, to his woman helpers, "some personally attached to me," to his remarkable underground knowledge of social life—"the illicit side." What could he do for me? There was nothing, I said, illicit about me. His interest waned a little. I told him that[Pg 180] I was interested in certain financial matters, no matter what they were, and that I wanted to have a report of the movements of Justin and his brothers-in-law for the past few weeks and for a little time to come. "You want them watched?" said my private enquiry agent, leaning over the desk towards me and betraying a slight squint. "Exactly," said I. "I want to know what sort of things they are looking at just at present."

"Have you any inkling——?"

"None."

"If our agents have to travel——"

I expressed a reasonable generosity in the matter of expenses, and left him at last with a vague discomfort in my mind. How far mightn't this undesirable unearth the whole business in the course of his investigations? And then what could he do? Suppose I went back forthwith and stopped his enquiries before they began! I had a disagreeable feeling of meanness that I couldn't shake off; I felt I was taking up a weapon that Justin didn't deserve. Yet I argued with myself that the abduction of Mary justified any such course.

As I was still debating this I saw Philip. He was perhaps twenty yards ahead of me, he was paying off a hansom which had just put him down outside Blake's. "Philip," I cried, following him up the steps and overtaking him and seizing his arm as the commissionaire opened the door for him. "Philip! What have you people done with Mary? Where is Mary?"

He turned a white face to me. "How dare you," he said with a catch of the breath, "mention my sister?"

I spoke in an undertone, and stepped a little between him and the man at the door in order that the latter[Pg 181] might not hear what I said. "I want to see her," I expostulated. "I *must* see her. What you are doing is not playing the game. I've got to see her."

"Let go of my arm, sir!" cried he, and suddenly I felt a whirlwind of rage answering the rage in his eyes. The pent-up exasperation of three weeks rushed to its violent release. He struck me in the face with the hand that was gripped about his umbrella. He meant to strike me in the face and then escape into his club, but before he could get away from me after his blow I had flung out at him, and had hit him under the jawbone. My blow followed his before guard or counter was possible. I hit with all my being. It was an amazing flare up of animal passion; from the moment that I perceived he was striking at me to the moment when both of us came staggering across the door-mat into the dignified and spacious hall-way of Blake's, we were back at the ancestral ape, and we did exactly what the ancestral ape would have done. The arms of the commissionaire about my waist, the rush of the astonished porter from his little glass box, two incredibly startled and delighted pages, and an intervening member bawling out "Sir! Sir!" converged to remind us that we were a million years or so beyond those purely arboreal days....

We seemed for a time to be confronted before an audience that hesitated to interfere. "How dare you name my sister to me?" he shouted at me, and brought to my mind the amazing folly of which he was capable. I perceived Mary's name flung to the four winds of heaven.

"You idiot, Philip!" I cried. "I don't *know* your sister. I've not seen her—scarcely seen her for years.[Pg 182] I ask you—I ask you for a match-box or something and you hit me."

"If you dare to speak to her——!"

"You fool!" I cried, going nearer to him and trying to make him understand. But he winced and recoiled defensively. "I'm sorry," I said to the commissionaire who was intervening. "Lord Maxton has made a mistake."

"Is he a member?" said someone in the background, and somebody else suggested calling a policeman. I perceived that only a prompt retreat would save the whole story of our quarrel from the newspapers. So far as I could see nobody knew me there except Philip. I had to take the risks of his behavior; manifestly I couldn't control it. I made no further attempt to explain anything to anybody. Everyone was a little too perplexed for prompt action, and so the advantage in that matter lay with me. I walked through the door, and with what I imagined to be an appearance of the utmost serenity down the steps. I noted an ascending member glance at me with an expression of exceptional interest, but it was only after I had traversed the length of Pall Mall that I realized that my lip and the corner of my nostril were both bleeding profusely. I called a cab when I discovered my handkerchief scarlet, and retreated to my flat and cold ablutions. Then I sat down to write a letter to Tarville, with a clamorous "Urgent, Please forward if away" above the address, and tell him at least to suppress Philip. But within the club that blockhead, thinking of nothing but the appearances of our fight and his own credit, was varying his assertion that he had thrashed me, with denunciations of me as a "blackguard," and giving half a dozen men a highly colored, improvised, and altogether improbable account of my relentless pursuit and persecution of Lady Mary Justin, and how she had left London to avoid me. They listened, no doubt, with extreme avidity. The matrimonial relations of the Justins had long been a matter for speculative minds.

And while Philip was doing this, Guy, away in Mayo still, was writing a tender, trusting, and all too explicit letter to a well-known and extremely impatient lady in London to account for his continued absence from her house. "So that is it!" said the lady, reading, and was at least in the enviable position of one who had confirmatory facts to impart....

And so quite suddenly the masks were off our situation and we were open to an impertinent world. For some days I did not realize what had happened, and lived in hope that Philip had been willing and able to cover his lapse. I went about with my preoccupation still, as I imagined, concealed, and with an increasing number of typed letters from my private enquiry agent in my pocket containing inaccurate and worthless information about the movements of Justin, which appeared to have been culled for the most part from a communicative young policeman stationed at the corner nearest to the Justins' house, or expanded from *Who's Who* and other kindred works of reference. The second letter, I remember, gave some particulars about the financial position of the younger men, and added that Justin's credit with the west-end tradesmen was "limitless," points upon which I had no sort of curiosity whatever....

I suppose a couple of hundred people in London knew before I did that Lady Mary Justin had been carried off [Pg 184] to Ireland and practically imprisoned there by her husband because I was her lover. The thing reached me at last through little Fred Riddling, who came to my rooms in the morning while I was sitting over my breakfast. "Stratton!" said he, "what is all this story of your shaking Justin by the collar, and threatening to kill him if he didn't give up his wife to you? And why do you want to fight a duel with Maxton? What's it all about? Fire-eater you must be! I stood up for you as well as I could, but I heard you abused for a solid hour last night, and there was a chap there simply squirting out facts and dates and names. Got it all.... What have you been up to?"

He stood on my hearthrug with an air of having called for an explanation to which he was entitled, and he very nearly got one. But I just had some scraps of reserve left, and they saved me. "Tell me first," I said, delaying myself with the lighting of a cigarette, "the particulars ... as you heard them."

Riddling embarked upon a descriptive sketch, and I got a minute or so to think.

"Go on," I said with a note of irony, when he paused. "Go on. Tell me some more. Where did you say they have taken her; let us have it right."

By the time his little store had run out I knew exactly what to do with him. "Riddling," said I, and stood up beside him suddenly and dropped my hand with a little added weight upon his shoulder, "Riddling, do you know the only right and proper thing to do when you hear scandal about a friend?"

"Come straight to him," said Riddling virtuously, "as I have done."

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"No. Say you don't believe it. Ask the scandal-monger how he knows and insist on his telling you—insist. And if he won't—be very, very rude to him. Insist up to the quarrelling point. Now who were those people?"

"Well—that's a bit stiff.... One chap I didn't know at all."

"You should have pulled him up and insisted upon knowing who he was, and what right he had to lie about me. For it's lying, Riddling. Listen! It isn't true that I'm besieging Lady Mary Justin. So far from besieging her I didn't even know where she was until you told me. Justin is a neighbor of my father's and a friend of mine. I had tea with him and his wife not a month ago. I had tea with them together. I knew they were going away, but it was a matter of such slight importance to me, such slight importance—I impressed this on his collarbone—that I was left with the idea that they were going to the south of France. I believe they are in the south of France. And there you are. I'm sorry to spoil sport, but that's the bleak unromantic truth of the matter."

"You mean to say that there is nothing in it all?"

"Nothing."

He was atrociously disappointed. "But everybody," he said, "everybody has got something."

"Somebody will get a slander case if this goes on. I don't care what they've got."

"Good Lord!" he said, and stared at the rug. "You'll take your oath——" He glanced up and met my eye. "Oh, of course it's all right what you say." He was profoundly perplexed. He reflected. "But then, I say Stratton, why did you go for Maxton at Blake's? *That*[Pg 186] I had from an eye-witness. You can't deny a scrap like that—in broad daylight. Why did you do that?"

"Oh *that's* it," said I. "I begin to have glimmerings. There's a little matter between myself and Maxton...." I found it a little difficult to improvise a plausible story.

"But he said it was his sister," persisted Riddling. "He said so afterwards, in the club."

"Maxton," said I, losing my temper, "is a fool and a knave and a liar. His sister indeed! Lady Mary! If he can't leave his sister out of this business I'll break every bone of his body." ... I perceived my temper was undoing me. I invented rapidly but thinly. "As a matter of fact, Riddling, it's quite another sort of lady has set us by the ears."

Riddling stuck his chin out, tucked in the corners of his mouth, made round eyes at the breakfast things and, hands in pockets, rocked from heels to toes and from toes to

heels. "I see Stratton, yes, I see. Yes, all this makes it very plain, of course. Very plain.... Stupid thing, scandal is.... Thanks! no, I won't have a cigarette."

And he left me presently with an uncomfortable sense that he did see, and didn't for one moment intend to restrain his considerable histrionic skill in handing on his vision to others. For some moments I stood savoring this all too manifest possibility, and then my thoughts went swirling into another channel. At last the curtain was pierced. I was no longer helplessly in the dark. I got out my Bradshaw, and sat with the map spread out over the breakfast things studying the routes to Mayo. Then I rang for Williams, the man I shared with the two adjacent flat-holders, and told him to pack my kit-bag because I was suddenly called away.

[Pg 187]

### § 13

Many of the particulars of my journey to Ireland have faded out of my mind altogether. I remember most distinctly my mood of grim elation that at last I had to deal with accessible persons again....

The weather was windy and violent, and I was sea-sick for most of the crossing, and very tired and exhausted when I landed. Williams had thought of my thick over-coat and loaded me with wraps and rugs, and I sat in the corner of a compartment in that state of mental and bodily fatigue that presses on the brows like a painless headache. I got to some little junction at last where I had to wait an hour for a branch-line train. I tasted all the bitterness of Irish hospitality, and such coffee as Ireland alone can produce. Then I went on to a station called Clumber or Clumboye, or some such name, and thence after some difficulty I got a car for my destination. It was a wretched car in which hens had been roosting, and it was drawn by a steaming horse that had sores under its mended harness.

