

CHAPTER THE NINTH

The Spirit of the New World

§ 1

I met Rachel again in Germany through the devices of my cousin the Fürstin Letzlingen. I had finished seeing what I wanted to see in Westphalia and I was preparing to go to the United States. There I thought I should be able to complete and round off that large view of the human process I had been developing in my mind. But my departure was delayed by an attack of influenza that I picked up at a Socialist Congress in Munich, and the dear Durchlaucht, hearing of this and having her own views of my destiny, descended upon me while I was still in bed there, made me get up and carried me off in her car, to take care of me herself at her villa at Boppard, telling me nothing of any fellow-guests I might encounter.

She had a villa upon the Rhine under a hill of vineyards, where she devoted herself—she was a widow—to matchmaking and belated regrets for the childlessness that necessitated a perpetual borrowing of material for her pursuit. She had a motor-car, a steam-launch, several rowing boats and canoes, a tennis-lawn, a rambling garden, a devious house and a rapid mind, and in fact[Pg 247] everything that was necessary for throwing young people together. She made her surprise seem easy and natural, and with returning health I found myself already back upon my old footing of friendly intimacy with Rachel.

I found her a new and yet a familiar Rachel. She had grown up, she was no longer a schoolgirl, crystalline clear with gleams of emotion and understanding, and what she had lost in transparency she had gained in depth. And she had become well-informed, she had been reading very widely and well, I could see, and not simply reading but talking and listening and thinking. She showed a vivid interest in the current of home politics,—at that time the last government of Mr. Balfour was ebbing to its end and my old Transvaal friends, the Chinese coolies, were to avenge themselves on their importers. The Tariff Reformers my father detested were still struggling to unseat the Premier from his leadership of Conservatism....

It was queer to hear once more, after my Asiatic wanderings and dreamings, those West-End dinner-table politics, those speculations about "Winston's" future and the possibility of Lloyd George or Ramsay Macdonald or Macnamara taking office with the Liberals and whether there might not ultimately be a middle party in which Haldane and Balfour, Grey and the Cecils could meet upon common ground. It seemed now not only very small but very far off. She told me too of the huge popularity of King

Edward. He had proved to be interested, curious, understanding and clever, an unexpectedly successful King. She described how he was breaking out of the narrow official limits that had kept his mother in a kind of social bandbox, extending his [Pg 248] solvent informality of friendliness to all sorts of men. He had won the heart of Will Crooks, the labor member for Poplar, for example, made John Burns a social success and warmed all France for England.

I surveyed this novel picture of the English throne diffusing amiability.

"I suppose it's what the throne ought to do," said Rachel. "If it can't be inspiration, at any rate it can tolerate and reconcile and take the ill-bred bitterness out of politics."

"My father might have said that."

"I got that from your father," she said; and added after a momentary pause, "I go over and talk to him."

"You talk to my father!"

"I like to. Or rather I listen and take it in. I go over in the afternoon. I go sometimes twice or three times a week."

"That's kind of you."

"Not at all. You see—— It sounds impudent, I know, for a girl to say so, but we've so many interests in common."

§ 2

I was more and more interested by Rachel as the days went on. A man must be stupid who does not know that a woman is happy in his presence, and for two years now and more I had met no one with a very strong personal feeling for me. And quite apart from that, her mind was extraordinarily interesting to me because it was at once so active and so clear and so limited by her entirely English circumstances. She had the prosperous [Pg 249] English outlook. She didn't so much see the wide world as get glimpses of it through the tangle of Westminster and of West End and week-end limitations. She wasn't even aware of that greater unprosperous England, already sulking and darkling outside her political world, that greater England which was presently to make its first audible intimations of discontent in that remarkable anti-climax to King George's Coronation, the Railway Strike. India for her was the land of people's cousins, Germany and the German Dreadnoughts bulked far larger, and all the tremendous gathering forces of the East were beyond the range of her imagination. I set myself to widen her horizons.

I told her something of the intention and range of my travels, and something of the views that were growing out of their experiences.

I have a clear little picture in my mind of an excursion we made to that huge national Denkmal which rears its head out of the amiable vineyards of Assmannshausen and Rudesheim over against Bingen. We landed at the former place, went up its little funicular to eat our lunch and drink its red wine at the pleasant inn above, and then strolled along through the woods to the monument.

The Fürstin fell behind with her unwilling escort, a newly arrived medical student from England, a very pleasant youngster named Berwick, who was all too obviously anxious to change places with me. She devised delays, and meanwhile I, as yet unaware of the state of affairs, went on with Rachel to that towering florid monument with its vast gesticulating Germania, which triumphs over the conquered provinces.

We fell talking of war and the passions and delusions[Pg 250] that lead to war. Rachel's thoughts were strongly colored by those ideas of a natural rivalry between Germany and England and of a necessary revenge for France which have for nearly forty years diverted the bulk of European thought and energy to the mere waste of military preparations. I jarred with an edifice of preconceptions when I scoffed and scolded at these assumptions.

"Our two great peoples are disputing for the leadership of the world," I said, "and meanwhile the whole world sweeps past us. We're drifting into a quarrelsome backwater."

I began to tell of the fermentation and new beginnings that were everywhere perceptible throughout the East, of the vast masses of human ability and energy that were coming into action in China and India, of the unlimited future of both North and South America, of the mere accidentalness of the European advantage. "History," I said, "is already shifting the significance out of Western Europe altogether, and we English cannot see it; we can see no further than Berlin, and these Germans can think of nothing better than to taunt the French with such tawdry effigies as *this!* Europe goes on to-day as India went on in the eighteenth century, making aimless history. And the sands of opportunity run and run..."

I shrugged my shoulders and we stood for a little while looking down on the shining crescent of the Rhine.

"Suppose," said Rachel, "that someone were to say that—in the House."

"The House," I said, "doesn't hear things at my pitch. Bat outcries. Too shrill altogether."

"It might. If *you*——"

[Pg 251]

She halted, hesitated for a moment on the question and asked abruptly:

"When are you coming back to England, Mr. Stratton?"

"Certainly not for six months," I said.

A movement of her eyes made me aware of the Fürstin and Berwick emerging from the trees. "And then?" asked Rachel.

I didn't want to answer that question, in which the personal note sounded so clearly. "I am going to America to see America," I said, "and America may be rather a big thing to see."

"You must see it?"

"I want to be sure of it—as something comprehensive. I want to get a general effect of it...."

Rachel hesitated, looked back to measure the distance of the Fürstin and her companion and put her question again, but this time with a significance that did not seem even to want to hide itself. "*Then* will you come back?" she said.

Her face flamed scarlet, but her eyes met mine boldly. Between us there was a flash of complete understanding.

My answer, if it was lame and ungallant to such a challenge, was at least perfectly honest. "I can't make up my mind," I said. "I've been near making plans—taking steps.... Something holds me back...."

I had no time for an explanation.

"I can't make up my mind," I repeated.

She stood for a moment rather stiffly, staring away towards the blue hills of Alsace.

Then she turned with a smiling and undisturbed countenance to the Fürstin. Her crimson had given place to white. "The triumph of it," she said with a [Pg 252] slight gesture to the flamboyant Teutonism that towered over us, and boldly repeating words

I had used scarcely five minutes before, "makes me angry. They conquered— ungraciously...."

She had overlooked something in her effort to seem entirely self-possessed. She collapsed. "My dear!" she cried,— "I forgot!"

"Oh! I'm only a German by marriage!" cried the Fürstin. "And I can assure you I quite understand—about the triumph of it...." She surveyed the achievement of her countrymen. "It is—ungracious. But indeed it's only a sort of artlessness if you see the thing properly.... It's not vulgarity—it's childishness.... They've hardly got over it yet—their intense astonishment at being any good at war.... That large throaty Victory! She's not so militant as she seems. She's too plump.... Of course what a German really appreciates is nutrition. But I quite agree with you both.... I'm beginning to want my tea, Mr. Stratton.... Rachel!"

Her eyes had been on Rachel as she chattered. The girl had turned to the distant hills again, and had forgotten even to pretend to listen to the answer she had evoked. Now she came back sharply to the sound of her name.

"Tea?" said the Fürstin.

"Oh!" cried Rachel. "Yes. Yes, certainly. Rather. Tea."

§ 3

It was clear to me that after that I must as people say "have things out" with Rachel. But before I could do [Pg 253] anything of the sort the Fürstin pounced upon me. She made me sit up that night after her other guests had gone to their rooms, in the cosy little turret apartment she called her study and devoted to the reading of whatever was most notorious in contemporary British fiction. "Sit down," said she, "by the fire in that chair there and tell me all about it. It's no good your pretending you don't know what I mean. What are you up to with her, and why don't you go straight to your manifest destiny as a decent man should?"

"Because manifestly it isn't my destiny," I said.

"Stuff," said the Fürstin.

"You know perfectly well why I am out of England."

"Everybody knows—except of course quite young persons who are being carefully brought up."

"Does *she* know?"

"She doesn't seem to."

"Well, that's what I want to know."

"Need she know?"

"Well, it does seem rather essential——"

"I suppose if you think so——"

"Will you tell her?"

"Tell her yourself, if she must be told. Down there in Surrey, she *must* have seen things and heard things. But I don't see that she wants a lot of ancient history."

"If it is ancient history!"

"Oh! two years and a half,—it's an Era."

I made no answer to that, but sat staring into the fire while my cousin watched my face. At length I made my confession. "I don't think it is ancient history at all," I said. "I think if I met Mary again now——"

"You mean Lady Mary Justin?"

[Pg 254]

"Of course."

"It would be good for your mind if you remembered to call her by her proper name.... You think if you met her again you two would begin to carry on. But you see,—you aren't going to meet her. Everybody will see that doesn't happen."

"I mean that I—— Well——"

"You'd better not say it. Besides, it's nonsense. I doubt if you've given her a thought for weeks and weeks."

"Until I came here perhaps that was almost nearly true. But you've stirred me up, sweet cousin, and old things, old memories and habits have come to the surface again. Mary wrote herself over my life—in all sorts of places.... I can't tell you. I've never talked of her to anyone. I'm not able, very well, to talk about my feelings.... Perhaps a man of my sort—doesn't love twice over."

I disregarded a note of dissent from my cousin. "That was all so magic, all my youth, all my hope, all the splendid adventure of it. Why should one pretend?... I'm giving none of that to Rachel. It isn't there any more to give...."

"One would think," remarked the Fürstin, "there was no gift of healing."

She waited for me to speak, and then irritated by my silence struck at me sharply with that wicked little tongue of hers.

"Do you think that Lady Mary Justin thinks of you—as you think of her? Do you think she hasn't settled down?"

I looked up at her quickly.

"She's just going to have a second child," the Fürstin flung out.

[Pg 255]

Yes, that did astonish me. I suppose my face showed it.

"That girl," said the Fürstin, "that clean girl would have sooner died—ten thousand deaths.... And she's never—never been anything to you."

I think that for an instant she had been frightened at her own words. She was now quite angry and short of breath. She had contrived a rapid indignation against Mary and myself.

"I didn't know Mary had had any child at all," I said.

"This makes two," said the Fürstin, and held up a brace of fingers, "with scarcely a year and a half between them. Not much more anyhow.... It was natural, I suppose. A natural female indecency. I don't blame her. When a woman gives in she ought to do it thoroughly. But I don't see that it leaves *you* much scope for philandering, Stephen, does it?... And there you are, and here is Rachel. And why don't you make a clean job of your life?..."

"I didn't understand."

"I wonder what you imagined."

I reflected. "I wonder what I did. I suppose I thought of Mary—just as I had left her—always."

I remained with my mind filled with confused images of Mary, memories, astonishment....

I perceived the Fürstin was talking.

"Maundering about," she was saying, "like a huntsman without a horse.... You've got work to do—blood in your veins. I'm not one of your ignorant women, Stephen. You ought to have a wife...."

"Rachel's too good," I said, at the end of a pause and [Pg 256] perceiving I had to say something, "to be that sort of wife."

"No woman's too good for a man," said the Fürstin von Letzlingen with conviction. "It's what God made her for."

§ 4

My visit to Boppard was drawing to an end before I had a clear opportunity to have things out with Rachel. It was in a little garden, under the very shadow of that gracious cathedral at Worms, the sort of little garden to which one is admitted by ringing a bell and tipping a custodian. I think Worms is in many respects one of the most beautiful cathedrals I have ever seen, so perfectly proportioned, so delicately faded, so aloof, so free from pride or presumption, and it rises over this green and flowery peace, a towering, lithe, light brown, sunlit, easy thing, as unconsciously and irrelevantly splendid as a tall ship in the evening glow under a press of canvas. We looked up at it for a time and then went on with the talk to which we had been coming slowly since the Fürstin had packed us off for it, while she went into the town with Berwick to buy toys for her gatekeeper's children. I had talked about myself, and the gradual replacement of my ambition to play a part in imperial politics by wider intentions. "You know," I asked abruptly, "why I left England?"

She thought through the briefest of pauses. "No," she decided at last.

"I made love," I said, "to Lady Mary Justin, and we were found out. We couldn't go away together——"

[Pg 257]

"Why not?" she interjected.

"It was impossible."

For some moments neither of us spoke. "Something," she said, and then, "Some vague report," and left these fragments to be her reply.