An immense wet wind was blowing as we came over the big hill that lies to the south of Mirk. Everything was wet, the hillside above me was either intensely green sodden turf or great streaming slabs of limestone, seaward was a rocky headland, a ruin of a beehive shape, and beyond a vast waste of tumbling waters unlit by any sun. Not a tree broke that melancholy wilderness, nor any living thing but ourselves. The horse went stumblingly under the incessant stimulation of the driver's lash and tongue....

"Yonder it is," said my man, pointing with his whip,[Pg 188] and I twisted round to see over his shoulder, not the Rhine-like castle I had expected, but a long low house of stone upon a headland, backed by a distant mountain that vanished in a wild driven storm of rain as I looked. But at the sight of Mirk my lassitude passed, my nerves

tightened, and my will began to march again. Now, thought I, we bring things to an issue. Now we come to something personal and definite. The vagueness is at an end. I kept my eyes upon the place, and thought it more and more like a prison as we drew nearer. Perhaps from that window Mary was looking for me now. Had she wondered why I did not come to her before? Now at any rate I had found her. I sprang off the car, found a bell-handle, and set the house jangling.

The door opened, and a little old man appeared with his fingers thrust inside his collar as though he were struggling against strangulation. He regarded me for a second, and spoke before I could speak.

"What might you be wanting?" said he, as if he had an answer ready.

"I want to see Lady Mary Justin," I said.

"You can't," he said. "She's gone."

"Gone!"

"The day before yesterday she went to London. You'll have to be getting back there."

"She's gone to London."

"No less."

"Willingly?"

The little old man struggled with his collar. "Anyone would go willingly," he said, and seemed to await my further commands. He eyed me obliquely with a shadow of malice in his eyes.

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It was then my heart failed, and I knew that we lovers were beaten. I turned from the door without another word to the janitor. "Back," said I to my driver, and got up behind him.

But it is one thing to decide to go back, and another to do it. At the little station I studied time-tables, and I could not get to England again without a delay of half a day. Somewhere I must wait. I did not want to wait where there was any concourse of people. I decided to stay in the inn by the station for the intervening six hours, and get some sleep before I started upon my return, but when I saw the bedroom I changed my plan and went down out of the village by a steep road towards the shore. I wandered down through the rain and spindrift to the very edge of the sea, and there found a corner among the rocks a little sheltered from the wind, and sat, inert and

wretched; my lips salt, my hair stiff with salt, and my body wet and cold; a miserable defeated man. For I had now an irrational and entirely overwhelming conviction of defeat. I saw as if I ought always to have seen that I had been pursuing a phantom of hopeless happiness, that my dream of ever possessing Mary again was fantastic and foolish, and that I had expended all my strength in vain. Over me triumphed a law and tradition more towering than those cliffs and stronger than those waves. I was overwhelmed by a sense of human weakness, of the infinite feebleness of the individual man against wind and wave and the stress of tradition and the ancient usages of mankind. "We must submit," I whispered, crouching close, "we must submit." ...

Far as the eye could reach the waves followed one another in long unhurrying lines, an inexhaustible succession,[Pg 190] rolling, hissing, breaking, and tossing white manes of foam, to gather at last for a crowning effort and break thunderously, squirting foam two hundred feet up the streaming faces of the cliffs. The wind tore and tugged at me, and wind and water made together a clamor as though all the evil voices in the world, all the violent passions and all the hasty judgments were seeking a hearing above the more elemental uproar....

#### **§ 14**

And while I was in this phase of fatigue and despair in Mayo, the scene was laid and all the other actors were waiting for the last act of my defeat in London. I came back to find two letters from Mary and a little accumulation of telegrams and notes, one written in my flat, from Tarville.

Mary's letters were neither of them very long, and full of a new-born despair. She had not realized how great were the forces against her and against us both. She let fall a phrase that suggested she was ill. She had given in, she said, to save herself and myself and others from the shame and ruin of a divorce, and I must give in too. We had to agree not to meet or communicate for three years, and I was to go out of England. She prayed me to accept this. She knew, she said, she seemed to desert me, but I did not know everything,—I did not know everything,—I must agree; she could not come with me; it was impossible. *Now* certainly it was impossible. She had been weak, but I did not know all. If I knew all I should be the readier to understand and forgive her,[Pg 191] but it was part of the conditions that I could not know all. Justin had been generous, in his way.... Justin had everything in his hands, the whole world was behind him against us, and I must give in. Those letters had a quality I had never before met in her, they were broken-spirited. I could not understand them fully, and they left me

perplexed, with a strong desire to see her, to question her, to learn more fully what this change in her might mean.

Tarville's notes recorded his repeated attempts to see me, I felt that he alone was capable of clearing up things for me, and I went out again at once and telegraphed to him for an appointment.

He wired to me from that same house in Mayfair in which I had first met Mary after my return. He asked me to come to him in the afternoon, and thither I went through a November fog, and found him in the drawing-room that had the plate glass above the fireplace. But now he was vacating the house, and everything was already covered up, the pictures and their frames were under holland, the fine furniture all in covers of faded stuff, the chandeliers and statues wrapped up, the carpets rolled out of the way. Even the window-curtains were tucked into wrappers, and the blinds, except one he had raised, drawn down. He greeted me and apologized for the cold inhospitality of the house. "It was convenient here," he said. "I came here to clear out my papers and boxes. And there's no chance of interruptions."

He went and stood before the empty fireplace, and plunged into the middle of the matter.

"You know, my dear Stratton, in this confounded business my heart's with you. It has been all along. If [Pg 192] I could have seen a clear chance before you—for you and Mary to get away—and make any kind of life of it—though she's my cousin—I'd have helped you. Indeed I would. But there's no sort of chance—not the ghost of a chance...."

He began to explain very fully, quite incontrovertibly, that entire absence of any chance for Mary and myself together. He argued to the converted. "You know as well as I do what that romantic flight abroad, that Ouidaesque casa in some secluded valley, comes to in reality. All round Florence there's no end of such scandalous people, I've been among them, the nine circles of the repenting scandalous, all cutting one another."

"I agree," I said. "And yet——"

"What?"

"We could have come back."

Tarville paused, and then leant forward. "No."

"But people have done so. It would have been a clean sort of divorce."

"You don't understand Justin. Justin would ruin you. If you were to take Mary away.... He's a queer little man. Everything is in his hands. Everything always is in the husband's hands in these affairs. If he chooses. And keeps himself in the right. For an injured husband the law sanctifies revenge...."

"And you see, you've got to take Justin's terms. He's changed. He didn't at first fully realize. He feels—cheated. We've had to persuade him. There's a case for Justin, you know. He's had to stand—a lot. I don't wonder at his going stiff at last. No doubt it's hard for you to see that. But you have to see it. You've got to go away as he requires—three years out of England,[Pg 193] you've got to promise not to correspond, not to meet afterwards——"

"It's so extravagant a separation."

"The alternative is—not for you to have Mary, but for you two to be flung into the ditch together—that's what it comes to, Stratton. Justin's got his case. He's set like—steel. You're up against the law, up against social tradition, up against money—any one of those a man may fight, but not all three. And she's ill, Stratton. You owe her consideration. You of all people. That's no got-up story; she's truly ill and broken. She can no longer fly with you and fight with you, travel in uncomfortable trains, stay in horrible little inns. You don't understand. The edge is off her pluck, Stratton."

"What do you mean?" I asked, and questioned his face.

"Just exactly what I say."

A gleam of understanding came to me....

"Why can't I see her?" I broke in, with my voice full of misery and anger. "Why can't I see her? As if seeing her once more could matter so very greatly now!"

He appeared to weigh something in his mind. "You can't," he said.

"How do I know that she's not being told some story of my abandonment of her? How do I know she isn't being led to believe I no longer want her to come to me?"

"She isn't," said Tarville, still with that arrested judicial note in his voice. "You had her letters?" he said.

"Two."

"Yes. Didn't they speak?"

"I want to see her. Damn it, Tarville!" I cried with [Pg 194] sudden tears in my smarting eyes. "Let *her* send me away. This isn't—— Not treating us like human beings."

"Women," said Tarville and looked at his boot toes, "are different from men. You see, Stratton——"

He paused. "You always strike me, Stratton, as not realizing that women are weak things. We've got to take *care* of them. You don't seem to feel that as I do. Their moods—fluctuate—more than ours do. If you hold 'em to what they say in the same way you hold a man—it isn't fair..."

He halted as though he awaited my assent to that proposition.

"If you were to meet Mary now, you see, and if you were to say to her, come—come and we'll jump down Etna together, and you said it in the proper voice and with the proper force, she'd do it, Stratton. You know that. Any man knows a thing like that. And she wouldn't *want* to do it...."

"You mean that's why I can't see her."

"That's why you can't see her."

"Because we'd become—dramatic."

"Because you'd become—romantic and uncivilized."

"Well," I said sullenly, realizing the bargain we were making, "I won't."

"You won't make any appeal?"

"No."

He made no answer, and I looked up to discover him glancing over his shoulder through the great glass window into the other room. I stood up very quickly, and there in the further apartment were Guy and Mary, standing side by side. Our eyes met, and she came forward [Pg 195] towards the window impulsively, and paused, with that un pitying pane between us....

Then Guy was opening the door for her and she stood in the doorway. She was in dark furs wrapped about her, but in the instant I could see how ill she was and how broken. She came a step or so towards me and then stopped short, and so we stood, shyly and awkwardly under Guy and Tarville's eyes, two yards apart. "You see," she said, and stopped lamely.

"You and I," I said, "have to part, Mary. We—— We are beaten. Is that so?"

"Stephen, there is nothing for us to do. We've offended. We broke the rules. We have to pay."

"By parting?"

"What else is there to do?"

"No," I said. "There's nothing else." ...

"I tried," she said, "that you shouldn't be sent from England."

"That's a detail," I answered.

"But your politics—your work?"

"That does not matter. The great thing is that you are ill and unhappy—that I can't help you. I can't do anything.... I'd go anywhere ... to save you.... All I can do, I suppose, is to part like this and go."

"I shan't be—altogether unhappy. And I shall think of you——"

She paused, and we stood facing one another, tongue-tied. There was only one word more to say, and neither of us would say it for a moment.

"Good-bye," she whispered at last, and then, "Don't think I deserted you, Stephen my dear. Don't think ill of me. I couldn't come—I couldn't come to you,"[Pg 196] and suddenly her face changed slowly and she began to weep, my fearless playmate whom I had never seen weeping before; she began to weep as an unhappy child might weep.