"We were old playmates; we were children together. We have—something—that draws us to each other. She—she made a mistake in marrying. We were both very young and the situation was difficult. And then afterwards we were thrown together.... But you see that has made a great difference to my life; it's turned me off the rails on

which men of my sort usually run. I've had to look to these other things.... They've become more to me than to most people if only because of that...."

"You mean these ideas of yours—learning as much as you can about the world, and then doing what you can to help other people to a better understanding."

"Yes," I said.

"And that—will fill your life."

"It ought to."

"I suppose it ought. I suppose—you find—it does."

"Don't you think it ought to fill my life?"

"I wondered if it did."

"But why shouldn't it?"

"It's so—so cold."

My questioning silence made her attempt to explain.

"One wants life more beautiful than that," she said. "One wants— There are things one needs, things nearer one."

We became aware of a jangling at the janitor's bell. Our opportunity for talk was slipping away. And we were both still undecided, both blunderingly nervous [Pg 258] and insecure. We were hurried into clumsy phrases that afterwards we would have given much to recall.

"But how could life be more beautiful," I said, "than when it serves big human ends?"

Her brows were knit. She seemed to be listening for the sound of the unlocking gate.

"But," she said, and plunged, "one wants to be loved. Surely one needs that."

"You see, for me—that's gone."

"Why should it be gone?"

"It is. One doesn't begin again. I mean—myself. *You*—can. You've never begun. Not when you've loved—loved really." I forced that on her. I over emphasized. "It was real love, you know; the real thing.... I don't mean the mere imaginative love, blindfold love, but love that sees.... I want you to understand that. I loved—altogether...."

Across the lawn under its trim flowering-trees appeared Berwick loaded with little parcels, and manifestly eager to separate us, and the Fürstin as manifestly putting on the drag.

"There's a sort of love," I hurried, "that doesn't renew itself ever. Don't let yourself believe it does. Something else may come in its place, but that is different. It's youth,—a wonderful newness.... Look at that youngster. *He* can love you like that. I've watched him. He does. You know he does...."

"Yes," she said, as hurriedly; "but then, you see, I don't love him."

"You don't?"

"I can't."

"But he's such a fresh clean human being——"

[Pg 259]

"That's not all," said Rachel. "That's not all.... You don't understand."

The two drew near. "It is so hard to explain," she said. "Things that one hardly sees for oneself. Sometimes it seems one cannot help oneself. You can't choose. You are taken...." She seemed about to say something more, and stopped and bit her lip.

In another moment I was standing up, and the Fürstin was calling to us across ten feet of space. "Such amoosin' little toshops. We've got a heap of things. Just look at him!"

He smiled over his load with anxious eyes upon our faces.

"Ten separate parcels," he said, appealing for Rachel's sympathy. "I'm doing my best not to complain."

And rather adroitly he contrived to let two of them slip, and captured Rachel to assist him.

He didn't relinquish her again.

§ 5

The Fürstin and I followed them along the broad, pleasant, tree-lined street towards the railway station.

"A boy of that age ought not to marry a girl of that age," said the Fürstin, breaking a silence.

I didn't answer.

"Well?" she said, domineering.

"My dear cousin," I said, "I know all that you have in your mind. I admit—I covet her. You can't make me more jealous than I am. She's clean and sweet—it is marvellous how the God of the rest of the world can[Pg 260] have made a thing so brave and honest and wonderful. She's better than flowers. But I think I'm going away to-night, nevertheless."

"You don't mean you're going to carry chivalry to the point of giving that boy a chance—for he hasn't one while you're about."

"No. You see—I want to give Rachel a chance. You know as well as I do—the things in my mind."

"That you've got to forget."

"That I don't forget."

"That you're bound in honor to forget. And who could help you better?"

"I'm going," I said and then, wrathfully, "If you think I want to use Rachel as a sort of dressing—for my old sores——"

I left the sentence unfinished.

"Oh *nonsense!*" cried the Fürstin, and wouldn't speak to me again until we got to that entirely Teutonic "art" station that is not the least among the sights of Worms.

"Sores, indeed!" said the Fürstin presently, as we walked up the end of the platform.

"There's nothing," said the Fürstin, with an unusual note of petulance, "she'd like better."

"I can't think what men are coming to," she went on. "You're in love with her, or you wouldn't be so generous. And she's head over heels with you. And here you are! I'll give you one more chance——"

"I won't take it," I interrupted. "It isn't fair. I tell you I won't take it. I'll go two days earlier to prevent you. Unless you promise me—— Of course I see how things are with her. She's not a sphinx. But it isn't[Pg 261] fair. It isn't. Not to her, or to him—or myself. *He's* got some claims. He's got more right to her than I..."

"A boy like that! No man has any rights about women—until he's thirty. And as for me and all the pains *I've* taken—— Oh! I *hate* Worms. Dust and ashes! Well here thank heaven! comes the train. If nothing else could stir you, Stephen, at least I could have

imagined some decent impulse of gratitude to me. Stephen, you're disgusting. You've absolutely spoilt this trip for me—absolutely. When only a little reasonableness on your part— Oh!"

She left her sentence unfinished.

Berwick and I had to make any conversation that was needed on the way back to Boppard. Rachel did not talk and the Fürstin did not want to.

§ 6

Directly I had parted from Rachel's questioning eyes I wanted to go back to them. It seems to me now that all the way across to America, in that magnificent German liner I joined at Hamburg, I was thinking in confused alternations of her and of Mary. There are turns of thought that still bring back inseparably with them the faint echo of the airs of the excellent but industrious band that glorified our crossing.

I had been extraordinarily shocked and concerned at the thought of Mary bearing children. It is a grotesque thing to confess but I had never let myself imagine the possibility of such a thing for her who had been so immensely mine....

[Pg 262]

We are the oddest creatures, little son, beasts and barbarians and brains, neither one nor the other but all confusedly, and here was I who had given up Mary and resigned her and freed myself from her as I thought altogether, cast back again into my old pit by the most obvious and necessary consequence of her surrender and mine. And it's just there and in that relation that we men and women are so elaborately insecure. We try to love as equals and behave as equals and concede a level freedom, and then comes a crisis,—our laboriously contrived edifice of liberty collapses and we perceive that so far as sex goes the woman remains to the man no more than a possession—capable of loyalty or treachery.

There, still at that barbaric stage, the situation stands. You see I had always wanted to own Mary, and always she had disputed that. That is our whole story, the story of an instinctive subjugation struggling against a passionate desire for fellowship. She had denied herself to me, taken herself away; that much I could endure; but now came this blazing fact that showed her as it seemed in the most material and conclusive way—overcome. I had storms of retrospective passion at the thoroughness of her surrender.... Yes, and that's in everyone of us,—in everyone. I wonder if in all decent law-abiding London there lives a single healthy adult man who has not at times longed to trample and kill....

For once I think the Fürstin miscalculated consequences. I think I should have engaged myself to Rachel before I went to America if it had not been for the Fürstin's revelation, but this so tore me that I could no longer go on falling in love again, naturally and sweetly. No man falls in love if he has just been flayed.... I could no longer think of Rachel except as a foil to Mary. I was moved to marry her by a new set of motives; to fling her so to speak in Mary's face, and from the fierce vulgarity of that at least I recoiled—and let her go as I have told you.

§ 7

I had thought all that was over.

I remember my struggles to recover my peace.

I remember how very late one night I went up to the promenade deck to smoke a cigar before turning in. It was a warm moonlight night. The broad low waves of ebony water that went seething past below, foamed luminous and were streaked and starred with phosphorescence. The recumbent moon, past its full and sinking westward, seemed bigger than I had ever seen it before, and the roundness of the watery globe was manifest about the edge of the sky. One had that sense so rare on land, so common in the night at sea, of the world as a conceivable sphere, and of interstellar space as of something clear and close at hand.

There came back to me again that feeling I had lost for a time in Germany of being not myself but Man consciously on his little planet communing with God.

But my spirit was saying all the time, "I am still in my pit, in my pit. After all I am still in my pit."

And then there broke the answer on my mind, that all our lives we must struggle out of our pits, that to struggle out of our pit is this life, there is no individual life but that, and that there comes no escape here, no end to that effort, until the release of death.

Continually or frequently we may taste salvation, but never may we achieve it while we are things of substance. Each moment in our lives we come to the test and are lost again or saved again. To be assured of one's security is to forget and fall away.

And standing at the rail with these thoughts in my mind, suddenly I prayed....

I remember how the engine-throbs beat through me like the beating of a heart, and that far below, among the dim lights that came up from the emigrants in the steerage, there was a tinkling music as I prayed and a man's voice singing a plaintive air in some strange Slavonic tongue.

That voice of the invisible singer and the spirit of the unknown song-maker and the serenity of the sky, they were all, I perceived, no more and no less than things in myself that I did not understand. They were out beyond the range of understanding. And yet they fell into the completest harmony that night with all that I seemed to understand....

§ 8

The onset of New York was extraordinarily stimulating to me. I write onset. It is indeed that. New York rides up out of the waters, a cliff of man's making; its great buildings at a distance seem like long Chinese banners held up against the sky. From Sandy Hook to the great landing stages and the swirling hooting traffic of the Hudson River there fails nothing in that magnificent crescendo of approach.

And New York keeps the promise of its first [Pg 265]appearance. There is no such fulness of life elsewhere in all the world. The common man in the streets is a bigger common man than any Old World city can show, physically bigger; there is hope in his eyes and a braced defiance. New York may be harsh and blustering and violent, but there is a breeze from the sea and a breeze of fraternity in the streets, and the Americans of all peoples in the world are a nation of still unbroken men.

I went to America curious, balancing between hope and scepticism. The European world is full of the criticism of America, and for the matter of that America too is full of it; hostility and depreciation prevail,—overmuch, for in spite of rawness and vehemence and a scum of blatant, oh! quite asinine folly, the United States of America remains the greatest country in the world and the living hope of mankind. It is the supreme break with the old tradition; it is the freshest and most valiant beginning that has ever been made in human life.

Here was the antithesis of India; here were no peasants whatever, no traditional culture, no castes, no established differences (except for the one schism of color); this amazing place had never had a famine, never a plague; here were no temples and no priesthoods dominating the lives of the people,—old Trinity church embedded amidst towering sky-scrapers was a symbol for as much as they had of all that; and here too there was no crown, no affectations of an ancient loyalty, no visible army, no traditions of hostility, for the old defiance of Britain is a thing now ridiculous and dead; and everyone I met had an air as if he knew that to-morrow must be different from to-day and different and novel and remarkable by virtue of himself and such as himself.

[Pg 266]

I went about New York, with the incredulous satisfaction of a man who has long doubted, to find that after all America was coming true. The very clatter pleased me, the crowds, the camp-like slovenliness, a disorder so entirely different from the established and accepted untidiness of China or India. Here was something the old world had never shown me, a new enterprise, a fresh vigor. In the old world there is Change, a mighty wave now of Change, but it drives men before it as if it were a power outside them and not in them; they do not know, they do not believe; but here the change is in the very blood and spirit of mankind. They breathe it in even before the launch has brought their feet to Ellis Island soil. In six months they are Americanized. Does it matter that a thing so gigantic should be a little coarse and blundering in detail, if this stumbling giant of the new time breaks a gracious relic or so in his eager clutch and treads a little on the flowers?

§ 9

And in this setting of energy and activity, towering city life and bracing sea breezes, I met Gidding again, whom I had last seen departing into Egypt to look more particularly at the prehistoric remains and the temples of the first and second dynasty at Abydos. It was at a dinner-party, one of those large gatherings that welcome interesting visitors. It wasn't, of course, I who was the centre of interest, but a distinguished French portrait painter; I was there as just any guest. I hadn't even perceived Gidding until he came round to me in that [Pg 267] precious gap of masculine intercourse that ensues upon the departure of the ladies. That gap is one of the rare opportunities for conversation men get in America.

"I don't know whether you will remember me," he said, "but perhaps you remember Crete—in the sunrise."

"And no end of talk afterwards," I said, grasping his hand, "no end—for we didn't half finish. Did you have a good time in Egypt?"

"I'm not going to talk to you about Egypt," said Gidding. "I'm through with ruins. I'm going to ask you—you know what I'm going to ask you."

"What I think of America. It's the same inevitable question. I think everything of it. It's the stepping-off place. I've come here at last, because it matters most."

"That's what we all want to believe," said Gidding. "That's what we want you to tell us."

He reflected. "It's immense, isn't it, perfectly immense? But—I am afraid at times we're too disposed to forget just what it's all about. We've got to be reminded. That, you know, is why we keep on asking."

He went on to question me where I had been, what I had done, what I made of things. He'd never, he said, forgotten our two days' gossip in the Levant, and all the wide questions about the world and ourselves that we had broached then and left so open. I soon found myself talking very freely to him. I am not a ready or abundant talker, but Gidding has the knack of precipitating my ideas. He is America to my Europe, and at his touch all that has been hanging in concentrated solution in my mind comes crystallizing out. He has to a peculiar [Pg 268]degree that directness and simplicity which is the distinctive American quality. I tried to explain to his solemnly nodding head and entirely intelligent eyes just exactly what I was making of things, of the world, of humanity, of myself....

It was an odd theme for two men to attempt after dinner, servants hovering about them, their two faces a little flushed by wine and good eating, their keen interest masked from the others around them by a gossiping affectation, their hands going out as they talked for matches or cigarette, and before we had gone further than to fling out a few intimations to each other our colloquy was interrupted by our host standing up and by the general stir that precluded our return to feminine society. "We've got more to say than this," said Gidding. "We've got to *talk*." He brought out a little engagement book that at once drew out mine in response. And a couple of days after, we spent a morning and afternoon together and got down to some very intimate conversation. We motored out to lunch at a place called Nyack, above the Palisades, we crossed on a ferry to reach it, and we visited the house of Washington Irving near Yonkers on our way.

I've still a vivid picture in my mind of the little lawn at Irvington that looks out upon the rushing steel of Hudson River, where Gidding opened his heart to me. I can see him now as he leant a little forward over the table, with his wrists resting upon it, his long clean-shaven face very solemn and earnest and grey against the hard American sunlight in the greenery about us, while he told me in that deliberate American voice of his and with the deliberate American solemnity, of his desire to "do some decent thing with life."

[Pg 269]

He was very anxious to set himself completely before me, I remember, on that occasion. There was a peculiar mental kinship between us that even the profound differences of our English and American trainings could not mask. And now he told me almost everything material about his life. For the first time I learnt how enormously rich he was, not only by reason of his father's acquisitions, but also because of his own almost instinctive aptitude for business. "I've got," he said, "to begin with, what

almost all men spend their whole lives in trying to get. And it amounts to nothing. It leaves me with life like a blank sheet of paper, and nothing in particular to write on it."

"You know," he said, "it's—exasperating. I'm already half-way to three-score and ten, and I'm still wandering about wondering what to do with this piece of life God has given me...."

He had "lived" as people say, he had been in scrapes and scandals, tasted to the full the bitter intensities of the personal life; he had come by a different route to the same conclusions as myself, was as anxious as I to escape from memories and associations and feuds and that excessive vividness of individual feeling which blinds us to the common humanity, the common interest, the gentler, larger reality, which lies behind each tawdrily emphatic self....

"It's a sort of inverted homœopathy I want," he said. "The big thing to cure the little thing...."

But I will say no more of that side of our friendship, because the ideas of it are spread all through this book from the first page to the last.... What concerns me now is not our sympathy and agreement, but that other aspect[Pg 270] of our relations in which Gidding becomes impulse and urgency. "Seeing we have these ideas," said he,— "and mind you there must be others who have them or are getting to them, for nobody thinks all alone in this world,—seeing we have these ideas what are we going to *do*?"

§ 10

That meeting was followed by another before I left New York, and presently Gidding joined me at Denver, where I was trying to measure the true significance of a labor paper called *The Appeal to Reason* that, in spite of a rigid boycott by the ordinary agencies for news distribution went out in the middle west to nearly half a million subscribers, and was filled with such a fierceness of insurrection against labor conditions, such a hatred, blind and impassioned, as I had never known before. Gidding remained with me there and came back with me to Chicago, where I wanted to see something of the Americanization of the immigrant, and my survey of America, the social and economic problem of America, resolved itself more and more into a conference with him.

There is no more fruitless thing in the world than to speculate how life would have gone if this thing or that had not happened. Yet I cannot help but wonder how far I might have travelled along the lines of my present work if I had gone to America and not met Gidding, or if I had met him without visiting America. The man and his country are inextricably interwoven in my mind. Yet I do think that his simplicity and

directness, his force of initiative that turned me from a mere enquirer into an[Pg 271] active writer and organizer, are qualities less his in particular than America's in general. There is in America a splendid crudity, a directness that cleared my spirit as a bracing wind will sweep the clouds from mountain scenery. Compared with our older continents America is mankind stripped for achievement. So many things are not there at all, need not be considered; no institutional aristocracy, no Kaisers, Czars, nor King-Emperors to maintain a litigious sequel to the Empire of Rome; it has no uneducated immovable peasantry rooted to the soil, indeed it has no rooting to the soil at all; it is, from the Forty-ninth Parallel to the tip of Cape Horn, one triumphant embodiment of freedom and deliberate agreement. For I mean all America, Spanish-speaking as well as English-speaking; they have this detachment from tradition in common. See how the United States, for example, stands flatly on that bare piece of eighteenth-century intellectualism the Constitution, and is by virtue of that a structure either wilful and intellectual or absurd. That sense of incurable servitude to fate and past traditions, that encumbrance with ruins, pledges, laws and ancient institutions, that perpetual complication of considerations and those haunting memories of preceding human failures which dwarf the courage of destiny in Europe and Asia, vanish from the mind within a week of one's arrival in the New World. Naturally one begins to do things. One is inspired to do things. One feels that one has escaped, one feels that the time is *now*. All America, North and South alike, is one tremendous escape from ancient obsessions into activity and making.

And by the time I had reached America I had already come to see that just as the issues of party politics at home[Pg 272] and international politics abroad are mere superficialities above the greater struggle of an energetic minority to organize and exploit the labor of the masses of mankind, so that struggle also is only a huge incident in the still more than half unconscious impulse to replace the ancient way of human living by a more highly organized world-wide social order, by a world civilization embodying itself in a World State. And I saw now how that impulse could neither cease nor could it on the other hand realize itself until it became conscious and deliberate and merciful, free from haste and tyranny, persuasive and sustained by a nearly universal sympathy and understanding. For until that arrives the creative forces must inevitably spend themselves very largely in blind alleys, futile rushes and destructive conflicts. Upon that our two minds were agreed.

"We have," said Gidding, "to understand and make understanding. That is the real work for us to do, Stratton, that is our job. The world, as you say, has been floundering about, half making civilization and never achieving it. Now *we*, I don't mean just you and me, Stratton, particularly, but every intelligent man among us, have got to set to

and make it thorough. There is no other sane policy for a man outside his private passions but that. So let's get at it——"

I find it now impossible to trace the phases by which I reached these broad ideas upon which I rest all my work, but certainly they were present very early in my discussions with Gidding. We two men had been thinking independently but very similarly, and it is hard to say just what completing touches either of us gave to the other's propositions. We found ourselves rather than [Pg 273] arrived at the conception of ourselves as the citizens neither of the United States nor of England but of a state that had still to come into being, a World State, a great unity behind and embracing the ostensible political fabrics of to-day—a unity to be reached by weakening antagonisms, by developing understandings and toleration, by fostering the sense of brotherhood across the ancient bounds.

We believed and we believe that such a creative conception of a human commonweal can be fostered in exactly the same way that the idea of German unity was fostered behind the dukedoms, the free cities and kingdoms of Germany, a conception so creative that it can dissolve traditional hatreds, incorporate narrower loyalties and replace a thousand suspicions and hostilities by a common passion for collective achievement, so creative that at last the national boundaries of to-day may become obstacles as trivial to the amplifying good-will of men as the imaginary line that severs Normandy from Brittany, or Berwick from Northumberland.

And it is not only a great peace about the earth that this idea of a World State means for us, but social justice also. We are both convinced altogether that there survives no reason for lives of toil, for hardship, poverty, famine, infectious disease, for the continuing cruelties of wild beasts and the greater multitude of crimes, but mismanagement and waste, and that mismanagement and waste spring from no other source than ignorance and from stupid divisions and jealousies, base patriotisms, fanaticisms, prejudices and suspicions that are all no more than ignorance a little mingled with viciousness. We have looked closely into this servitude of modern labor, we [Pg 274] have seen its injustice fester towards syndicalism and revolutionary socialism, and we know these things for the mere aimless, ignorant resentments they are; punishments, not remedies. We have looked into the portentous threat of modern war, and it is ignorant vanity and ignorant suspicion, the bargaining aggression of the British prosperous and the swaggering vulgarity of the German junker that make and sustain that monstrous European devotion to arms. And we are convinced there is nothing in these evils and conflicts that light may not dispel. We believe that these things can be dispelled, that the great universals, Science which has limitations neither of race nor class, Art which speaks to its own in

every rank and nation, Philosophy and Literature which broaden sympathy and banish prejudice, can flood and submerge and will yet flow over and submerge every one of these separations between man and man.

I will not say that this Great State, this World Republic of civilized men, is our dream, because it is not a dream, it is a manifestly reasonable possibility. It is our intention. It is what we are deliberately making and what in a little while very many men and women will be making. We are secessionists from all contemporary nationalities and loyalties. We have set ourselves with all the capacity and energy at our disposal to create a world-wide common fund of ideas and knowledge, and to evoke a world-wide sense of human solidarity in which the existing limitations of political structure must inevitably melt away.

It was Gidding and his Americanism, his inborn predisposition to innovation and the large freedom of his wealth that turned these ideas into immediate concrete undertakings. I see more and more that it is here that [Pg 275] we of the old European stocks, who still grow upon the old wood, differ most from those vigorous grafts of our race in America and Africa and Australia on the one hand and from the renascent peoples of the East on the other: that we have lost the courage of youth and have not yet gained the courage of desperate humiliations, in taking hold of things. To Gidding it was neither preposterous nor insufferably magnificent that we should set about a propaganda of all science, all knowledge, all philosophical and political ideas, round about the habitable globe. His mind began producing concrete projects as a fire-work being lit produces sparks, and soon he was "figuring out" the most colossal of printing and publishing projects, as a man might work out the particulars for an alteration to his bathroom. It was so entirely natural to him, it was so entirely novel to me, to go on from the proposition that understanding was the primary need of humanity to the systematic organization of free publishing, exhaustive discussion, intellectual stimulation. He set about it as a company of pharmacists might organize the distribution of some beneficial cure.

"Say, Stratton," he said, after a conversation that had seemed to me half fantasy; "Let's *do* it."

There are moments still when it seems to me that this life of mine has become the most preposterous of adventures. We two absurd human beings are spending our days and nights in a sustained and growing attempt to do what? To destroy certain obsessions and to give the universal human mind a form and a desire for expression. We have put into the shape of one comprehensive project that force of released wealth that has already dotted America with universities, libraries, institutions for [Pg

276]research and enquiry. Already there are others at work with us, and presently there will be a great number. We have started an avalanche above the old politics and it gathers mass and pace....

And there never was an impulse towards endeavor in a human heart that wasn't preposterous. Man is a preposterous animal. Thereby he ceases to be a creature and becomes a creator, he turns upon the powers that made him and subdues them to his service; by his sheer impudence he establishes his claim to possess a soul....

But I need not write at all fully of my work here. This book is not about that but about my coming to that. Long before this manuscript reaches your hands—if ultimately I decide that it shall reach your hands—you will be taking your share, I hope, in this open conspiracy against potentates and prejudices and all the separating powers of darkness.

§ 11

I would if I could omit one thing that I must tell you here, because it goes so close to the very core of all this book has to convey. I wish I could leave it out altogether. I wish I could simplify my story by smoothing out this wrinkle at least and obliterating a thing that was at once very real and very ugly. You see I had at last struggled up to a sustaining idea, to a conception of work and duty to which I could surely give my life. I had escaped from my pit so far. And it was natural that now with something to give I should turn not merely for consolation and service but for help and fellowship to that dear human being across the seas who had offered them to me so[Pg 277] straightly and sweetly. All that is brave and good and as you would have me, is it not? Only, dear son, that is not all the truth.

There was still in my mind, for long it remained in my mind, a bitterness against Mary. I had left her, I had lost her, we had parted; but from Germany to America and all through America and home again to my marriage and with me after my marriage, it rankled that she could still go on living a life independent of mine. I had not yet lost my desire to possess her, to pervade and dominate her existence; my resentment that though she loved me she had first not married me and afterwards not consented to come away with me was smouldering under the closed hatches of my mind. And so while the better part of me was laying hold of this work because it gave me the hope of a complete distraction and escape from my narrow and jealous self, that lower being of the pit was also rejoicing in the great enterprises before me and in the marriage upon which I had now determined, because it was a last trampling upon my devotion to Mary, because it defied and denied some lurking claims to empire I could suspect in her. I want to tell you that particularly because so I am made, so you are made, so

most of us are made. There is scarcely a high purpose in all the world that has no dwarfish footman at its stirrup, no base intention over which there does not ride at least the phantom of an angel.

Constantly in those days, it seems to me now, I was haunted by my own imagination of Mary amiably reconciled to Justin, bearing him children, forgetful of or repudiating all the sweetness, all the wonder and beauty we had shared.... It was an unjust and ungenerous [Pg 278]conception, I knew it for a caricature even as I entertained it, and yet it tormented me. It stung me like a spur. It kept me at work, and if I strayed into indolence brought me back to work with a mind galled and bleeding....

§ 12

And I suppose it is mixed up with all this that I could not make love easily and naturally to Rachel. I could not write love-letters to her. There is a burlesque quality in these scruples, I know, seeing that I was now resolved to marry her, but that is the quality, that is the mixed texture of life. We overcome the greater things and are conscience-stricken by the details.

I wouldn't, even at the price of losing her—and I was now passionately anxious not to lose her—use a single phrase of endearment that did not come out of me almost in spite of myself. At any rate I would not cheat her. And my offer of marriage when at last I sent it to her from Chicago was, as I remember it, almost business-like. I atoned soon enough for that arid letter in ten thousand sweet words that came of themselves to my lips. And she paid me at any rate in my own coin when she sent me her answer by cable, the one word "Yes."