"Oh my Mary!" I cried, weeping also, and held out my arms, and we clung together and kissed with tear-wet faces.

"No," cried Guy belatedly, "we promised Justin!"

But Tarville restrained his forbidding arm, and then after a second's interval put a hand on my shoulder. "Come," he said....

And so it was Mary and I parted from one another.

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## **CHAPTER THE SEVENTH**

### **Beginning Again**

**§ 1**

In operas and romances one goes from such a parting in a splendid dignity of gloom. But I am no hero, and I went down the big staircase of Tarville's house the empty shuck of an abandoned desire. I was acutely ashamed of my recent tears. In the centre of the hall was a marble figure swathed about with yellow muslin. "On account of the flies," I said, breaking our silence.

My words were far too unexpected for Tarville to understand. "The flies," I repeated with an air of explanation.

"You're sure she'll be all right?" I said abruptly.

"You've done the best thing you can for her."

"I suppose I have. I have to go." And then I saw ahead of me a world full of the tiresome need of decisions and arrangements and empty of all interest. "Where the *devil* am I to go, Tarville? I can't even get out of things altogether...."

And then with a fresh realization of painful difficulties ahead: "I have to tell this to my father. I've got to explain— And he thought—he expected—"

Tarville opened the half of the heavy front door [Pg 198] for me, hesitated, and came down the broad steps into the chilly grey street and a few yards along the pavement with me. He wanted to say something that he found difficult to say. When at last he did find words they were quite ridiculous in substance, and yet at the time I took them as gravely as he intended them. "It's no good quoting Marcus Aurelius," said Tarville, "to a chap with his finger in the crack of a door."

"I suppose it isn't," I said.

"One doesn't want to be a flatulent ass of course," said Tarville, "still—"

He resumed with an air of plunging. "It will sound just rot to you now, Stratton, but after all it comes to this. Behind us is a—situation—with half-a-dozen particular persons. Out here—I mean here round the world—before you've done with them—there's a thousand million people—men and women."

"Oh! what does that matter to me?" said I.

"Everything," said Tarville. "At least—it ought to."

He stopped and held out his hand. "Good-bye, Stratton—good luck to you! Good-bye."

"Yes," I said. "Good-bye."

I turned away from him. The image of Mary crying as a child cries suddenly blinded me and blotted out the world.

## § 2

I want to give you as clearly as I can some impression of the mental states that followed this passion and this collapse. It seems to me one of the most extraordinary aspects of all that literature of speculative attack [Pg 199] which is called psychology, that there is no name and no description at all of most of the mental states that make up life. Psychology, like sociology, is still largely in the scholastic stage, it is ignorant and intellectual, a happy refuge for the lazy industry of pedants; instead of experience and accurate description and analysis it begins with the rash assumption of elements and starts out upon ridiculous syntheses. Who with a sick soul would dream of going to a psychologist?...

Now here was I with a mind sore and inflamed. I did not clearly understand what had happened to me. I had blundered, offended, entangled myself; and I had no more conception than a beast in a bog what it was had got me, or the method or even the need of escape. The desires and passionate excitements, the anger and stress and strain and suspicion of the last few months had worn deep grooves in my brain, channels without end or issue, out of which it seemed impossible to keep my thoughts. I had done dishonorable things, told lies, abused the confidence of a friend. I kept wrestling with these intolerable facts. If some momentary distraction released me for a time, back I would fall presently before I knew what was happening, and find myself scheming once more to reverse the accomplished, or eloquently restating things already intolerably overdiscussed in my mind, justifying the unjustifiable or avenging defeat. I would dream again and again of some tremendous appeal to Mary, some violent return and attack upon the situation....

One very great factor in my mental and moral distress was the uncertain values of nearly every aspect of the case. There is an invincible sense of wild rightness about passionate love that no reasoning and no training will [Pg 200] ever altogether repudiate; I had a persuasion that out of that I would presently extract a magic to excuse my deceits and treacheries and assuage my smarting shame. And round these deep central preoccupations were others of acute exasperation and hatred towards secondary people. There had been interventions, judgments upon insufficient evidence, comments, and often quite justifiable comments, that had filled me with an extraordinary savagery of resentment.

I had a persuasion, illogical but invincible, that I was still entitled to all the respect due to a man of unblemished honor. I clung fiercely to the idea that to do dishonorable

things isn't necessarily to be dishonorable.... This state of mind I am describing is, I am convinced, the state of every man who has involved himself in any affair at once questionable and passionate. He seems free, but he is not free; he is the slave of the relentless paradox of his position.

And we were all of us more or less in deep grooves we had made for ourselves, Philip, Guy, Justin, the friends involved, and all in the measure of our grooves incapable of tolerance or sympathetic realization. Even when we slept, the clenched fist of the attitudes we had assumed gave a direction to our dreams.

You see the same string of events that had produced all this system of intense preoccupations had also severed me from the possible resumption of those wider interests out of which our intrigue had taken me. I had had to leave England and all the political beginnings I had been planning, and to return to those projects now, those now impossible projects, was to fall back promptly into hopeless exasperation....

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And then the longing, the longing that is like a physical pain, that hunger of the heart for some one intolerably dear! The desire for a voice! The arrested habit of phrasing one's thoughts for a hearer who will listen in peace no more! From that lonely distress even rage, even the concoction of insult and conflict, was a refuge. From that pitiless travail of emptiness I was ready to turn desperately to any offer of excitement and distraction.

From all those things I was to escape at last unhelped, but I want you to understand particularly these phases through which I passed; it falls to many and it may fall to you to pass through such a period of darkness and malign obsession. Make the groove only a little deeper, a little more unclimbable, make the temperament a little less sanguine, and suicide stares you in the face. And things worse than suicide, that suicide of self-respect which turns men to drugs and inflammatory vices and the utmost outrageous defiance of the dreaming noble self that has been so despitefully used. Into these same inky pools I have dipped my feet, where other men have drowned. I understand why they drown. And my taste of misdeed and resentment has given me just an inkling of what men must feel who go to prison. I know what it is to quarrel with a world.

### § 3

My first plan when I went abroad was to change my Harbury French, which was poor stuff and pedantic, into a more colloquial article, and then go into Germany[Pg 202] to do the same thing with my German, and then perhaps to remain in Germany studying

German social conditions—and the quality of the German army. It seemed to me that when the term of my exile was over I might return to England and re-enter the army. But all these were very anæmic plans conceived by a tired mind, and I set about carrying them out in a mood of slack lassitude. I got to Paris, and in Paris I threw them all overboard and went to Switzerland.

I remember very clearly how I reached Paris. I arrived about sunset—I suppose at St. Lazare or the Gare du Nord—sent my luggage to the little hotel in the Rue d'Antin where I had taken rooms, and dreading their loneliness decided to go direct to a restaurant and dine. I remember walking out into the streets just as shops and windows and street lamps were beginning to light up, and strolling circuitously through the clear bright stir of the Parisian streets to find a dinner at the Café de la Paix. Some day you will know that peculiar sharp definite excitement of Paris. All cities are exciting, and each I think in a different way. And as I walked down along some boulevard towards the centre of things I saw a woman coming along a side street towards me, a woman with something in her body and something in her carriage that reminded me acutely of Mary. Her face was downcast, and then as we converged she looked up at me, not with the meretricious smile of her class but with a steadfast, friendly look. Her face seemed to me sane and strong. I passed and hesitated. An extraordinary impulse took me. I turned back. I followed this woman across the road and a little way along the opposite pavement. I remember I did that, but I do not remember clearly what was [Pg 203] in my mind at the time; I think it was a vague rush towards the flash of companionship in her eyes. There I had seemed to see the glimmer of a refuge from my desolation. Then came amazement and reaction. I turned about and went on my way, and saw her no more.

But afterwards, later, I went out into the streets of Paris bent upon finding that woman. She had become a hope, a desire.

I looked for her for what seemed a long time, half an hour perhaps or two hours. I went along, peering at the women's faces, through the blazing various lights, the pools of shadowy darkness, the flickering reflections and transient glitter, one of a vast stream of slow-moving adventurous human beings. I crossed streams of traffic, paused at luminous kiosks, became aware of dim rows of faces looking down upon me from above the shining enamel of the omnibuses.... My first intentness upon one person, so that I disregarded any distracting intervention, gave place by insensible degrees to a more general apprehension of the things about me. That original woman became as it were diffused. I began to look at the men and women sitting at the little tables behind the panes of the cafés, and even on the terraces—for the weather was still dry and open. I scrutinized the faces I passed, faces for the most part animated by a sort of

shallow eagerness. Many were ugly, many vile with an intense vulgarity, but some in that throng were pretty, some almost gracious. There was something pathetic and appealing for me in this great sweeping together of people into a little light, into a weak community of desire for joy and eventfulness. There came to me a sense of tolerance, of fellowship, of participation. From an outer[Pg 204] darkness of unhappiness or at least of joylessness, they had all come hither—as I had come.

I was like a creature that slips back again towards some deep waters out of which long since it came, into the light and air. It was as if old forgotten things, prenatal experiences, some magic of ancestral memories, urged me to mingle again with this unsatisfied passion for life about me....

Then suddenly a wave of feeling between self-disgust and fear poured over me. This vortex was drawing me into deep and unknown things.... I hailed a passing *fiacre*, went straight to my little hotel, settled my account with the proprietor, and caught a night train for Switzerland.

All night long my head ached, and I lay awake swaying and jolting and listening to the rhythms of the wheels, Paris clean forgotten so soon as it was left, and my thoughts circling continually about Justin and Philip and Mary and the things I might have said and done.

#### **§ 4**

One day late in February I found myself in Vevey. I had come down with the break-up of the weather from Montana, where I had met some Oxford men I knew and had learned to ski. I had made a few of those vague acquaintances one makes in a winter-sport hotel, but now all these people were going back to England and I was thrown back upon myself once more. I was dull and angry and unhappy still, full of self-reproaches and dreary indignations, and then very much as the sky will[Pg 205] sometimes break surprisingly through storm clouds there began in me a new series of moods. They came to me by surprise. One clear bright afternoon I sat upon the wall that runs along under the limes by the lake shore, envying all these people who were going back to England and work and usefulness. I thought of myself, of my career spoilt, my honor tarnished, my character tested and found wanting. So far as English politics went my prospects had closed for ever. Even after three years it was improbable that I should be considered by the party managers again. And besides, it seemed to me I was a man crippled. My other self, the mate and confirmation of my mind, had gone from me. I was no more than a mutilated man. My life was a thing condemned; I had joined the ranks of loafing, morally-limping, English exiles.

I looked up. The sun was setting, a warm glow fell upon the dissolving mountains of Savoy and upon the shining mirror of the lake. The luminous, tranquil breadth of it caught me and held me. "I am done for." The light upon the lake and upon the mountains, the downward swoop of a bird over the water and something in my heart, gave me the lie.

"What nonsense!" I said, and felt as if some dark cloud that had overshadowed me had been thrust back.

I stared across at Savoy as though that land had spoken. Why should I let all my life be ruled by the blunders and adventures of one short year of adventure? Why should I become the votary of a train of consequences? What had I been dreaming of all this time? Over there were gigantic uplands I had never seen and trodden; and beyond were great plains and cities, and [Pg 206] beyond that the sea, and so on, great spaces and multitudinous things all round about the world. What did the things I had done, the things I had failed to do, the hopes crushed out of me, the tears and the anger, matter to *that*? And in some amazing way this thought so took possession of me that the question seemed also to carry with it the still more startling collateral, what then did they matter to me? "Come out of yourself," said the mountains and all the beauty of the world. "Whatever you have done or suffered is nothing to the inexhaustible offer life makes you. We are you, just as much as the past is you."

It was as though I had forgotten and now remembered how infinitely multitudinous life can be. It was as if Tarville's neglected words to me had sprouted in the obscurity of my mind and borne fruit....

I cannot explain how that mood came, I am doing my best to describe it, and it is not easy even to describe. And I fear that to you who will have had I hope no experience of such shadows as I had passed through, it is impossible to convey its immense elation.... I remember once I came in a boat out of the caves of Han after two hours in the darkness, and there was the common daylight that is nothing wonderful at all, and its brightness ahead there seemed like trumpets and cheering, like waving flags and like the sunrise. And so it was with this mood of my release.

There is a phrase of Peter E. Noyes', that queer echo of Emerson whom people are always rediscovering and forgetting again, a phrase that sticks in my mind,—"Every living soul is heir to an empire and has fallen into a pit." It's an image wonderfully apt to describe my change of [Pg 207] mental attitude, and render the contrast between those intensely passionate personal entanglements that had held me tight and that wide estate of life that spreads about us all, open to all of us in just the measure that we can scramble out of our individual selves—to a more general self. I seemed to be

hanging there at the brim of my stale and painful den, staring at the unthought-of greatness of the world, with an unhoped-for wind out of heaven blowing upon my face.

I suppose the intention of the phrase "finding salvation," as religious people use it, is very much this experience. If it is not the same thing it is something very closely akin. It is as if someone were scrambling out of a pit into a largeness—a largeness that is attainable by every man just in the measure that he realizes it is there.

I leave these fine discriminations to the theologian. I know that I went back to my hotel in Vevey with my mind healed, with my will restored to me, and my ideas running together into plans. And I know that I had come out that day a broken and apathetic man.

## § 5

The next day my mood declined again; it was as if that light, that sense of release that had shone so clear and strong in my mind, had escaped me. I sought earnestly to recover it. But I could not do so, and I found my old narrow preoccupations calling urgently to me again.

I thought that perhaps I might get back those intimations of outlook and relief if I clambered alone into some[Pg 208] high solitude and thought. I had a crude attractive vision of myself far above the heat and noise, communing with the sky. It was the worst season for climbing, and on the spur of the moment I could do nothing but get up the Rochers de Naye on the wrong side, and try and find some eyrie that was neither slippery nor wet. I did not succeed. In one place I slipped down a wet bank for some yards and held at last by a root; if I had slipped much further I should not be writing here now; and I came back a very weary and bruised climber, without any meditation....

Three nights after when I was in bed I became very lucidly awake—it must have been about two or three in the morning—and the vision of life returned to me, with that same effect of enlargement and illumination. It was as if the great stillness that is behind and above and around the world of sense did in some way communicate with me. It bade me rouse my spirit and go on with the thoughts and purposes that had been stirring and proliferating in my mind when I had returned to England from the Cape. "Dismiss your passion." But I urged that that I could not do; there was the thought of Mary subjugated and weeping, the smarting memory of injury and defeat, the stains of subterfuge and discovery, the aching separation. No matter, the stillness answered, in the end all that is just to temper you for your greater uses.... I cannot forget, I insisted. Do not forget, but for the present this leads you no whither; this

chapter has ended; dismiss it and turn to those other things. You are not only Stephen Stratton who fell into adultery; in these silences he is a little thing and far away; here and with me you are Man—Everyman—in this round world in [Pg 209] which your lot has fallen. But Mary, I urged, to forget Mary is a treason, an ingratitude, seeing that she loved me. But the stillness did not command me to forget her, but only to turn my face now to the great work that lies before mankind. And that work? That work, so far as your share goes, is first to understand, to solve, and then to achieve, to work out in the measure of yourself that torment of pity and that desire for order and justice which together saturate your soul. Go about the world, embue yourself with life, make use of that confusedly striving brain that I have lifted so painfully out of the deadness of matter....

"But who are you?" I cried out suddenly to the night. "Who are you?"

I sat up on the side of my bed. The dawn was just beginning to break up the featureless blackness of the small hours. "This is just some odd corner of my brain," I said....

Yet— How did I come to have this odd corner in my brain? What *is* this lucid stillness?...

## § 6

Let me tell you rather of my thoughts than of my moods, for there at least one comes to something with a form that may be drawn and a substance that is measurable; one ceases to struggle with things indefinable and the effort to convey by metaphors and imaginary voices things that are at once bodiless and soundless and lightless and yet infinitely close and real. And moreover with that mysterious and subtle change of heart in me there came [Pg 210] also a change in the quality and range of my ideas. I seemed to rise out of a tangle of immediacies and misconceptions, to see more largely and more freely than I had ever done before.

I have told how in my muddled and wounded phase I had snatched at the dull project of improving my languages, and under the cloak of that spying a little upon German military arrangements. Now my mind set such petty romanticism on one side. It had recovered the strength to look on the whole of life and on my place in it. It could resume the ideas that our storm of passion had for a time thrust into the background of my thoughts. I took up again all those broad generalizations that had arisen out of my experiences in South Africa, and which I had been not so much fitting into as forcing into the formulæ of English politics; I recalled my disillusionment with British Imperialism, my vague but elaborating apprehension of a profound conflict between enterprise and labor, a profound conflict between the life of the farm and the life of

trade and finance and wholesale production, as being something far truer to realities than any of the issues of party and patriotism upon which men were spending their lives. So far as this rivalry between England and Germany, which so obsessed the imagination of Europe, went, I found that any faith I may have had in its importance had simply fallen out of my mind. As a danger to civilization, as a conceivable source of destruction and delay, it was a monstrous business enough, but that in the long run it mattered how or when they fought and which won I did not believe. In the development of mankind the thing was of far less importance than the struggle for Flanders or the wars of France and [Pg 211] Burgundy. I was already coming to see Europe as no more than the dog's-eared corner of the page of history,—like most Europeans I had thought it the page—and my recovering mind was eager and open to see the world beyond and form some conception of the greater forces that lay outside our insularities. What is humanity as a whole doing? What is the nature of the world process of which I am a part? Why should I drift from cradle to grave wearing the blinkers of my time and nationality, a mere denizen of Christendom, accepting its beliefs, its stale antagonisms, its unreal purposes? That perhaps had been tolerable while I was still an accepted member of the little world into which my lot had fallen, but now that I was thrust out its absurdity glared. For me the alternative was to be a world-man or no man. I had seemed sinking towards the latter: now I faced about and began to make myself what I still seek to make myself to-day, a son of mankind, a conscious part of that web of effort and perplexity which wraps about our globe....

All this I say came into my mind as if it were a part of that recovery of my mind from its first passionate abjection. And it seemed a simple and obvious part of the same conversion to realize that I was ignorant and narrow, and that, too, in a world which is suffering like a beast in a slime pit by reason of ignorance and narrowness of outlook, and that it was my manifest work and purpose to make myself less ignorant and to see and learn with all my being. It came to me as a clear duty that I should get out of the land of hotels and leisure and go seeking the facts and clues to human inter-relationship nearer the earthy roots of things, and I turned my thoughts to India and China, those vast enigmas of human [Pg 212]accumulation, in a spirit extraordinarily like that of some mystic who receives a call. I felt I must go to Asia and from Asia perhaps round the world. But it was the greatness of Asia commanded me. I wanted to see the East not as a spectacle but as the simmering vat in which the greater destiny of man brews and brews....

## § 7

It was necessary to tell my father of my intentions. I made numerous beginnings. I tore up several letters and quarrelled bitterly with the hotel pens. At first I tried to describe

the change that had happened to my mind, to give him some impression of the new light, the release that had come to me. But how difficult this present world is with its tainted and poisoned phrases and its tangled misunderstandings! Here was I writing for the first time in my life of something essentially religious and writing it to him whose profession was religion, and I could find no words to convey my meaning to him that did not seem to me fraught with the possibilities of misinterpretation. One evening I made a desperate resolve to let myself go, and scrawled my heart out to him as it seemed that night, a strange, long letter. It was one of the profoundest regrets that came to me when I saw him dead last winter that I did not risk his misunderstanding and post that letter. But when I re-read it in the next morning's daylight it seemed to me so rhetorical, so full of—what shall I call it?—spiritual bombast, it so caricatured and reflected upon the deep feelings sustaining me, that I could not post it for shamefacedness,[Pg 213] and I tore it up into little pieces and sent instead the briefest of notes.

"I am doing no good here in Switzerland," I wrote. "Would you mind if I went east? I want to see something of the world outside Europe. I have a fancy I may find something to do beyond there. Of course, it will cost rather more than my present allowance. I will do my best to economize. Don't bother if it bothers you—I've been bother enough to you...."

He replied still more compactly. "By all means. I will send you some circular notes, Poste Restante, Rome. That will be on your way. Good wishes to you, Stephen. I'm glad you want to go east instead of just staying in Switzerland."