And indeed I was already in love with her long before I wrote. It was only a dread of giving her a single undeserved cheapness that had held me back so long. It was that and the perplexity that Mary still gripped my feelings; my old love for her was there in my heart in spite of my new passion for Rachel, it was blackened perhaps and ruined and changed but it was there. It was as if [Pg 279] a new crater burnt now in the ampler circumference of an old volcano, which showed all the more desolate and sorrowful and obsolete for the warm light of the new flames....

How impatiently I came home! Thoughts of England I had not dared to think for three long years might now do what they would in me. I dreamt of the Surrey Hills and the great woods of Burnmore Park, of the changing skies and stirring soft winds of our grey green Motherland. There was fog in the Irish Sea, and we lost the better part of a day hooting our way towards Liverpool while I fretted about the ship with all my luggage packed, staring at the grey waters that weltered under the mist. It was the longest day

in my life. My heart was full of desire, my eyes ached for the little fields and golden October skies of England, England that was waiting to welcome me back from my exile with such open arms. I was coming home,—home.

I hurried through London into Surrey and in my father's study, warned by a telegram, I found a bright-eyed, resolute young woman awaiting me, with the quality about her of one who embarks upon a long premeditated adventure. And I found too a family her sisters and her brother all gladly ready for me, my father too was a happy man, and on the eighth of November in 1906 Rachel and I were married in the little church at Shere. We stayed for a week or so in Hampshire near Ringwood, the season was late that year and the trees still very beautiful; and then we went to Portofino on the Ligurian coast.

There presently Gidding joined us and we began to work out the schemes we had made in America, the schemes that now fill my life.

[Pg 280]

CHAPTER THE TENTH

Mary Writes

§ 1

It was in the early spring of 1909 that I had a letter from Mary.

By that time my life was set fully upon its present courses, Gidding and I had passed from the stage of talking and scheming to definite undertakings. Indeed by 1909 things were already organized upon their present lines. We had developed a huge publishing establishment with one big printing plant in Barcelona and another in Manchester, and we were studying the peculiar difficulties that might attend the establishment of a third plant in America. Our company was an English company under the name of Alphabet and Mollentrave, and we were rapidly making it the broadest and steadiest flow of publication the world had ever seen. Its streams already reached further and carried more than any single firm had ever managed to do before. We were reprinting, in as carefully edited and revised editions as we could, the whole of the English, Spanish and French literature, and we were only waiting for the release of machinery to attack German, Russian and Italian, and were giving each language not only its own but a very complete series [Pg 281] of good translations of the classical writers in every other tongue. We had a little band of editors and translators permanently in our service at each important literary centre. We had, for example, more than a score of

men at work translating Bengali fiction and verse into English,—a lot of that new literature is wonderfully illuminating to an intelligent Englishman—and we had a couple of men hunting about for new work in Arabic. We meant to give so good and cheap a book, and to be so comprehensive in our choice of books, excluding nothing if only it was real and living, on account of any inferiority of quality, obscurity of subject or narrowness of demand, that in the long run anybody, anywhere, desiring to read anything would turn naturally and inevitably to our lists.

Ours was to be in the first place a world literature. Then afterwards upon its broad currents of distribution and in the same forms we meant to publish new work and new thought. We were also planning an encyclopædia. Behind our enterprise of translations and reprints we were getting together and putting out a series of guide-books, gazetteers, dictionaries, text-books and books of reference, and we were organizing a revising staff for these, a staff that should be constantly keeping them up to date. It was our intention to make every copy we printed bear the date of its last revision in a conspicuous place, and we hoped to get the whole line of these books ultimately upon an annual basis, and to sell them upon repurchasing terms that would enable us to issue a new copy and take back and send the old one to the pulping mill at a narrow margin of profit. Then we meant to spread our arms wider, and consolidate and offer our whole line of text-books, guide-books and [Pg 282]gazetteers, bibliographies, atlases, dictionaries and directories as a new World Encyclopædia, that should also annually or at longest biennially renew its youth.

So far we had gone in the creation of a huge international organ of information, and of a kind of gigantic modern Bible of world literature, and in the process of its distribution we were rapidly acquiring an immense detailed knowledge of the book and publishing trade, finding congestions here, neglected opportunities there, and devising and drawing up a hundred schemes for relief, assistance, amalgamation and rearrangement. We had branches in China, Japan, Peru, Iceland and a thousand remote places that would have sounded as far off as the moon to an English or American bookseller in the seventies. China in particular was a growing market. We had a subsidiary company running a flourishing line of book shops in the east-end of London, and others in New Jersey, Chicago, Buenos Ayres, the South of France, and Ireland. Incidentally we had bought up some thousands of miles of Labrador forest to ensure our paper supply, and we could believe that before we died there would not be a corner of the world in which any book of interest or value whatever would not be easily attainable by any intelligent person who wanted to read it. And already we were taking up the more difficult and ambitious phase of our self-appointed task, and

considering the problem of using these channels we were mastering and deepening and supplementing for the stimulation and wide diffusion of contemporary thought.

There we went outside the province of Alphabet and Mollentrave and into an infinitely subtler system of interests. We wanted to give sincere and clear-thinking[Pg 283] writers encouragement and opportunity, to improve the critical tribunal and make it independent of advertising interests, so that there would be a readier welcome for luminous thinking and writing and a quicker explosion of intellectual imposture. We sought to provide guides and intelligencers to contemporary thought. We had already set up or subsidized or otherwise aided a certain number of magazines and periodicals that seemed to us independent-spirited, out-spoken and well handled, but we had still to devise our present scheme of financing groups of men to create magazines and newspapers, which became their own separate but inalienable property after so many years of success.

But all this I hope you will already have become more or less familiar with when this story reaches your hands, and I hope by the time it does so we shall be far beyond our present stage of experiment and that you will have come naturally to play your part in this most fascinating business of maintaining an onward intellectual movement in the world, a movement not simply independent of but often running counter to all sorts of political and financial interests. I tell you this much here for you to understand that already in 1909 and considering the business side of my activities alone, I was a hard worker and very strenuously employed. And in addition to all this huge network of enterprises I had developed with Gidding, I was still pretty actively a student. I wasn't—I never shall be—absolutely satisfied with my general ideas. I was enquiring keenly and closely into those problems of group and crowd psychology from which all this big publishing work has arisen, and giving particular attention to the war-panics and outbreaks of international[Pg 284] hostility that were then passing in deepening waves across Europe. I had already accumulated a mass of notes for the book upon "Group Jealousy in Religious Persecution, Racial Conflicts and War" which I hope to publish the year after next, and which therefore I hope you will have read long before this present book can possibly come to you. And moreover Rachel and I had established our home in London—in the house we now occupy during the winter and spring—and both you and your little sister had begun your careers as inhabitants of this earth. Your little sister had indeed but just begun.

And then one morning at the breakfast-table I picked a square envelope out of a heap of letters, and saw the half-forgotten and infinitely familiar handwriting of Lady Mary Justin.... The sight of it gave me an odd mixture of sensations. I was startled, I was

disturbed, I was a little afraid. I hadn't forgiven her yet; it needed but this touch to tell me how little I had forgotten....

§ 2

I sat with it in my hand for a moment or so before I opened it, hesitating as one hesitates before a door that may reveal a dramatic situation. Then I pushed my chair a little back from the table and ripped the envelope.

It was a far longer letter than Mary had ever written me in the old days, and in a handwriting as fine as ever but now rather smaller. I have it still, and here I open its worn folds and, except for a few trifling omissions, copy it out for you.... A few trifling omissions, I say,—just[Pg 285] one there is that is not trifling, but that I must needs make....

You will never see any of these letters because I shall destroy them so soon as this copy is made. It has been difficult—or I should have destroyed them before. But some things can be too hard for us....

This first letter is on the Martens note-paper; its very heading was familiar to me. The handwriting of the earlier sentences is a little stiff and disjointed, and there are one or two scribbled obliterations; it is like someone embarrassed in speaking; and then it passes into her usual and characteristic ease....

And as I read, slowly my long-cherished anger evaporated, and the real Mary, outspoken and simple, whom I had obscured by a cloud of fancied infidelities, returned to me....

"My dear Stephen," she begins, "About six weeks ago I saw in the *Times* that you have a little daughter. It set me thinking, picturing you with a mite of a baby in your arms—what *little* things they are, Stephen!—and your old face bent over it, so that presently I went to my room and cried. It set me thinking about you so that I have at last written you this letter.... I love to think of you with wife and children about you Stephen,—I heard of your son for the first time about a year ago, but—don't mistake me,—something wrings me too....

"Well, I too have children. Have you ever thought of me as a mother? I am. I wonder how much you know about me now. I have two children and the youngest is just two years old. And somehow it seems to me that now that you and I have both given such earnestness of our good behavior, such evidence that *that* side of life[Pg 286] anyhow is effectually settled for us, there is no reason remaining why we shouldn't correspond. You are my brother, Stephen, and my friend and my twin and the core of my

imagination, fifty babies cannot alter that, we can live but once and then die, and, promise or no promise, I will not be dead any longer in your world when I'm not dead, nor will I have you, if I can help it, a cold unanswering corpse in mine....

"Too much of my life and being, Stephen, has been buried, and I am in rebellion. This is a breach of the tomb if you like, an irregular private premature resurrection from an interment in error. Out of my alleged grave I poke my head and say Hello! to you. Stephen, old friend! dear friend! how are you getting on? What is it like to you? How do you feel? I want to know about you.... I'm not doing this at all furtively, and you can write back to me, Stephen, as openly as your heart desires. I have told Justin I should do this. I rise, you see, blowing my own Trump. Let the other graves do as they please....

"Your letters will be respected, Stephen.... If you choose to rise also and write me a letter.

"Stephen, I've been wanting to do this for—for all the time. If there was thought-reading you would have had a thousand letters. But formerly I was content to submit, and latterly I've chafed more. I think that as what they call passion has faded, the immense friendliness has become more evident, and made the bar less and less justifiable. You and I have had so much between us beyond what somebody the other day—it was in a report in the *Times*, I think—was calling *Materia Matrimoniala*. And of course I hear about you from all sorts [Pg 287] of people, and in all sorts of ways—whatever you have done about me I've had a woman's sense of honor about you and I've managed to learn a great deal without asking forbidden questions. I've pricked up my ears at the faintest echo of your name.

"They say you have become a publisher with an American partner, a sort of Harmsworth and Nelson and Times Book Club and Hooper and Jackson all rolled into one. That seems so extraordinary to me that for that alone I should have had to write to you. I want to know the truth of that. I never see any advertisement of Stratton & Co. or get any inkling of what it is you publish. Are you the power behind the respectable Murgatroyd and the honest Milvain? I know them both and neither has the slightest appearance of being animated by you. And equally perplexing is your being mixed up with an American like that man Gidding in Peace Conferences and Social Reform Congresses and so forth. It's so—Carnegieish. There I'm surer because I've seen your name in reports of meetings and I've read your last two papers in the *Fortnightly*. I can't imagine you of all people, with your touch of reserve, launching into movements and rubbing shoulders with faddists. What does it mean, Stephen? I had expected to find you coming back into English politics—speaking and writing on the lines of your

old beginning, taking up that work you dropped—it's six years now ago. I've been accumulating disappointment for two years. Mr. Arthur, you see, on our side,"—this you will remember was in 1909—"still steers our devious party courses, and the Tariff Reformers have still to capture us. Weston Massinghay was comparing them the other night, at a dinner at the Clynes', [Pg 288] to a crowded piratical galley trying to get alongside a good seaman in rough weather. He was very funny about Leo Maxse in the poop, white and shrieking with passion and the motion, and all the capitalists armed to the teeth and hiding snug in the hold until the grappling-irons were fixed.... Why haven't you come into the game? I'd hoped it if only for the sake of meeting you again. What are you doing out beyond there?

"We are in it so far as I can contrive. But I contrive very little. We are pillars of the Conservative party—on that Justin's mind is firmly settled—and every now and then I clamor urgently that we must do more for it. But Justin's ideas go no further than writing cheques—doing more for the party means writing a bigger cheque—and there are moments when I feel we shall simply bring down a peerage upon our heads and bury my ancient courtesy title under the ignominy of a new creation. He would certainly accept it. He writes his cheque and turns back at the earliest opportunity to his miniature gardens and the odd little freaks of collecting that attract him. Have you ever heard of chintz oil jars? 'No,' you will say. Nor has anyone else yet except our immediate circle of friends and a few dealers who are no doubt industriously increasing the present scanty supply. We possess three. They are matronly shaped jars about two feet or a yard high, of a kind of terra-cotta with wooden tops surmounted by gilt acorns, and they have been covered with white paint and on this flowers and birds and figures from some very rich old chintz have been stuck very cunningly, and then everything has been varnished—and there you are. Our first and best was bought for seven-and-sixpence, brought home in the [Pg 289] car, put upon a console table on the second landing and worshipped. It's really a very pleasant mellow thing to see. Nobody had ever seen the like. Guests, sycophantic people of all sorts were taken to consider it. It was looked at with heads at every angle, one man even kept his head erect and one went a little upstairs and looked at it under his arm. Also the most powerful lenses have been used for a minute examination, and one expert licked the varnish and looked extremely thoughtful and wise at me as he turned the booty over his gifted tongue. And now, God being with us, we mean to possess every specimen in existence—before the Americans get hold of the idea. Yesterday Justin got up and motored sixty miles to look at an alleged fourth....