I sit here now and wonder, little son, what he thought, what he supposed, what he understood.

I loved my father, and I began to perceive he loved me wonderfully. I can imagine no man I would have sooner had for a priest than him; all priestcraft lays hands if it can, and with an excellent wisdom, upon the titles and dignity of fatherhood; and yet here am I left to guessing—I do not know whether my father ever worshipped, whether he ever prayed with his heart bared to God. There are times when the inexpressiveness of life comes near to overwhelming me, when it seems to me we are all asleep or entranced, and but a little way above the still cows who stand munching slowly in a field. Why couldn't we and why didn't we talk together?... We fear bathos too much, are shyly decent to the pitch of mania. We have neither the courage of our bodies nor of our souls....

I went almost immediately to Rome. I stayed in[Pg 214] Rome some days, getting together an outfit, and incidentally seeing that greater city of the dead in whose

embrace the modern city lies. I was now becoming interested in things outside my grooves, though my grooves were still there, deep and receptive, and I went about the place at last almost eagerly, tracing the outlines of that great departed city on whose colossal bones the churches and palaces of the middle ages cluster like weeds in the spaces and ruins of a magnificent garden. I found myself one day in the Forum, thinking of that imperialism that had built the Basilica of Julius Cæsar, and comparing its cramped vestiges with that vaster second administrative effort which has left the world the monstrous arches of Constantine. I sat down over against these last among the ruins of the Vestals' House, and mused on that later reconstruction when the Empire, with its science aborted and its literature and philosophy shrivelled to nothing, its social fabric ruined by the extravagances of financial adventure and its honor and patriotism altogether dead, united itself, in a desperate effort to continue, with all that was most bickeringly intolerant and destructive in Christianity—only to achieve one common vast decay. All Europe to this day is little more than the sequel to that failure. It is the Roman Empire in disintegration. The very churches whose domes rise to the northward of the ancient remains are built of looted stones and look like parasitic and fungoid growths, and the tourists stream through those spaces day by day, stare at the marble fragments, the arches, the fallen carvings and rich capitals, with nothing greater in their minds and nothing clearer....

I discovered I was putting all this into the form of a [Pg 215] letter to Mary. I was writing to her in my mind, as many people talk to themselves. And I remember that I wandered upon the Palatine Hill musing over the idea of writing a long letter to her, a long continuous letter to her, a sort of diary of impressions and ideas, that somewhen, years ahead, I might be able to put into her hands.

One does not carry out such an idea into reality; it is so much easier to leave the letter imagined and unwritten if there lives but little hope of its delivery; yet for many years I kept up an impalpable correspondence in my thoughts, a stream of expression to which no answer came—until at last the habits of public writing and the gathering interests of a new rôle in life diverted it to other ends.

## § 8

One morning on the way from Brindisi to Egypt I came up on deck at dawn because my mind was restless and I could not sleep. Another solitary passenger was already up, so intently watching a pink-lit rocky coast-line away to the north of us that for a time he did not observe me.

"That's Crete," he said, when at last he became aware of me close at hand.

"Crete!" said I.

"Yes," he said, "Crete."

He came nearer to me. "That, sir," he said with a challenging emphasis, "is the most wonderful island I've ever yet set eyes on,—quite the most wonderful."

"Five thousand years ago," he remarked after a pause that seemed to me to be calculated, "they were building palaces there, better than the best we can build to-day.[Pg 216] And things—like modern things. They had bathrooms there, beautifully fitted bathrooms—and admirable sanitation—admirable. Practically—American. They had better artists to serve them than your King Edward has, why! Minos would have laughed or screamed at all that Windsor furniture. And the things they made of gold, sir—you couldn't get them done anywhere to-day. Not for any money. There was a Go about them.... They had a kind of writing, too—before the Phœnicians. No man can read it now, and there it is. Fifty centuries ago it was; and to-day—They grow oranges and lemons. And they riot.... Everything else gone.... It's as if men struggled up to a certain pitch and then—grew tired.... All this Mediterranean; it's a tired sea...."

That was the beginning of a curious conversation. He was an American, a year or so younger than myself, going, he said, "to look at Egypt."

"In our country," he explained, "we're apt to forget all these worked-out regions. Too apt. We don't get our perspectives. We think the whole blessed world is one everlasting boom. It hit me first down in Yucatan that that wasn't so. Why! the world's littered with the remains of booms and swaggering beginnings. Americanism!—there's always been Americanism. This Mediterranean is just a Museum of old Americas. I guess Tyre and Sidon thought they were licking creation all the time. It's set me thinking. What's *really* going on? Why—anywhere,—you're running about among ruins—anywhere. And ruins of something just as good as anything we're doing to-day. Better—in some ways. It takes the heart out of you...."

It was Gidding, who is now my close friend and ally.[Pg 217] I remember very vividly the flavor of morning freshness as we watched Crete pass away northward and I listened to his talk.

"I was coming out of New York Harbor a month ago and looking back at the skyscrapers," he said, "and suddenly it hit me in the mind;—'That's just the next ruin,' I thought."

I remember that much of our first talk, but the rest of it now is indistinct.

We had however struck up an acquaintance, we were both alone, and until he left me on his way to Abydos we seem now to have been conversing all the time. And almost all the time we were discussing human destiny and the causes of effort and decay, and whether the last few ascendant centuries the world has seen have in them anything more persistent than the countless beginnings that have gone before.

"There's Science," said I a little doubtfully.

"At Cnossus there they had Dædalus, sir, fifty centuries ago. Dædalus! He was an F.R.S. all right. I haven't a doubt he flew. If they hadn't steel they had brass. We're too conceited about our little modern things."

## § 9

I found something very striking and dramatic in the passage from Europe to Asia. One steams slowly through a desert that comes up close to the ship; the sand stretches away, hillock and mound beyond hillock and mound; one sees camels in the offing stringing out to some ancient destination; one is manifestly passing across a barrier,—the[Pg 218] canal has changed nothing of that. Suez is a first dab of tumultuous Orientalism, noisy and vivid. And then, after that gleam of turmoil, one opens out into the lonely dark blue waters of the Red Sea. Right and left the shore is a bitter, sun-scorched desolation; eastward frowns a great rampart of lowering purple mountains towering up to Sinai. It is like no European landscape. The boat goes slowly as if uncharted dangers lurked ahead. It is a new world with a new atmosphere. Then comes wave upon wave of ever more sultry air, and the punkahs begin to swing and the white clothes appear. Everyone casts off Europe, assumes an Asiatic livery. The very sun, rushing up angrily and abruptly after a heated night, is unfamiliar, an Asiatic sun.

And so one goes down that reef-fringed waterway to Aden; it is studded with lonely-looking lighthouses that burn, it seems, untended, and sometimes in their melancholy isolation swing great rhythmic arms of light. And then, land and the last lateen sails of Aden vanishing together, one stands out into the hot thundery monotonies of the Indian Ocean; into imprisonment in a blue horizon across whose Titan ring the engines seem to throb in vain. How one paces the ship day by day, and eats and dozes and eats again, and gossips inanely and thanks Heaven even for a flight of flying fish or a trail of smoke from over the horizon to take one's mind a little out of one's oily quivering prison!... A hot portentous delay; a sinister significant pause; that is the voyage from Europe to India still.

I suppose by the time that you will go to India all this prelude will have vanished, you will rattle through in a train-de-luxe from Calais, by way of Baku or [Pg 219]Constantinople; you will have none of this effect of a deliberate sullen approach across limitless miles of sea. But that is how I went to India. Everything seemed to expand; I was coming out of the frequent landfalls, the neighborly intimacies and neighborly conflicts of the Mediterranean into something remoter; into larger seas and greater lands, rarer communications and a vaster future....

To go from Europe to Asia is like going from Norway to Russia, from something slight and "advanced" to something massive and portentous. I felt that nearly nine years ago; to-day all Asia seems moving forward to justify my feelings....

And I remember too that as I went down the Red Sea and again in the Indian Ocean I had a nearly intolerable passion of loneliness. A wound may heal and still leave pain. I was coming out of Europe as one comes out of a familiar house into something larger and stranger, I seemed but a little speck of life, and behind me, far away and silent and receding, was the one other being to whom my thoughts were open. It seemed very cruel to me that I could not write to her.

Such moods were to come to me again and again, and particularly during the inactivities of voyages and in large empty spaces and at night when I was weary. At other times I could banish and overcome them by forcing myself to be busy and by going to see novel and moving things.

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[Pg 220]

## **CHAPTER THE EIGHTH**

### **This Swarming Business of Mankind**

#### **§ 1**

I do not think I could now arrange into a consecutive history my travellings, my goings and returnings in my wandering effort to see and comprehend the world. And certainly even if I could arrange my facts I should still be at a loss to tell of the growth of ideas that is so much more important than any facts, to trace the increasing light to its innumerable sources, to a chink here, to a glowing reflection there, to a leap of burning light from some long inert darkness close at hand. But steadily the light grew, and this vast world of man, in which our world, little son, is the world of a limited class in a small island, began to take on definite forms, to betray broad universal movements; what seemed at first chaotic, a drift and tangle of passions, traditions,

foolish ideas, blundering hostilities, careless tolerances, became confusedly systematic, showed something persistent and generalized at work among its multitudinous perplexity.

I wonder now if I can put before you very briefly the main generalizations that were growing up in my mind during my exile, the simplified picture into which I translated the billions of sights and sounds and—smells, for [Pg 221] every part of the world has its distinctive olfactory palette as much as its palette of colors—that rained daily and nightly upon my mind.

Before, my eyes again as I sit here in this quiet walled French garden, the great space before the Jumna Musjid at Delhi reappears, as I saw it in the evening stillness against a glowing sky of gold, and the memory of countless worshippers within, praying with a devotion no European displays. And then comes a memory of that long reef of staircases and temples and buildings, the ghats of Benares, in the blazing morning sun, swarming with a vast multitude of multicolored people and the water also swarming with brown bodies. It has the colors of a bed of extravagantly splendid flowers and the light that is Indian alone. Even as I sit here these places are alive with happening. It is just past midday here; at this moment the sun sinks in the skies of India, the Jumna Musjid flushes again with the glow of sunset, the smoke of evening fires streams heavenward against its subtle lines, and upon those steps at Benares that come down the hillside between the conquering mosque of Aurangzeb and the shining mirror of the Ganges a thousand silent seated figures fall into meditation. And other memories recur and struggle with one another; the crowded river-streets of Canton, the rafts and houseboats and junks innumerable, riding over inky water, begin now to twinkle with a thousand lights. They are ablaze in Osaka and Yokohama and Tokio, and the swarming staircase streets of Hong Kong glitter with a wicked activity now that night has come. I flash a glimpse of Burmese temples, of villages in Java, of the sombre purple masses of the walls of the Tartar city at Pekin with squat [Pg 222] pagoda-guarded gates. How those great outlines lowered at me in the twilight, full of fresh memories and grim anticipations of baseness and violence and bloodshed! I sit here recalling it—feeling it all out beyond the trellised vine-clad wall that bounds my physical vision.... Vast crowded world that I have seen! going from point to point seeking for clues, for generalities, until at last it seems to me that there emerges—something understandable.

I think I have got something understandable out of it all.

What a fantastically courageous thing is this mind of ours! My thoughts seem to me at once presumptuous and inevitable. I do not know why it is that I should dare, that any

of us should dream of this attempt to comprehend. But we who think are everyone impelled to this amazing effort to get it all together into some simple generality. It is not reason but a deep-seated instinct that draws our intelligence towards explanations, that sets us perpetually seeking laws, seeking statements that will fit into infinite, incessantly interweaving complexities, and be true of them all! There is I perceive a valiant and magnificent stupidity about the human mind, a disregard of disproportion and insufficiency—like the ferret which will turn from the leveret it has seized to attack even man if he should interfere. By these desperate feats of thinking it is that our species has achieved its victories. By them it survives. By them it must stand the test of ultimate survival. Some forgotten man in our ancestry—for every begetting man alive was in my individual ancestry and yours three thousand years ago—first dared to think of the world as round,—an astounding temerity. He rolled up the rivers and mountains, the[Pg 223] forests and plains and broad horizons that stretched beyond his ken, that seemed to commonsense to go on certainly for ever, into a ball, into a little ball "like an orange." Magnificent feat of the imagination, outdoing Thor's deep draught of the sea! And once he had done it, all do it and no one falters at the deed. You are not yet seven as I write and already you are serenely aware that you live upon a sphere. And in much the same manner it is that we, who are sociologists and economists, publicists and philosophers and what not, are attempting now to roll up the vast world of facts which concern human intercourse, the whole indeed of history and archæology, into some similar imaginable and manageable shape, that presently everyone will be able to grasp.

I suppose there was a time when nobody bothered at all about the shape of the earth, when nobody had even had the idea that the earth could be conceived as having a shape, and similarly it is true that it is only in recent centuries that people have been able to suppose that there was a shape to human history. It is indeed not much more than a century since there was any real emergence from theological assumptions and pure romanticism and accidentalism in these matters. Old Adam Smith it was, probing away at the roots of economics, who set going the construction of ampler propositions. From him spring all those new interpretations which have changed the writing of history from a record of dramatic reigns and wars and crises to an analysis of economic forces. How impossible it would be for anyone now to write that great chapter of Gibbon's in which he sweeps together into one contempt the history of sixty Emperors and six hundred years of time. His note of weariness and futility[Pg 224] vanishes directly one's vision penetrates the immediate surface. Those Heraclians and Isaurians and Comneni were not history, a schoolboy nowadays

knows that their record is not history, knows them for the mere scum upon the stream.

And still to-day we have our great interpretations to make. Ours is a time of guesses, theories and provisional generalizations. Our phase corresponds to the cosmography that was still a little divided between discs and domes and spheres and cosmic eggs; that was still a thousand years from measuring and weighing a planet. For a long time my mind hovered about the stimulating theories of Socialism and particularly about those more systematic forms of Socialist teaching that centre about Karl Marx. He rose quite naturally out of those early economists who saw all the world in terms of production and saving. He was a necessary step for me at least, on the way to understanding. For a time I did so shape the world in my mind that it seemed to me no more than a vast enterprise for the organization and exploitation of labor. For a time I thought human life was essentially a labor problem, that working and controlling work and lending and selling and "speculating" made the essential substance of human life, over which the forms of politics ran as the stripes of a tiger's skin run and bend over its living muscles. I followed my period in thinking that. You will find in Ferrero's "Roman Decline," which was published early in this century, and which waits for you in the library, almost exactly the method of interpretation that was recommending itself to me in 1904 and 1905.

Well, the labor problem concerns a great—*substantial*, shall I say?—in human society. It is only I think the [Pg 225] basis and matter of society, not its shape and life and reality, but it had to be apprehended before I could get on to more actual things. Insensibly the idea that contemporary political forms mattered very fundamentally to men, was fading out of my mind. The British Empire and the German Empire, the Unity of Italy, and Anglo-Saxon ascendancy, the Yellow Peril and all the other vast phantoms of the World-politician's mythology were fading out of my mind in those years, as the Olympic cosmogony must have faded from the mind of some inquiring Greek philosopher in the days of Heraclitus. And I revised my history altogether in the new light. The world had ceased to be chaotic in my mind; it had become a vast if as yet a quite inconclusive drama between employer and employed.

It makes a wonderful history, this history of mankind as a history of Labor, as a history of the perpetual attempts of an intelligent minority to get things done by other people. It does not explain how that aggression of the minority arose nor does it give any conception of a primordial society which corresponds with our knowledge of the realities of primitive communities. One begins rather in the air with a human society that sells and barter and sustains contracts and permits land to be privately owned, and having as hastily as possible got away from that difficulty of beginnings, having

ignored the large areas of the world which remain under a pacific and unprogressive agriculture to this day, the rest of the story becomes extremely convincing and illuminating. It does indeed give a sustaining explanation to a large part of recorded history, this generalization about the proclivity of able and energetic people to make other[Pg 226] people do things. One ignores what is being done as if that mattered nothing, and concentrates upon the use and enslavement of men.

One sees that enslavement to labor progressing from crude directness to the most subtly indirect methods. The first expedient of enterprise was the sword and then the whip, and still there are remote and ugly corners of the world, in the Mexican Valle Nazionale or in Portuguese South Africa, where the whip whistles still and the threat of great suffering and death follows hard upon the reluctant toiler. But the larger part of our modern slavery is past the stage of brand and whip. We have fallen into methods at once more subtle and more effective. We stand benevolently in front of our fellow man, offering, almost as if it were food and drink and shelter and love, the work we want him to do; and behind him, we are acutely aware, is necessity, sometimes quite of our making, as when we drive him to work by a hut-tax or a poll tax or a rent, that obliges him to earn money, and sometimes not so obviously of our making, sometimes so little of our making that it is easy to believe we have no power to remove it. Instead of flicking the whip, we groan at last with Harriet Martineau at the inexorable laws of political economy that condemn us to comfort and direction, and those others to toil and hardship and indignity....

And through the consideration of these latter later aspects it was that I came at last to those subtler problems of tacit self-deception, of imperfect and unwilling apprehension, of innocently assumed advantages, of wilfully disregarded unfairness; and also to all those other problems of motive, those forgotten questions of why we make[Pg 227] others work for us long after our personal needs are satisfied, why men aggrandize and undertake, which gradually have become in my mind the essential problems of human relationship, replacing the crude problems of labor altogether in that position, making *them* at last only questions of contrivance and management on the way to greater ends.

I have come to believe now that labor problems are problems merely by the way. They have played their part in a greater scheme. This phase of expropriation and enslavement, this half designed and half unconscious driving of the duller by the clever, of the pacific by the bolder, of those with weak appetites and imaginations by those with stronger appetites and imaginations, has been a necessary phase in human development. With my innate passionate desire to find the whole world purposeful, I cannot but believe that. But however necessary it has been, it is

necessary no longer. Strangest of saviors, there rises over the conflicts of mankind the glittering angular promise of the machine. There is no longer any need for slavery, open or disguised. We do not need slaves nor toilers nor mere laborers any more; they are no longer essential to a civilization. Man has ridden on his brother man out of the need of servitude. He struggles through to a new phase, a phase of release, a phase when leisure and an unexampled freedom is possible to every human being. Is possible. And it is there one halts seeing that splendid possibility of aspiration and creation before mankind—and seeing mankind for the most part still downcast, quite unaware or incredulous, following the old rounds, the grooves of ancient and superseded assumptions and subjections....

[Pg 228]

But here I will not trace in any detail the growth of my conviction that the ancient and heavy obligation to work hard and continually throughout life has already slipped from man's shoulders. Suffice it that now I conceive of the task before mankind as a task essentially of rearrangement, as a problem in relationships, extremely complex and difficult indeed, but credibly solvable. During my Indian and Chinese journey I was still at the Marxist stage. I went about the east looking at labor, watching its organization and direction, seeing great interests and enterprises replace the diffused life of an earlier phase; the disputes and discussions in the Transvaal which had first opened my mind to these questions came back to me, and steadily I lost my interest in those mere political and national issues with their paraphernalia of kings and flags and governments and parties that had hitherto blinded me to these more fundamental interactions.

## § 2

It happened that in Bombay circumstances conspired to bring the crude facts of labor enslavement vividly before me. I found a vigorous agitation raging in the English press against the horrible sweating that was going on in the cotton mills, I met the journalist most intimately concerned in the business on my second day in India, and before a week was out I was hard at work getting up the question and preparing a memorandum with him on the possibility of immediate legislative intervention. The very name of Bombay, which for most people recalls a spacious and dignified landfall, lateen sails, green islands[Pg 229] and jutting precipices, a long city of trees and buildings like a bright and various breakwater between the great harbor and the sea, and then exquisite little temples, painted bullock carriages, Towers of Silence, Parsis, and an amazingly kaleidoscopic population,—is for me a reminder of narrow, foetid, plague-stricken streets and tall insanitary tenement-houses packed and dripping with

humanity, and of terrible throbbing factories working far into the night, blazing with electric light against the velvet-black night-sky of India, damp with the steam-clouds that are maintained to moisten the thread, and swarming with emaciated overworked brown children—for even the adults, spare and small, in those mills seem children to a western eye.