"Oh my dear! I am writing chatter. You perceive I've reached the chattering stage. It is the fated end of the clever woman in a good social position nowadays, her mind beats

against her conditions for the last time and breaks up into this carping talk, this spume of observation and comment, this anecdotal natural history of the restraining husband, as waves burst out their hearts in a foam upon a reef. But it isn't chatter I want to write to you.

"Stephen, I'm intolerably wretched. No creature has ever been gladder to have been born than I was for the first five and twenty years of my life. I was full of hope and I was full, I suppose, of vanity and rash confidence. I thought I was walking on solid earth with my head reaching up to the clouds, and that sea and sky and all mankind were mine for the smiling. And I am nothing and worse than nothing, I am the ineffectual[Pg 290] mother of two children, a daughter whom I adore—but of her I may not tell you—and a son,—a son who is too like his father for any fury of worship, a stolid little creature.... That is all I have done in the world, a mere blink of maternity, and my blue Persian who is scarcely two years old, has already had nine kittens. My husband and I have never forgiven each other the indefinable wrong of not pleasing each other; that embitters more and more; to take it out of each other is our rôle; I have done my duty to the great new line of Justin by giving it the heir it needed, and now a polite and silent separation has fallen between us. We hardly speak except in company. I have not been so much married, Stephen, I find, as collected, and since our tragic misadventure—but there were beautiful moments, Stephen, unforgettable glimpses of beauty in that—thank God, I say impenitently for that—the door of the expensively splendid cabinet that contains me, when it is not locked, is very discreetly—watched. I have no men friends, no social force, no freedom to take my line. My husband is my official obstacle. We barb the limitations of life for one another. A little while ago he sought to chasten me—to rouse me rather—through jealousy, and made me aware indirectly but a little defiantly of a young person of artistic gifts in whose dramatic career he was pretending a conspicuous interest. I was jealous and roused, but scarcely in the way he desired. 'This,' I said quite cheerfully, 'means freedom for *me*, Justin,'—and the young woman vanished from the visible universe with an incredible celerity. I hope she was properly paid off and not simply made away with by a minion, but I become more and more aware of my ignorance of a great[Pg 291] financier's methods as I become more and more aware of them....

"Stephen, my dear, my brother, I am intolerably unhappy. I do not know what to do with myself, or what there is to hope for in life. I am like a prisoner in a magic cage and I do not know the word that will release me. How is it with you? Are you unhappy beyond measure or are you not; and if you are not, what are you doing with life? Have you found any secret that makes living tolerable and understandable? Write to me, write to me at least and tell me that.... Please write to me.

"Do you remember how long ago you and I sat in the old Park at Burnmore, and how I kept pestering you and asking you what is all this *for*? And you looked at the question as an obstinate mule looks at a narrow bridge he could cross but doesn't want to. Well, Stephen, you've had nearly—how many years is it now?—to get an answer ready. What *is* it all for? What do you make of it? Never mind my particular case, or the case of Women with a capital *W*, tell me *your* solution. You are active, you keep doing things, you find life worth living. Is publishing a way of peace for the heart? I am prepared to believe even that. But justify yourself. Tell me what you have got there to keep your soul alive."

§ 3

I read this letter to the end and looked up, and there was my home about me, a room ruddy-brown and familiar, with the row of old pewter things upon the dresser, the steel engravings of former Strattons that came to me [Pg 292] from my father, a convex mirror exaggerating my upturned face. And Rachel just risen again sat at the other end of the table, a young mother, fragile and tender-eyed. The clash of these two systems of reality was amazing. It was as though I had not been parted from Mary for a day, as though all that separation and all that cloud of bitter jealousy had been a mere silence between two people in the same room. Indeed it was extraordinarily like that, as if I had been sitting at a desk, imagining myself alone, reading my present life as one reads in a book at a shaded lamp, and then suddenly that silent other had spoken.

And then I looked at the page of my life before me and became again a character in the story.

I met the enquiry in Rachel's eyes. "It's a letter from Mary Justin," I said.

She did not answer for a few moments. She became interested in the flame of the little spirit lamp that kept her coffee hot. She finished what she had to do with that and then remarked, "I thought you two were not to correspond."

"Yes," I said, putting the letter down; "that was the understanding."

There was a little interval of silence, and then I got up and went to the fireplace where the bacon and sausages stood upon a trivet.

"I suppose," said Rachel, "she wants to hear from you again."

"She thinks that now we have children, and that she has two, we can consider what was past, past and closed and done with, and she wants to hear—about me.... Apart from everything else—we were very great friends."

[Pg 293]

"Of course," said Rachel with lips a little awry, "of course. You must have been great friends. And it's natural for her to write."

"I suppose," she added, "her husband knows."

"She's told him, she says...."

Her eye fell on the letter in my hand for the smallest fraction of a second, and it was as if hastily she snatched away a thought from my observation. I had a moment of illuminating embarrassment. So far we had contrived to do as most young people do when they marry, we had sought to make our lives unreservedly open to one another, we had affected an entire absence of concealments about our movements, our thoughts. If perhaps I had been largely silent to her about Mary it was not so much that I sought to hide things from her as that I myself sought to forget. It is one of the things that we learn too late, the impossibility of any such rapid and wilful coalescences of souls. But we had maintained a convention of infinite communism since our marriage; we had shown each other our letters as a matter of course, shared the secrets of our friends, gone everywhere together as far as we possibly could.

I wanted now to give her the letter in my hand to read—and to do so was manifestly impossible. Something had arisen between us that made out of our unity two abruptly separated figures masked and veiled. Here were things I knew and understood completely and that I could not even describe to Rachel. What would she make of Mary's "Write to me. Write to me"? A mere wish to resume.... I would not risk the exposure of Mary's mind and heart and unhappiness, to her possible misinterpretation....

[Pg 294]

That letter fell indeed like a pitiless searchlight into all that region of differences ignored, over which we had built the vaulted convention of our complete mutual understanding. In my memory it seems to me now as though we hung silent for quite a long time over the evasions that were there so abruptly revealed.

Then I put the letter into my pocket with a clumsy assumption of carelessness, and knelt down to the fender and sausages.

"It will be curious," I said, "to write to her again.... To tell her about things...."

And then with immense interest, "Are these Chichester sausages you've got here, Rachel, or some new kind?"

Rachel roused herself to respond with an equal affectation, and we made an eager conversation about bacon and sausages—for after that startling gleam of divergence we were both anxious to get back to the superficialities of life again.

§ 4

I did not answer Mary's letter for seven or eight days.

During that period my mind was full of her to the exclusion of every other interest. I re-read all that she had to say many times, and with each reading the effect of her personality deepened. It was all so intensely familiar, the flashes of insight, the blazing frankness, the quick turns of thought, and her absurd confidence in a sort of sane stupidity that she had always insisted upon my possessing. And her unembarrassed affectionateness. Her quick irregular writing seemed to bring[Pg 295] back with it the changing light in her eyes, the intonations of her voice, something of her gesture....

I didn't go on discussing with myself whether we two ought to correspond; that problem disappeared from my thoughts. Her challenge to me to justify myself took possession of my mind. That thrust towards self-examination was the very essence of her ancient influence. How did I justify myself? I was under a peculiar compulsion to answer that to her satisfaction. She had picked me up out of my work and accumulating routines with that demand, made me look at myself and my world again as a whole.... I had a case. I have a case. It is a case of passionate faith triumphing over every doubt and impossibility, a case real enough to understand for those who understand, but very difficult to state. I tried to convey it to her.

I do not remember at all clearly what I wrote to her. It has disappeared from existence. But it was certainly a long letter. Throughout this book I have been trying to tell you the growth of my views of life and its purpose, from my childish dreams and Harbury attitudes to those ideas of human development that have made me undertake the work I do. It is not glorious work I know, as the work of great artists and poets and leaders is glorious, but it is what I find best suits my gifts and my want of gifts. Greater men will come at last to build within my scaffoldings. In some summary phrasing I must have set out the gist of this. I must have explained my sense of the supreme importance of mental clarification in human life. All this is manifest in her reply. And I think too I did my best to tell her plainly the faith that was in me, and why life seemed worth while to me....

[Pg 296]

Her second letter came after an interval of only a few days from the despatch of mine. She began abruptly.

"I won't praise your letter or your beliefs. They are fine and large—and generous—like you. Just a little artificial (but you will admit that), as though you had felt them *give* here and there and had made up your mind they shouldn't. At times it's oddly like looking at the Alps, the real Alps, and finding that every now and then the mountains have been eked out with a plank and canvas Earl's Court background.... Yes, I like what you say about Faith. I believe you are right. I wish I could—perhaps some day I shall—light up and *feel* you are right. But—but— That large, *respectable* project, the increase of wisdom and freedom and self-knowledge in the world, the calming of wars, the ending of economic injustice and so on and so on—

"When I read it first it was like looking at a man in profile and finding him solid and satisfactory, and then afterwards when I thought it all over and looked for the particular things that really matter to me and tried to translate it into myself—nothing is of the slightest importance in the world that one cannot translate into oneself—then I began to realize just how amazingly deficient you are. It was like walking round that person in profile and finding his left side wasn't there—with everything perfect on the right, down to the buttons. A kind of intellectual Lorelei—sideways. You've planned out your understandings and tolerances and enquiries and clearings-up as if the world were all just men—or citizens—and nothing doing but racial and national and class prejudices and the exacting and shirking of labor, and you seem to ignore altogether that man is a sexual[Pg 297] animal first—first, Stephen, first—that he has that in common with all the animals, that it made him indeed because he has it more than they have—and after that, a long way after that, he is the labor-economizing, war-and-feud-making creature you make him out to be. A long way after that....

"Man is the most sexual of all the beasts, Stephen. Half of him, womankind, rather more than half, isn't simply human at all, it's specialized, specialized for the young, not only naturally and physically as animals are, but mentally and artificially. Womankind isn't human, it's reduced human. It's 'the sex' as the Victorians used to say, and from the point of view of the Lex Julia and the point of view of Mr. Malthus, and the point of view of biologists and saints and artists and everyone who deals in feeling and emotion—and from the point of view of all us poor specialists, smothered up in our clothes and restrictions—the future of the sex is the centre of the whole problem of the human future, about which you are concerned. All this great world-state of your man's imagination is going to be wrecked by us if you ignore us, we women are going to be the Goths and Huns of another Decline and Fall. We are going

to sit in the conspicuous places of the world and *loot* all your patient accumulations. We are going to abolish your offspring and turn the princes among you into undignified slaves. Because, you see, specialized as we are, we are not quite specialized, we are specialized under duress, and at the first glimpse of a chance we abandon our cradles and drop our pots and pans and go for the vast and elegant side possibilities—of our specialization. Out we come, looking for the fun the men are having. Dress us, feed us, play with us![Pg 298] We'll pay you in excitement,—tremendous excitement. The State indeed! All your little triumphs of science and economy, all your little accumulations of wealth that you think will presently make the struggle for life an old story and the millennium possible—we *spend*. And all your dreams of brotherhood!—we will set you by the ears. We hold ourselves up as my little Christian nephews—Philip's boys—do some coveted object, and say *Quis?* and the whole brotherhood shouts '*Ego!*' to the challenge.... Back you go into Individualism at the word and all your Brotherhood crumbles to dust again.

"How are you going to remedy it, how are you going to protect that Great State of your dreams from this anti-citizenship of sex? You give no hint.

"You are planning nothing, Stephen, nothing to meet this. You are fighting with an army all looting and undisciplined, frantic with the private jealousies that centre about *us*, feuds, cuts, expulsions, revenges, and you are giving out orders for an army of saints. You treat us as a negligible quantity, and we are about as negligible as a fire in the woodwork of a house that is being built....

"I read what I have written, Stephen, and I perceive I have the makings of a fine scold in me. Perhaps under happier conditions—... I should certainly have scolded you, constantly, continually.... Never did a man so need scolding.... And like any self-respecting woman I see that I use half my words in the wrong meanings in order to emphasize my point. Of course when I write woman in all that has gone before I don't mean woman. It is a woman's privilege to talk or write[Pg 299] incomprehensibly and insist upon being understood. So that I expect you already to understand that what I mean isn't that men are creative and unselfish and brotherly and so forth and that women are spoiling and going to spoil the game—although and notwithstanding that is exactly what I have written—but that humans are creative and unselfish et cetera and so forth, and that it is their sexual, egotistical, passionate side (which is ever so much bigger relatively in a woman than in a man, and that is why I wrote as I did) which is going to upset your noble and beautiful apple-cart. But it is not only that by nature we are more largely and gravely and importantly sexual than men but that men have shifted the responsibility for attraction and passion upon us and made us pay in servitude and restriction and blame for the common defect of the species. So that you

see really I was right all along in writing of this as though it was women when it wasn't, and I hope now it is unnecessary for me to make my meaning clearer than it is now and always has been in this matter. And so, resuming our discourse, Stephen, which only my sense of your invincible literalness would ever have interrupted, what are you going to do with us?

"I gather from a hint rather than accept as a statement that you propose to give us votes.