I plunged into this heated dreadful business with a passionate interest and went back to the Yacht Club only when the craving for air and a good bath and clean clothes and space and respect became unendurable. I waded deep in labor, in this process of consuming humanity for gain, chasing my facts through throbbing quivering sheds reeking of sweat and excrement under the tall black-smoking chimneys,—chasing them in very truth, because when we came prying into the mills after the hour when child-labor should cease, there would be a shrill whistle, a patter of feet and a cuffing and hiding of the naked little creatures we were trying to rescue. They would be hidden under rugs, in boxes, in the most impossible places, and we dragged them out scared and lying. Many of them were perhaps seven years old at most; and the adults—men and women of fourteen that is to say—we could not touch at all, and they worked in that Indian heat, in a noisome air drenched with steam for [Pg 230] fourteen and fifteen hours a day. And essential to that general impression is a memory of a slim Parsi mill-manager luminously explaining the inherited passion for toil in the Indian weaver, and a certain bulky Hindu with a lemon-yellow turban and a strip of plump brown stomach showing between his clothes, who was doing very well, he said, with two wives and five children in the mills.

That is my Bombay, that and the columns of crossed circles marking plague cases upon the corners of houses and a peculiar acrid smell, and the polychromatic stir of crowded narrow streets between cliffs of architecture with carved timbers and heavy ornamentations, into which the sun strikes obliquely and lights a thousand vivid hues....

Bombay, the gateway of what silly people were still calling in those days "the immemorial East," Bombay, which is newer than Boston or New York, Bombay which has grown beneath the Englishman's shadow out of a Portuguese fort in the last two hundred years....

### § 3

I came out of these dark corners presently into the sunblaze of India. I was now intensely interested in the whole question of employment and engaged in preparing matter for my first book, "Enterprise and India," and therein you may read how I went first to Assam and then down to Ceylon following up this perplexing and complicated

business of human enslavement to toil, exercised by this great spectacle of human labor, and at once attracted by and stimulated by and dissatisfied with those [Pg 231] socialist generalizations that would make all this vast harsh spectacle of productive enterprise a kind of wickedness and outrage upon humanity. And behind and about the things I was looking for were other things for which I was not looking, that slowly came into and qualified the problem. It dawned upon me by degrees that India is not so much one country as a vast spectacle of human development at every stage, in infinite variety. One ranges between naked savages and the most sophisticated of human beings. I pursued my enquiries about great modern enterprises, about railway labor, canal labor, tea-planting, across vast stretches of country where men still lived, illiterate, agricultural, unprogressive and simple, as men lived before the first stirrings of recorded history. One sees by the tanks of those mud-built villages groups of women with brass vessels who are identical in pose and figure and quality with the women modelled in Tanagra figures, and the droning wall-wheel is the same that irrigated the fields of ancient Greece, and the crops and beasts and all the life is as it was in Greece and Italy, Phœnicia and Judea before the very dawn of history.

By imperceptible degrees I came to realize that this matter of expropriation and enslavement and control, which bulks so vastly upon the modern consciousness, which the Socialists treat as though it was the comprehensive present process of mankind, is no more than one aspect of an overlife that struggles out of a massive ancient and traditional common way of living, struggles out again and again—blindly and always so far with a disorderly insuccess....

I began to see in their proper proportion the vast enduring normal human existence, the peasant's agricultural [Pg 232] life, unlettered, laborious and essentially unchanging on the one hand, and on the other those excrescences of multitudinous city aggregation, those stormy excesses of productive energy that flare up out of that life, establish for a time great unstable strangenesses of human living, palaces, cities, roads, empires, literatures, and then totter and fall back again into ruin. In India even more than about the Mediterranean all this is spectacular. There the peasant goes about his work according to the usage of fifty thousand years. He has a primitive version of religion, a moral tradition, a social usage, closely adapted by countless years of trial and survival to his needs, and the whole land is littered with the vestiges and abandoned material of those newer, bolder, more experimental beginnings, beginnings that merely began.

It was when I was going through the panther-haunted palaces of Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri that I first felt how tremendously the ruins of the past may face towards the

future; the thing there is like a frozen wave that rose and never broke; and once I had caught that light upon things, I found the same quality in all the ruins I saw, in Amber and Vijayanagar and Chitor, and in all that I have seen or heard of, in ancient Rome and ancient Verona, in Pæstum and Cnossus and ancient Athens. None of these places was ever really finished and done with; the Basilicas of Cæsar and Constantine just as much as the baths and galleries and halls of audience at Fatehpur Sikri express not ends achieved but thwarted intentions of permanence. They embody repulse and rejection. They are trials, abandoned trials, towards ends vaguely apprehended, ends felt rather than known. Even so was I moved by the Bruges-like emptinesses of Pekin, in the vast pretensions[Pg 233] of its Forbidden City, which are like a cry, long sustained, that at last dies away in a wail. I saw the place in 1905 in that slack interval after the European looting and before the great awakening that followed the Russo-Japanese war. Pekin in a century or so may be added in its turn to the list of abandoned endeavors. Insensibly the sceptre passes.... Nearer home than any of these places have I imagined the same thing; in Paris it seemed to me I felt the first chill shadow of that same arrest, that impalpable ebb and cessation at the very crest of things, that voice which opposes to all the hasty ambitions and gathering eagerness of men: "It is not here, it is not yet."

Only the other day as I came back from Paris to this quiet place and walked across the fields from the railway station to this house, I saw an old woman, a grandmother, a bent old crone with two children playing about her as she cut grass by the wayside, and she cut it, except that her sickle was steel, exactly as old women were cutting grass before there was writing, before the dawn of history, before men laid the first stones one upon the other of the first city that ever became a ruin....

You see Civilization has never yet existed, it has only continually and obstinately attempted to be. Our Civilization is but the indistinct twilight before the dawn. It is still only a confused attempt, a flourish out of barbarism, and the normal life of men, the toiling earthy life of the field and the byre, goes on still like a stream that at once supports and carries to destruction the experimental ships of some still imperfect inventor. India gives it all from first to last, and now the modern movement, the latest half-conscious struggle of the New Thing in mankind, throws up Bombay and Calcutta, vast feverish pustules[Pg 234] upon the face of the peninsula, bridges the sacred rivers with hideous iron lattice-work and smears the sky of the dusty ruin-girdled city of Delhi,—each ruin is the vestige of an empire,—with the black smoke of factory chimneys.

Altogether scattered over that sun-burnt plain there are the remains of five or six extinguished Delhis, that played their dramas of frustration before the Delhi of the

Great Mogul. This present phase of human living—its symbol at Delhi is now, I suppose, a scaffold-bristling pile of neo-Georgian building—is the latest of the constructive synthetic efforts to make a newer and fuller life for mankind. Who dares call it the last? I question myself constantly whether this life we live to-day, whether that too, is more than a trial of these blind constructive forces, more universal perhaps, more powerful perhaps than any predecessor but still a trial, to litter the world with rusting material when the phase of recession recurs.

But yet I can never quite think that is so. This time, surely, it is different. This time may indeed be the beginning of a permanent change; this time there are new elements, new methods and a new spirit at work upon construction that the world has never known before. Mankind may be now in the dawn of a fresh phase of living altogether. It is possible. The forces of construction are proportionally gigantic. There was never so much clear and critical thought in the world as there is now, never so large a body of generally accessible knowledge and suggestion, never anything like the same breadth of outlook, the same universality of imaginative freedom. That is so in spite of infinite turmoil and confusion. Moreover the effort now is less concentrated, less dramatic. There is no one vital center to the modern[Pg 235] movement which disaster can strike or decay undermine. If Paris or New York slacken and grow dull and materialist, if Berlin and London conspire for a mutual destruction, Tokio or Baku or Valparaiso or Christiania or Smyrna or Delhi will shelter and continue the onward impetus.

And this time too it is not any one person, any one dynasty, any one cult or race which carries our destiny. Human thought has begun to free itself from individual entanglements and dramatic necessities and accidental standards. It becomes a collective mind, a collective will towards achievement, greater than individuals or cities or kingdoms or peoples, a mind and will to which we all contribute and which none of us may command nor compromise by our private errors. It ceases to be aristocratic; it detaches itself from persons and takes possession of us all. We are involved as it grows free and dominant, we find ourselves, in spite of ourselves, in spite of quarrels and jealousies and conflicts, helping and serving in the making of a new world-city, a new greater State above our legal States, in which all human life becomes a splendid enterprise, free and beautiful, whose aptest symbol in all our world is a huge Gothic Cathedral lit to flame by the sun, whose scheme is the towering conquest of the universe, whose every little detail is the wrought-out effort of a human soul....

Such were the ideas that grew together in my mind as I went about India and the East, across those vast sunlit plains, where men and women still toil in their dusty fields for a harsh living and live in doorless hovels on floors of trampled cow-dung, persecuted

by a hundred hostile beasts and parasites, caught and eaten by tigers and panthers as cats eat mice, and grievously afflicted by [Pg 236] periodic famine and pestilence, even as men and women lived before the dawn of history, for untold centuries, for hundreds of thousands of years.

#### § 4

How strange we English seem in India, a little scattered garrison. Are we anything more than accidental, anything more than the messenger-boy who has brought the impetus of the new effort towards civilization through the gates of the East? Are we makers or just a means, casually taken up and used by the great forces of God?

I do not know, I have never been able to tell. I have never been able to decide whether we are the greatest or the dullest of peoples.

I think we are an imaginative people with an imagination at once gigantic, heroic and shy, and also we are a strangely restrained and disciplined people who are yet neither subdued nor subordinated.... These are flat contradictions to state, and yet how else can one render the paradox of the English character and this spectacle of a handful of mute, snobbish, not obviously clever and quite obviously ill-educated men, holding together kingdoms, tongues and races, three hundred millions of them, in a restless fermenting peace? Again and again in India I would find myself in little circles of the official English, -supercilious, pretentious, conventional, carefully "turned out" people, living gawkily, thinking gawkily, talking nothing but sport and gossip, relaxing at rare intervals into sentimentality and levity as mean as a banjo tune, and a kind of despairful disgust would engulf me. And [Pg 237] then in some man's work, in some huge irrigation scheme, some feat of strategic foresight, some simple, penetrating realization of deep-lying things, I would find an effect, as if out of a thickly rusted sheath one had pulled a sword and found it—flame....

I recall one evening I spent at a little station in Bengal, between Lucknow and Delhi, an evening given over to private theatricals. The theatre was a huge tent, and the little roughly improvised stage was lit by a row of oil footlights and so small as barely to give a foothold for the actors and actresses in the more crowded scenes. About me were the great people, the colonel's wife, a touring young man of family, officers and the wife of the manager of the big sugar refinery close at hand. Behind were English of a more dubious social position, also connected with the sugar refinery, a Eurasian family or so, very dressy and aggressive and terribly snubbed, and then I think various Portuguese and other nondescripts and groups of non-commissioned officers and men, some with their wives. The play, admirably chosen, was that crystallization of liberal Victorian snobbery, Caste, and I remember there was a sub-current of

amusement because the young officer who played—what *is* the name of the hero's friend? I forget—had in the haste of his superficiality adopted a moustache that would not keep on and an eyeglass that would not keep in.

Everybody was acting very badly, nobody was word-perfect and a rasping prompter would not keep ahead as he ought to have done; the scenery and the make-ups were daubs, and I was filled with amazement that having quite wantonly undertaken to do this thing these people could then do it so slackly. Then a certain sudden[Pg 238] warmth in the applause about me quickened my attention, and I realized the satirical purport of drunken old father Eccles, and the moral intention of his son-in-law, the plumber. Between them they expressed the whole duty of the workingman as the prosperous Victorians conceived it. He was to work hard always at any job he could find for any wages he could get, and if he didn't he was a "drunken shirker" and the dupe of "paid agitators." A comforting but misleading doctrine. And here were these people a decade on in the twentieth century, with Time, Death, and Judgment close upon them, still eagerly applauding, eager to excuse their minds with this one-sided, ungracious, old-fashioned nonsense, that has done so much to intensify the deepening class antagonisms that strain us now at home almost to the breaking point!

How amazingly, it seemed, those people didn't understand and wouldn't understand any class but their own, any race but their own, any usage other than their use! Covertly I surveyed the colonel's profile. It expressed nothing but entire satisfaction with these disastrous interpretations. What a weather-worn thought-free face that grizzled veteran showed the world!

I was seized with a sudden curiosity to see how the private soldiers behind me were taking old Eccles. I turned round to discover cropped heads and faces as expressionless as masks, and behind them dusky faces watching very alertly, and then other dusky faces, Eurasians, inferiors, servants, natives.

Then at a sharp edge the glare of our lighting ceased and the canvas walls of our narrow world of illusion opened into a vast blue twilight. At the opening stood[Pg 239] two white-clad Sikhs, very, very still and attentive, watching the performance, and beyond them was a great space of sky over a dim profile of trees and roofs and a minaret, a sky darkling down to the flushed red memory—such a short memory it is in India—of a day that had gone for ever.

I remained staring at that for some time.

"Isn't old Eccles *good*?" whispered the colonel's wife beside me, and recalled me to the play....

Somehow that picture of a narrow canvas tent in the midst of immensities has become my symbol for the whole life of the governing English, the English of India and Switzerland and the Riviera and the West End and the public services....

But they are not England, they are not the English reality, which is a thing at once bright and illuminating and fitful, a thing humorous and wise and adventurous—Shakespeare, Dickens, Newton, Darwin, Nelson, Bacon, Shelley—English names every one—like the piercing light of lanterns swinging and swaying among the branches of dark trees at night.

## § 5

I went again to Ceylon to look into the conditions of Coolie importation, and then I was going back into Assam once more, still in the wake of indentured labor, when I chanced upon a misadventure. I had my first and only experience of big game shooting in the Garo Hills, I was clawed out of a tree by a wounded panther, he missed his hold and I got back to my branch, but my shoulder was put out, my thigh was badly torn, and my blood was poisoned by the wound. I had an evil uncomfortable time. My injury hampered me greatly, and for a while it seemed likely I should be permanently lamed. I had to keep to vehicles and reasonably good roads. I wound up my convalescence with a voyage to Singapore, and from thence I went on rather disconnectedly to a number of exploratory journeys—excursions rather than journeys—into China. I got to Peking and then suddenly faced back to Europe, returning overland through Russia.

I wanted now to study the conditions of modern industrialism at its sources, and my disablement did but a little accelerate a return already decided upon. I had got my conception of the East as a whole and of the shape of the historical process. I no longer felt adrift in a formless chaos of forces. I perceived now very clearly that human life is essentially a creative struggle out of the usage of immemorial years, that the synthesis of our contemporary civilization is this creative impulse rising again in its latest and greatest effort, the creative impulse rising again, as a wave rises from the trough of its predecessors, out of the ruins of our parent system, imperial Rome. But this time, and for the first time, the effort is world-wide, and China and Iceland, Patagonia and Central Africa all swing together with us to make—or into another catastrophic failure to make—the Great State of mankind. All this I had now distinctly in my mind. The new process I perceive had gone further in the west; was most developed in the west. The lighter end lifts first. So back I came away from the great

body of mankind, which is Asia, to its head. And since I was still held by my promise from returning to England I betook myself first to the Pas de Calais and then to Belgium and thence[Pg 241] into industrial Germany, to study the socialistic movement at its sources.

And I was beginning to see too very clearly by the time of my return that what is confusedly called the labor problem is really not one problem at all, but two. There is the old problem, the problem as old as Zimbabwe and the pyramids, the declining problem, the problem of organizing masses of unskilled labor to the constructive ends of a Great State, and there is the new modification due to machinery, which has rendered unskilled labor and labor of a low grade of skill almost unnecessary to mankind, added coal, oil, wind and water, the elementary school and the printing-press to our sources of power, and superseded the ancient shepherding and driving of men by the possibility of their intelligent and willing co-operation. The two are still mixed in every discussion, even as they are mixed in the practice of life, but inevitably they will be disentangled. We break free from slavery, open or disguised, just as we illuminate and develop this disentanglement....

I have long since ceased to trouble about the economics of human society. Ours are not economic but psychological difficulties. There is enough for everyone, and only a fool can be found to deny it. But our methods of getting and making are still ruled by legal and social traditions from the time before we had tapped these new sources of power, before there was more than enough for everyone, and when a bare supply was only secured by jealous possession and unremitting toil. We have no longer to secure enough by a stern insistence. We have come to a plenty. The problem now is to make that plenty go round, and *keep it enough* while we do.

[Pg 242]

Our real perplexities are altogether psychological. There are no valid arguments against a great-spirited Socialism but this, that people will not. Indolence, greed, meanness of spirit, the aggressiveness of authority, and above all jealousy, jealousy for our pride and vanity, jealousy for what we esteem our possessions, jealousy for those upon whom we have set the heavy fetters of our love, a jealousy of criticism and association, these are the real obstacles to those brave large reconstructions, those profitable abnegations and brotherly feats of generosity that will yet turn human life—of which our individual lives are but the momentary parts—into a glad, beautiful and triumphant co-operation all round this sunlit world.

If but humanity could have its imagination touched——

I was already beginning to see the great problem of mankind as indeed nothing other than a magnification of the little problem of myself, as a problem in escape from grooves, from preoccupations and suspicions, precautions and ancient angers, a problem of escape from these spiritual beasts that prowl and claw, to a new generosity and a new breadth of view.

For all of us, little son, as for each of us, salvation is that. We have to get away from ourselves to a greater thing, to a giant's desire and an unending life, ours and yet not our own.

## § 6

It is a queer experience to be even for a moment in the grip of a great beast. I had been put into the fork of a tree, so that I could shoot with the big stem behind my[Pg 243] back. The fork wasn't, I suppose, more than a score of feet from the ground. It was a safe enough place from a tiger, and that is what we expected. We had been misled by our tracker, who had mistaken the pugs of a big leopard for a tiger's,—they were over rocky ground for the most part and he had only the spoor of a chance patch of half-dried mud to go upon. The beast had killed a goat and was beaten out of a thicket near by me in which he had been lying up. The probability had seemed that he would go away along a tempting ravine to where Captain Crosby, who was my host, awaited him; I, as the amateur, was intended to be little more than a spectator. But he broke back towards the wing of the line of beaters and came across the sunlit rocks within thirty yards of my post.

Seen going along in that way, flattened almost to the ground, he wasn't a particularly impressive beast, and I shot at his shoulder as one might blaze away at a rabbit,—perhaps just a little more carefully, feeling as a Lord of Creation should who dispenses a merited death. I expected him either to roll over or bolt.

Then instantly he was coming in huge bounds towards me....

He came so rapidly that he was covered by the big limb of the tree on which I was standing until he was quite beneath me, and my second shot, which I thought in the instant must have missed him, was taken rapidly as he crouched to spring up the trunk.

Then you know came a sort of astonishment, and I think,—because afterwards Crosby picked up a dropped cartridge at the foot of the tree—that I tried to reload. I believe I was completely incredulous that the beast[Pg 244] was going to have me until he actually got me. The thing was too completely out of my imaginative picture. I don't believe I thought at all while he was coming up the tree. I merely noted how

astonishingly he resembled an angry cat. Then he'd got my leg, he was hanging on to it first by two claws and then by one claw, and the whole weight of him was pulling me down. It didn't seem to be my leg. I wasn't frightened, I felt absolutely nothing, I was amazed. I slipped, tried to get a hold on the tree trunk, felt myself being hauled down, and then got my arm about the branch. I still clung to my unloaded gun as an impoverished aristocrat might cling to his patent of nobility. That was, I felt, my answer for him yet.

I suppose the situation lasted a fraction of a second, though it seemed to me to last an interminable time. Then I could feel my leggings rip and his claw go scoring deeply down my calf. That hurt in a kind of painless, impersonal interesting way. Was my leg coming off? Boot? The weight had gone, that enormous weight!

He'd missed his hold altogether! I heard his claws tear down the bark of the tree and then his heavy, soft fall upon the ground.

I achieved a cat-like celerity. In another second I was back in my fork reloading, my legs tucked up as tightly as possible.

I peered down through the branches ready for him. He wasn't there. Not up the tree again?... Then I saw him making off, with a halting gait, across the scorching rocks some thirty yards away, but I could not get my gun into a comfortable position before he was out of sight behind a ridge.... I wondered why the sunlight seemed [Pg 245] to be flickering like an electric light that fails, was somehow aware of blood streaming from my leg down the tree-stem; it seemed a torrent of blood, and there was a long, loose ribbon of flesh very sickening to see; and then I fainted and fell out of the tree, bruising my arm and cheek badly and dislocating my shoulder in the fall.... Some of the beaters saw me fall, and brought Crosby in sufficient time to improvise a *torniquet* and save my life.