"Stephen!—do you really think that we are going to bring anything to bear upon public affairs worth having? I know something of the contemporary feminine intelligence. Justin makes no serious objection to a large and various circle of women friends, and over my little sitting-room fire in the winter and in my corners of our various gardens in the summer and in walks over the heather at Martens and in Scotland there are great talks and [Pg 300]confessions of love, of mental freedom, of ambitions, and belief and unbelief—more particularly of unbelief. I have sometimes thought of compiling a dictionary of unbelief, a great list of the things that a number of sweet, submissive, value-above-rubies wives have told me they did not believe in. It would amaze their husbands beyond measure. The state of mind of women about these things, Stephen, is dreadful—I mean about all these questions—you know what I mean. The bold striving spirits do air their views a little, and always in a way that makes one realize how badly they need airing—but most of the nicer women are very chary of talk, they have to be drawn out, a hint of opposition makes them start back or prevaricate, and I see them afterwards with their husbands, pretty silken furry feathery jewelled *silences*. All their suppression doesn't keep them orthodox, it only makes them furtive and crumpled and creased in their minds—in just the way that things get crumpled and creased if they are always being shoved back into a drawer. You have only to rout about in their minds for a bit. They pretend at first to be quite correct, and then out comes the nasty little courage of the darkness. Sometimes there is even an apologetic titter. They are quite emancipated, they say; I have misunderstood them. Their emancipation is like those horrid white lizards that grow in the Kentucky caves out of the sunlight. They tell you they don't see why they shouldn't do this or that—mean things, underhand things, cheap, vicious, sensual things.... Are there, I wonder, the same dreadful little caverns in men? I doubt it. And then comes a situation that really tries their quality.... Think of the quandary I got into with you, Stephen. And for my sex I'm rather a[Pg 301] daring person. The way in which I went so far—and then ran away. I had a kind of excuse—in my illness. That illness! Such a queer untimely feminine illness....

"We're all to pieces, Stephen. That's what brought down Rome. The women went to pieces then, and the women are going to pieces to-day. What's the good of having your legions in the Grampians and marching up to Philae, while the wives are talking treason in your houses? It's no good telling us to go back to the Ancient Virtues. The Ancient Virtues haven't *kept*. The Ancient Virtues in an advanced state of decay is what was the matter with Rome and what is the matter with us. You can't tell a woman to go back to the spinning-wheel and the kitchen and the cradle, when you have power-looms, French cooks, hotels, restaurants and modern nurseries. We've overflowed. We've got to go on to a lot of New Virtues. And in all the prospect before me—I can't descry one clear simple thing to do....

"But I'm running on. I want to know, Stephen, why you've got nothing to say about all this. It must have been staring you in the face ever since I spent my very considerable superfluous energies in wrecking your career. Because you know I wrecked it, Stephen. I *knew* I was wrecking it and I wrecked it. I knew exactly what I was doing all the time. I had meant to be so fine a thing for you, a mothering friend, to have that dear consecutive kindly mind of yours steadying mine, to have seen you grow to power over men, me helping, me admiring. It was to have been so fine. So fine! Didn't I urge you to marry Rachel, make you talk of her. Don't you remember that? And one day when I saw you thinking of Rachel, saw a kind of pride in your eyes!—suddenly I [Pg 302] couldn't stand it. I went to my room after you had gone and thought of you and her until I wanted to scream. I couldn't bear it. It was intolerable. I was violent to my toilet things. I broke a hand-glass. Your dignified, selfish, self-controlled Mary *smashed* a silver hand-mirror. I never told you that. You know what followed. I pounced on you and took you. Wasn't I—a soft and scented hawk? Was either of us better than some creature of instinct that does what it does because it must? It was like a gust of madness—and I cared, I found, no more for your career than I cared for any other little thing, for honor, for Rachel, for Justin, that stood between us....

"My dear, wasn't all that time, all that heat and hunger of desire, all that secret futility of passion, the very essence of the situation between men and women now? We are all trying most desperately to be human beings, to walk erect, to work together—what was your phrase?—'in a multitudinous unity,' to share what you call a common collective thought that shall rule mankind, and this tremendous force which seizes us and says to us: 'Make that other being yours, bodily yours, mentally yours, wholly yours—at any price, no matter the price,' bars all our unifications. It splits the whole world into couples watching each other. Until all our laws, all our customs seem the servants of that. It is the passion of the body swamping the brain; it's an ape that has seized a gun, a beautiful modern gun. Here am I, Justin's captive, and he mine, he

mine because at the first escapade of his I get my liberty. Here are we two, I and you, barred for ever from the sight of one another, and I and you writing—I at any rate—in spite of the [Pg 303]ill-concealed resentment of my partner. We're just two, peeping through our bars, of a universal multitude. Everywhere this prison of sex. Have you ever thought just all that it means when every woman in the world goes dressed in a costume to indicate her sex, her cardinal fact, so that she dare not even mount a bicycle in knickerbockers, she has her hair grown long to its longest because yours is short, and everything conceivable is done to emphasize and remind us (and you) of the fundamental trouble between us? As if there was need of reminding! Stephen, is there no way out of this? Is there no way at all? Because if there is not, then I had rather go back to the hareem than live as I do now imprisoned in glass—with all of life in sight of me and none in reach. I had rather Justin beat me into submission and mental tranquillity and that I bore him an annual—probably deciduous—child. I can understand so well now that feminine attitude that implies, 'Well, if I must have a master, then the more master the better.' Perhaps that is the way; that Nature will not let us poor humans get away from sex, and I am merely—what is it?—an abnormality—with whiskers of enquiry sprouting from my mind. Yet I don't feel like that....

"I'm pouring into these letters, Stephen, the concentrated venom of years of brooding. My heart is black with rebellion against my lot and against the lot of woman. I have been given life and a fine position in the world, I made one fatal blunder in marrying to make these things secure, and now I can do nothing with it all and I have nothing to do with it. It astounds me to think of the size of our establishments, Stephen, of the extravagant way in which whole counties and great countries pay [Pg 304] tribute to pile up the gigantic heap of wealth upon which we two lead our lives of futile entanglement. In this place alone there are fourteen gardeners and garden helps, and this is not one of our garden places. Three weeks ago I spent a thousand pounds on clothes in one great week of shopping, and our yearly expenditure upon personal effect, upon our magnificence and our margins cannot be greatly less than forty-five thousand pounds. I walk about our house and gardens, I take one of the carriages or one of the automobiles and go to some large pointless gathering of hundreds and thousands and thousands of pounds, and we walk about and say empty little things, and the servants don't laugh at us, the butlers don't laugh at us, the people in the street tolerate us.... It has an effect of collective insanity.... You know the story of one of those dear Barons of the Cinque Ports—a decent plumber-body from Rye or Winchelsea—one of the six—or eight—who claimed the privilege of carrying the canopy over the King"—she is speaking of King Edward's coronation of course—"how

that he was discovered suddenly to be speaking quite audibly to the sacred presence so near to him: 'It is very remarkable—we should be here, your majesty—very remarkable.' And then he subsided—happily unheard—into hopeless embarrassment. That is exactly how I feel, Stephen. I feel I can't stand it much longer, that presently I shall splutter and spoil the procession....

"Perhaps I don't properly estimate our position in the fabric, but I can't get away from the feeling that everything in social life leads up to this—to us,—the ridiculous canopy. If so, then the universe means—*nothing*; it's blowing great forms and shapes as a swamp[Pg 305] blows bubbles; a little while ago it was megatheriums and plesiosauriums—if that's the name for them—and now it is country-houses and motor-cars and coronation festivals. And in the end—it is all nonsense, Stephen. It is utter nonsense.

"If it isn't nonsense, tell me what it is. For me at any rate it's nonsense, and for every intelligent woman about me—for I talk to some of them, we indulge in seditious whisperings and wit—and there isn't one who seems to have been able to get to anything solidier than I have done. Each of us has had her little fling at maternity—about as much as a washerwoman does in her odd time every two or three years—and that is our uttermost reality. All the rest,—trimmings! We go about the world, Stephen, dressing and meeting each other with immense ceremony, we have our seasonal movements in relation to the ritual of politics and sport, we travel south for the Budget and north for the grouse, we play games to amuse the men who keep us—not a woman would play a game for its own sake—we dabble with social reform and politics, for which few of us care a rap except as an occupation, we 'discover' artists or musicians or lecturers (as though we cared), we try to believe in lovers or, still harder, try to believe in old or new religions, and most of us—I don't—do our best to give the gratifications and exercise the fascinations that are expected of us....

"Something has to be done for women, Stephen. We are the heart of life, birth and begetting, the home where the future grows, and your schemes ignore us and slide about over the superficialities of things. We are spoiling the whole process of progress, we are turning all the [Pg 306]achievements of mankind to nothingness. Men invent, create, do miracles with the world, and we translate it all into shopping, into a glitter of dresses and households, into an immense parade of pride and excitement. We excite men, we stir them to get us and keep us. Men turn from their ideas of brotherhood to elaborate our separate cages....

"I am Justin's wife; not a thing in my heavens or my earth that is not subordinated to that.

"Something has to be done for women, Stephen, something—urgently—and nothing is done until that is done, some release from their intolerable subjection to sex, so that for us everything else in life, respect, freedom, social standing, is entirely secondary to that. But what has to be done? We women do not know. Our efforts to know are among the most desolating of spectacles. I read the papers of those suffrage women; the effect is more like agitated geese upon a common than anything human has a right to be.... That's why I turn to you. Years ago I felt, and now I know, there is about you a simplicity of mind, a foolishness of faith, that is stronger and greater than the cleverness of any woman alive. You are one of those strange men who take high and sweeping views—as larks soar. It isn't that you yourself are high and sweeping.... No, but still I turn to you. In the old days I used to turn to you and shake your mind and make you think about things you seemed too sluggish to think about without my clamor. Once do you remember at Martens I shook you by the ears.... And when I made you think, you thought, as I could never do. Think now—about women.

"Stephen, there are moments when it seems to me that[Pg 307] this futility of women, this futility of men's effort *through* women, is a fated futility in the very nature of things. We may be saddled with it as we are with all the animal infirmities we have, with appendixes and suchlike things inside of us, and the passions and rages of apes and a tail—I believe we have a tail curled away somewhere, haven't we? Perhaps mankind is so constituted that badly as they get along now they couldn't get along at all if they let women go free and have their own way with life. Perhaps you can't have *two* sexes loose together. You must shut up one. I've a horrible suspicion that all these anti-suffrage men like Lord Cromer and Sir Ray Lankester must know a lot about life that I do not know. And that other man Sir Something-or-other Wright, who said plainly that men cannot work side by side with women because they get excited.... And yet, you know, women have had glimpses of a freedom that was not mischievous. I could have been happy as a Lady Abbess—I must have space and dignity, Stephen—and those women had things in their hands as no women have things in their hands to-day. They came to the House of Lords. But they lost all that. Was there some sort of natural selection?...

"Stephen, you were made to answer my mind, and if you cannot do it nobody can. What is your outlook for women? Are we to go back to seclusion or will it be possible to minimize sex? If you are going to minimize sex how are you going to do it? Suppression? There is plenty of suppression now. Increase or diminish the pains and penalties? My nephew, Philip's boy, Philip Christian, was explaining to me the other day that if you boil water in an open bowl it just boils away, and that if you boil it in a corked bottle it bangs everything to pieces, and[Pg 308] you have, he says, 'to look

out.' But I feel that's a bad image. Boiling-water isn't frantically jealous, and men and women are. But still suppose, suppose you trained people not to make such an awful fuss about things. *Now* you train them to make as much fuss as possible....

"Oh bother it all, Stephen! Where's your mind in these matters? Why haven't you tackled these things? Why do you leave it to *me* to dig these questions into you—like opening a reluctant oyster? Aren't they patent? You up and answer them, Stephen—or this correspondence will become abusive...."

§ 5

It was true that I did ignore or minimize sexual questions as much as I could. I was forced now to think why I did this. That carried me back to those old days of passion, memories I had never stirred for many years. And I wrote to Mary that there was indeed no reason but a reasonable fear, that in fact I had dismissed them because they had been beyond my patience and self-control, because I could not think very much about them without an egotistical reversion to the bitterness of my own case. And in avoiding them I was only doing what the great bulk of men in business and men in affairs find themselves obliged to do. They train themselves not to think of the rights and wrongs of sexual life, not to tolerate liberties even in their private imaginations. They know it is like carrying a torch into a powder magazine. They feel they cannot trust their own minds beyond the experience, tested usages, and conventions of the ages,[Pg 309] because they know how many of those who have ventured further have been blinded by mists and clouds of rhetoric, lost in inexplicable puzzles and wrecked disastrously. There in those half explored and altogether unsettled hinterlands, lurk desires that sting like adders and hatreds cruel as hell....

And then I went on—I do not clearly remember now the exact line of argument I adopted—to urge upon her that our insoluble puzzles were not necessarily insoluble puzzles for the world at large, that no one soldier fights anything but a partial battle, and that it wasn't an absolute condemnation of me to declare that I went on living and working for social construction with the cardinal riddles of social order, so far as they affected her, unsolved. Wasn't I at any rate preparing apparatus for that huge effort at solution that mankind must ultimately make? Wasn't this dredging out and deepening of the channels of thought about the best that we could hope to do at the present time, seeing that to launch a keel of speculation prematurely was only to strand oneself among hopeless reefs and confusions? Better prepare for a voyage to-morrow than sail to destruction to-day.

Whatever I put in that forgotten part of my letter was put less strikingly than my first admissions, and anyhow it was upon these that Mary pounced to the disregard of any

other point. "There you are," she wrote, with something like elation, "there is a tiger in the garden and you won't talk or think about it for fear of growing excited. That is my grievance against so much historical and political and social discussion; its hopeless futility because of its hopeless omissions. You plan the world's future, taking the women and children for granted, with [Pg 310]Egotistical Sex, as you call it, a prowling monster upsetting everything you do..."

But I will not give you that particular letter in its order, nor its successors. Altogether she wrote me twenty-two letters, and I one or two more than that number to her, and—a thing almost inevitable in a discussion by correspondence—there is a lot of overlapping and recapitulation. Those letters spread over a space of nearly two and a half years. Again and again she insists upon the monstrous exaggeration of the importance of sex in human life and of the need of some reduction of its importance, and she makes the boldest experimental suggestions for the achievement of that end. But she comes slowly to recognize that there is a justification for an indirect attack, that sex and the position of women do not constitute the primary problem in that bristling system of riddles that lies like a hostile army across the path of mankind. And she realized too that through art, through science and literature and the whole enquiring and creative side of man's nature, lies the path by which those positions are to be outflanked, and those eternal-looking impossibles and inconceivables overcome. Here is a fragment—saturated with the essence of her thought. Three-quarters of her earlier letters are variations on this theme....

"What you call 'social order,' Stephen, all the arrangements seem to me to be *built* on subjection to sex even more than they are built (as you say) on labor subjection. And this is an age of release, you say it is an age of release for the workers and they know it. And so do the women. Just as much. 'Wild hopes' indeed! The workers' hopes are nothing to the women's! It is not only the workers[Pg 311] who are saying let us go free, manage things differently so that we may have our lives relieved from this intolerable burthen of constant toil, but the women also are saying let us go free. They are demanding release just as much from their intolerable endless specialization as females. The tramp on the roads who won't work, the swindler and the exploiter who contrive not to work, the strikers who throw down their tools, no longer for twopences and sixpences as you say but because their way of living is no longer tolerable to them, and we women, who don't bear children or work or help; we are all in one movement together. We are part of the General Strike. I have been a striker all my life. We are doing nothing—by the hundred thousand. Your old social machine is working without us and in spite of us, it carries us along with it and we are sand in the bearings. I'm not a wheel, Stephen, I'm grit. What you say about the reactionaries and

suppressionists who would stifle the complaints of labor and crush out its struggles to be free, is exactly true about the reactionaries and suppressionists who would stifle the discussion of the woman's position and crush out her hopes of emancipation...."

And here is a page of the peculiar doubt that was as characteristic of her as the quick changes of her eyes. It gives just that pessimistic touch that tempered her valiant adventurousness, that gave a color at last to the tragedy of her death....

"Have you ever thought, Stephen, that perhaps these (repressionist) people are righter than you are—that if the worker gets free he *won't* work and that if the woman gets free she won't furl her sex and stop disturbing things? Suppose she *is* wicked as a sex, suppose she *will* trade on[Pg 312] her power of exciting imaginative men. A lot of these new women run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, beguile some poor innocent of a man to ruin them and then call in fathers, brother, husbands, friends, chivalry, all the rest of it, and make the best of both sides of a sex. Suppose we go on behaving like that. After we've got all our emancipations. Suppose that the liberation of common people simply means loafing, no discipline, nothing being done, an end to labor and the beginning of nothing to replace it, and that the liberation of women simply means the elaboration of mischief. Suppose that it is so. Suppose you are just tumbling the contents of the grate into the middle of the room. Then all this emancipation *is* a decay, even as conservative-minded people say,—it's none the less a decay because we want it,—and the only thing to stop it is to stop it, and to have more discipline and more suppression and say to women and the common people: 'Back to the Sterner Virtues; Back to Servitude!' I wish I hadn't these reactionary streaks in my thoughts, but I have and there you are...."

And then towards the second year her letters began to break away from her preoccupation with her position as a woman and to take up new aspects of life, more general aspects of life altogether. It had an effect not of her having exhausted the subject but as if, despairing of a direct solution, she turned deliberately to the relief of other considerations. She ceased to question her own life, and taking that for granted, wrote more largely of less tangible things. She remembered that she had said that life, if it was no more than its present appearances, was "utter nonsense." She went back to that. "One says things like that," she wrote "and not for a[Pg 313] moment does one believe it. I grumble at my life, I seem to be always weakly and fruitlessly fighting my life, and I love it. I would not be willingly dead—for anything. I'd rather be an old match-woman selling matches on a freezing night in the streets than be dead. Nothing nonsensical ever held me so tightly or kept me so interested. I suppose really I am full of that very same formless faith on which you rely. But with me it's not only shapeless but intangible.... I nibble at religion. I am immensely attracted. I stand in the doorway.

Only when they come out to persuade me to come in I am like a shy child and I go away. The temples beguile me and the music, but not the men. I feel I want to join *it* and they say 'join *us*.' They are—like vergers. Such small things! Such dreadful little *arguing* men! They don't let you come in, they want you to say they are right. All the really religious people seem to be outside nowadays and all the pretending, cheating, atheistical, vain and limited people within....

"But the beautiful things religion gives! The beauty! Do you know Saint Paul's, Stephen? Latterly I have been there time after time. It is the most beautiful interior in all the world, so great, so sombrely dignified, so perfectly balanced—and filled with such wonderful music, brimming with music just as crystal water brims in a bowl of crystal. The other day I went there, up into a little gallery high up under the dome, to hear Bach's Passion Music, the St. Matthew Passion. One hangs high and far above the little multitudes below, the white-robed singers, the white-robed musicians, ranks and ranks, the great organ, the rows and rows and rows of congregation, receding this way, that way, into the haze of the aisle[Pg 314] and the transepts, and out of it all streams the sound and the singing, it pours up past you like a river, a river that rushes upward to some great sea, some unknown sea. The whole place is music and singing.... I hang on to the railings, Stephen, and weep—I have to weep—and I wonder and wonder....

"One prays then as naturally as one drinks when one is thirsty and cold water comes to hand. I don't know whom I pray to, but I pray;—of course I pray. Latterly, Stephen, I have been reading devotional works and trying to catch that music again. I never do—definitely. Never. But at times I put down the book and it seems to me that surely a moment ago I heard it, that if I sit very still in a moment I shall hear it again. And I can feel it is there, I know it is there, like a bat's cry, pitched too high for my ears. I know it is there, just as I should still know there was poetry somewhere if some poor toothless idiot with no roof to his mouth and no knowledge of any but the commonest words tried to read Shelley to me....

"I wish I could pray with you, Stephen; I wish I could kneel down somewhere with you of all people and pray."

§ 6

Presently our correspondence fell away. The gaps between our letters lengthened out. We never wrote regularly because for that there must be a free exchange upon daily happenings, and neither of us cared to dwell too closely on our immediate lives. We had a regard for one another that left our backgrounds vague and shadowy.[Pg 315] She had made her appeal across the sundering silences to me and I had

answered, and we had poured out certain things from our minds. We could not go on discussing. I was a very busy man now, and she did not write except on my replies.

For a gap of nearly four months neither of us had anything to say in a letter at all. I think that in time our correspondence might have altogether died away. Then she wrote again in a more familiar strain to tell me of certain definite changes of relationship and outlook. She said that the estrangement between herself and Justin had increased during the past year; that they were going to live practically apart; she for the most part in the Surrey house where her two children lived with their governesses and maids. But also she meant to snatch weeks and seasons for travel. Upon that they had been disputing for some time. "I know it is well with the children," she wrote; "why should I be in perpetual attendance? I do nothing for them except an occasional kiss, or half-an-hour's romping. Why should one pretend? Justin and I have wrangled over this question of going away, for weeks, but at last feminine persistence has won. I am going to travel in my own fashion and see the world. With periodic appearances at his side in London and Scotland. We have agreed at least on one thing, and that is upon a companion; she is to be my secretary in title, my moral guarantor in fact, and her name which is her crowning glory is Stella Summersley Satchel. She is blonde, erect, huffy-mannered and thoroughly up to both sides of her work. I partly envy her independence and rectitude—partly only. It's odd and quite inconsistent of me that I don't envy her [Pg 316] altogether. In theory I insist that a woman should not have charm,—it is our undoing. But when I meet one without it—

!

"I shall also trail a maid, but I guess that young woman will learn what it is to be left behind in half the cities of Europe before I have done with her. I always lose my maids. They are so much more passive and forgettable than luggage—abroad that is. And Justin usually in the old days used to remember about them. And his valet used to see after them,—a most attentive man. Justin cannot, he says, have his wife abroad with merely a companion; people would talk; maid it must be as well. And so in a week or less I shall start, unusually tailor-made, for South Germany and all that jolly country, companioned and maided. I shall tramp—on the feet God has given me—in stout boots. Miss Summersley Satchel marches, I understand, like the British infantry but on a vegetarian 'basis,'—fancy calling your nourishment a 'basis!'—the maid and so forth by *Èilgut*..."

§ 7

After the letter containing that announcement she wrote to me twice again, once from Oban and then after a long interval from Siena. The former was a scornfully minute

description of the English at their holidays and how the conversation went among the women after dinner. "They are like a row of Japanese lanterns, all blown out long ago and swinging about in a wind," she wrote—an extravagant image that yet conveys something of the large, empty, unilluminating effect of a sort of social [Pg 317] intercourse very vividly. In the second letter she was concerned chiefly with the natural beauty of Italy and how latterly she had thrice wept at beautiful things, and what this mystery of beauty could be that had such power over her emotions.

"All up the hillside before the window as I write the herbage is thick with anemones. They aren't scattered evenly and anyhow amongst the other things but in little clusters and groups that die away and begin again, like the repetitions of an air in some musical composition. I have been sitting and looking at them for the better part of an hour, loving them more and then more, and the sweet sunlight that is on them and in among them.... How marvellous are these things, Stephen! All these little exquisite things that are so abundant in the world, the gleaming lights and blossoms, the drifting scents! At times these things bring me to weeping.... I can't help it. It is as if God who is so stern and high, so terrible to all our appeals, took pity for a moment and saw fit to speak very softly and tenderly...."

That was the last letter I was ever to have from her.

[Pg 318]

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

The Last Meeting

§ 1

In the summer of 1911 immediately after the coronation of King George there came one of those storms of international suspicion that ever and again threaten Europe with war. It seems to have been brewed by some German adepts at Welt-Politik, those privileged makers of giant bombs who sit at the ears of foreign ministers suggesting idiotic wickedness, and it was brewed with a sublime ignorance of nearly every reality in the case. A German warship without a word of notice seized Agadir on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, within the regions reserved to French influence; an English demand for explanations was uncivilly disregarded and England and France and presently Germany began vigorous preparations for war. All over the world it was supposed that Germany had at last flung down the gauntlet. In England the war party was only too eager to grasp what it considered to be a magnificent opportunity. Heaven knows what

the Germans had hoped or intended by their remarkable coup; the amazing thing to note is that they were not prepared to fight, they had not even the necessary money ready and they could not get it; they had [Pg 319]perhaps never intended to fight, and the autumn saw the danger disperse again into diplomatic bickerings and insincerely pacific professions. But in the high summer the danger had not dispersed, and in common with every reasonable man I found myself under the shadow of an impending catastrophe that would have been none the less gigantic and tragic because it was an imbecility. It was an occasion when everyone needs must act, however trivially disproportionate his action may be to the danger. I cabled Gidding who was in America to get together whatever influences were available there upon the side of pacific intervention, and I set such British organs as I could control or approach in the same direction. It seemed probable that Italy would be drawn into any conflict that might ensue; it happened that there was to be a Conference of Peace Societies in Milan early in September, and thither I decided to go in the not very certain hope that out of that assemblage some form of European protest might be evolved.

That August I was very much run down. I had been staying in London through almost intolerably hot weather to attend a Races Congress that had greatly disappointed me. I don't know particularly now why I had been disappointed nor how far the feeling was due to my being generally run down by the pressure of detailed work and the stress of thinking about large subjects in little scraps of time. But I know that a kind of despair came over me as I sat and looked at that multicolored assembly and heard in succession the heavy platitudes of white men, the slick, thin cleverness of Hindoos, the rich-toned florid rhetoric of negroes. I lost sight of any germ of splendid possibility in all those people, and saw all too [Pg 320] plainly the vanity, the jealousy, the self-interests that show up so harshly against the professions of every altruistic movement. It seemed all such a windy business against the firm prejudices, the vast accumulated interests that grind race against race. We had no common purpose at all at that conference, no proposal to hold us together. So much of it was like bleating on a hillside....

I wanted a holiday badly, and then came this war crisis and I felt unable to go away for any length of time. Even bleating it seemed to me was better than acquiescence in a crime against humanity. So to get heart to bleat at Milan I snatched at ten days in the Swiss mountains en route. A tour with some taciturn guide involving a few middling climbs and glacier excursions seemed the best way of recuperating. I had never had any time for Switzerland since my first exile there years ago. I took the advice of a man in the club whose name I now forget—if ever I knew it, a dark man with a scar—and

went up to the Schwarzegg Hut above Grindelwald, and over the Strahlegg to the Grimsel. I had never been up into the central mass of the Bernese Oberland before, and I was amazed and extraordinarily delighted by the vast lonely beauty of those interminable uplands of ice. I wished I could have lingered up there. But that is the tragedy of those sunlit desolations; one may not stay; one sees and exclaims and then looks at a watch. I wonder no one has ever taken an arctic equipment up into that wilderness, and had a good healing spell of lonely exaltation. I found the descent from the Strahlegg as much of a climb as I was disposed to undertake; for an hour we were coming down frozen snow that wasn't so much a slope as a slightly inclined precipice....

[Pg 321]

From the Grimsel I went over the Rhone glacier to the inn on the Furka Pass, and then, paying off my guide and becoming frankly a pedestrian, I made my way round by the Schöllenen gorge to Goeschenen, and over the Susten Joch to the Susten Pass and Stein, meaning to descend to Meiringen.

But I still had four days before I went on to Italy, and so I decided to take one more mountain. I slept at the Stein inn, and started in the morning to do that agreeable first mountain of all, the Titlis, whose shining genial head attracted me. I did not think a guide necessary, but a boy took me up by a track near Gadmen, and left me to my Siegfried map some way up the great ridge of rocks that overlooks the Engstlen Alp. I a little overestimated my mountaineering, and it came about that I was benighted while I was still high above the Joch Pass on my descent. Some of this was steep and needed caution. I had to come down slowly with my folding lantern, in which a reluctant candle went out at regular intervals, and I did not reach the little inn at Engstlen Alp until long after eleven at night. By that time I was very tired and hungry.

They told me I was lucky to get a room, only one stood vacant; I should certainly not have enjoyed sleeping on a billiard table after my day's work, and I ate a hearty supper, smoked for a time, meditated emptily, and went wearily to bed.

But I could not sleep. Usually, I am a good sleeper, but ever and again when I have been working too closely or over-exerting myself I have spells of wakefulness, and that night after perhaps an hour's heavy slumber I became thinly alert and very weary in body and spirit, and [Pg 322] I do not think I slept again. The pain in my leg that the panther had torn had been revived by the day's exertion. For the greater part of my life insomnia has not been disagreeable to me. In the night, in the stillness, one has a kind of detachment from reality, one floats there without light, without weight, feeling very little of one's body. One has a certain disembodiment and one can achieve a

magnanimity of thought, forgiveness and self-forgetfulness that are impossible while the body clamors upon one's senses. But that night, because, I suppose, I was so profoundly fatigued, I was melancholy and despondent. I could feel again the weight of the great beast upon me as he clawed me down and I clung—desperately, in that interminable instant before he lost his hold....

Yes, I was extraordinarily wretched that night. I was filled with self-contempt and self-disgust. I felt that I was utterly weak and vain, and all the pretensions and effort of my life mere florid, fruitless pretensions and nothing more. I had lost all control over my mind. Things that had seemed secondary before became primary, difficult things became impossible things. I had been greatly impeded and irritated in London by the manœuvres of a number of people who were anxious to make capital out of the crisis, self-advertising people who wanted at any cost to be lifted into a position of unique protest.... You see, that unfortunate Nobel prize has turned the advocacy of peace into a highly speculative profession; the qualification for the winner is so vaguely defined that a vast multitude of voluntary idealists has been created and a still greater number diverted from the unendowed pursuit of human welfare in other directions. Such a man as myself who is known to command a considerable [Pg 323] publicity is necessarily a prey to those moral *entrepreneurs*. All sorts of ridiculous and petty incidents had forced this side of public effort upon me, but hitherto I had been able to say, with a laugh or sigh as the case warranted, "So much is dear old humanity and all of us"; and to remember the great residuum of nobility that remained. Now that last saving consideration refused to be credible. I lay with my body and my mind in pain thinking these people over, thinking myself over too with the rest of my associates, thinking drearily and weakly, recalling spites, dishonesties and vanities, feuds and absurdities, until I was near persuaded that all my dreams of wider human understandings, of great ends beyond the immediate aims and passions of common everyday lives, could be at best no more than the refuge of shy and weak and ineffective people from the failure of their personal lives....

We idealists are not jolly people, not honest simple people; the strain tells upon us; even to ourselves we are unappetizing. Aren't the burly, bellowing fellows after all righter, with their simple natural hostility to everything foreign, their valiant hatred of everything unlike themselves, their contempt for aspiring weakness, their beer and lush sentiment, their here-to-day-and-gone-tomorrow conviviality and fellowship? Good fellows! While we others, lost in filmy speculations, in moon-and-star snaring and the chase of dreams, stumble where even they walk upright....

You know I have never quite believed in myself, never quite believed in my work or my religion. So it has always been with me and always, I suppose, will be. I know I am

purblind, I know I do not see my way clearly [Pg 324] nor very far; I have to do with things imperfectly apprehended. I cannot cheat my mind away from these convictions. I have a sort of hesitation of the soul as other men have a limp in their gait. God, I suppose, has a need for lame men. God, I suppose, has a need for blind men and fearful and doubting men, and does not intend life to be altogether swallowed up in staring sight. Some things are to be reached best by a hearing that is not distracted by any clearer senses. But so it is with me, and this is the innermost secret I have to tell you.

I go valiantly for the most part I know, but despair is always near to me. In the common hours of my life it is as near as a shark may be near a sleeper in a ship; the thin effectual plank of my deliberate faith keeps me secure, but in these rare distresses of the darkness the plank seems to become transparent, to be on the verge of dissolution, a sense of life as of an abyssmal flood, full of cruelty, densely futile, blackly aimless, penetrates my defences....

I don't think I can call these stumblings from conviction unbelief; the limping man walks for all his limping, and I go on in spite of my falls. "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him...."

I fell into an inconsecutive review of my life under this light that touched every endeavor with the pale tints of failure. And as that flow of melancholy reflection went on, it was shot more and more frequently with thoughts of Mary. It was not a discursive thinking about Mary but a definite fixed direction of thought towards her. I had not so thought of her for many years. I wanted her, I felt, to come to me and help me out of this distressful pit into which my spirit had fallen. I believed she could. I [Pg 325] perceived our separation as an irreparable loss. She had a harder, clearer quality than I, a more assured courage, a readier, surer movement of the mind. Always she had "lift" for me. And then I had a curious impression that I had heard her voice calling my name, as one might call out in one's sleep. I dismissed it as an illusion, and then I heard it again. So clearly that I sat up and listened—breathless....

Mixed up with all this was the intolerable uproar and talking of a little cascade not fifty yards from the hotel. It is curious how distressing that clamor of running water, which is so characteristic of the Alpine night, can become. At last those sounds can take the likeness of any voice whatever. The water, I decided, had called to me, and now it mocked and laughed at me....

The next morning I descended at some late hour by Swiss reckoning, and discovered two ladies in the morning sunlight awaiting breakfast at a little green table. One rose slowly at the sight of me, and stood and surveyed me with a glad amazement.

§ 2

There she stood real and solid, a little unfamiliar in her tweeds and with her shining eyes intimate and unforgettable, as though I had never ceased to see them for all those intervening years. And bracing us both and holding back our emotion was, quite unmistakably, Miss Summersley Satchel, a blonde business-like young woman with a stumpy nose very cruelly corrugated and inflamed by a pince-nez that savagely did much more than its duty[Pg 326] by its name. She remained seated, tilting her chair a little, pushing herself back from the table and regarding me—intelligently.

It was one of those moments in life when one is taken unawares. I think our common realization of the need of masking the reality of our encounter, the hasty search in our minds for some plausible face upon this meeting, must have been very obvious to the lady who observed us. Mary's first thought was for a pseudonym. Mine was to make it plain we met by accident.

"It's Mr.—Stephen!" said Mary.

"It's you!"

"Dropped out of the sky!"

"From over there. I was benighted and go there late."

"Very late?"

"One gleam of light—and a yawning waiter. Or I should have had to break windows.... And then I meet you!"

Then for a moment or so we were silent, with our sense of the immense gravity of this position growing upon us. A little tow-headed waiter-boy appeared with their coffee and rolls on a tray poised high on his hand.

"You'll have your coffee out here with us?" said Mary.

"Where else?" said I, as though there was no conceivable alternative, and told the tow-headed waiter.

Belatedly Mary turned to introduce me to her secretary: "My friend Miss Summersley Satchel. Mr.—Stephen." Miss Satchel and I bowed to each other and agreed that the lake was very beautiful in the morning light. "Mr. Stephen," said Mary, in entirely unnecessary explanation, "is an old friend of my mother's. And I[Pg 327] haven't seen him for years. How is Mrs. Stephen—and the children?"

I answered briefly and began to tell of my climb down the Titlis. I addressed myself with unnecessary explicitness to Miss Satchel. I did perhaps over-accentuate the extreme fortuitousness of my appearance.... From where I stood, the whole course of the previous day after I had come over the shoulder was visible. It seemed a soft little shining pathway to the top, but the dangers of the descent had a romantic intensification in the morning light. "The rule of the game," said I, "is that one stops and waits for daylight. I wonder if anyone keeps that rule."

We talked for a time of mountains, I still standing a little aloof until my coffee came. Miss Summersley Satchel produced that frequent and most unpleasant bye-product of a British education, an intelligent interest in etymology. "I wonder," she said, with a brow of ruffled omniscience and eyeing me rather severely with a magnified eye, "why it is *called* Titlis. There must be *some* reason...."

Presently Miss Satchel was dismissed indoors on a transparent excuse and Mary and I were alone together. We eyed one another gravely. Perhaps all the more gravely because of the wild excitement that was quickening our pulse and breathing, and thrilling through our nerves. She pushed back the plate before her and put her dear elbows on the table and dropped her chin between her hands in an attitude that seemed all made of little memories.

"I suppose," she said, "something of this kind was bound to happen."

[Pg 328]

She turned her eyes to the mountains shining in the morning light. "I'm glad it has happened in a beautiful place. It might have been—anywhere."

"Last night," I said, "I was thinking of you and wanting to hear your voice again. I thought I did."

"I too. I wonder—if we had some dim perception...."

She scanned my face. "Stephen, you're not much changed. You're looking well.... But your eyes—they're dog-tired eyes. Have you been working too hard?"

"A conference—what did you call them once?—a Carnegieish conference in London. Hot weather and fussing work and endless hours of weak grey dusty speeches, and perhaps that clamber over there yesterday was too much. It *was* too much. In India I damaged a leg.... I had meant to rest here for a day."

"Well,—rest here."

"With you!"

"Why not? Now you are here."

"But—— After all, we've promised."

"It's none of our planning, Stephen."

"It seems to me I ought to go right on—so soon as breakfast is over."

She weighed that with just the same still pause, the same quiet moment of lips and eyes that I recalled so well. It was as things had always been between us that she should make her decision first and bring me to it.

"It isn't natural," she decided, "with the sun rising and the day still freshly beginning that you should go or that I should go. I've wanted to meet you like this and talk about things,—ten thousand times. And as for [Pg 329] me Stephen I *won't* go. And I won't let you go if I can help it. Not this morning, anyhow. No. Go later in the day if you will, and let us two take this one talk that God Himself has given us. We've not planned it. It's His doing, not ours."

I sat, yielding. "I am not so sure of God's participation," I said. "But I know I am very tired, and glad to be with you. I can't tell you how glad. So glad—— I think I should weep if I tried to say it..."

"Three, four, five hours perhaps—even if people know. Is it so much worse than thirty minutes? We've broken the rules already; we've been flung together; it's not our doing, Stephen. A little while longer—adds so little to the offence and means to us——"

"Yes," I said, "but—if Justin knows?"

"He won't."

"Your companion?"

There was the briefest moment of reflection. "She's discretion itself," she said.

"Still——"

"If he's going to know the harm is done. We may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. And he won't know. No one will know."

"The people here."

"Nobody's here. Not a soul who matters. I doubt if they know my name.... No one ever talks to me."

I sat in the bright sunshine, profoundly enervated and quite convinced, but still maintaining out of mere indolence a show of hesitation....

"You take the good things God sends you, Stephen—as I do. You stay and talk with me now, before the [Pg 330]curtain falls again. We've tired of letters. You stay and talk to me.

"Here we are, Stephen, and it's the one chance that is ever likely to come to us in all our lives. We'll keep the point of honor; and you shall go to-day. But don't let's drive the point of honor into the quick. Go easy Stephen, old friend.... My dear, my dear! What has happened to you? Have you forgotten? Of course! Is it possible for you to go, mute, with so much that we can say.... And these mountains and this sunlight!..."

I looked up to see her with her elbows on the table and her hands clasped under her chin; that face close to mine, her dear blue eyes watching me and her lips a little apart.

No other human being has ever had that effect upon me, so that I seem to feel the life and stir in that other body more than I feel my own.

§ 3

From the moment when I confessed my decision to stay we gave no further thought to the rightfulness or wisdom of spending the next few hours together. We thought only of those hours. Things lent themselves to us. We stood up and walked out in front of the hotel and there moored to a stake at the edge of the water was a little leaky punt, the one vessel on the Engstlen See. We would take food with us as we decided and row out there to where the vast cliffs came sheer from the water, out of earshot or interference and talk for all the time we had. And I remember now how Mary stood and [Pg 331] called to Miss Satchel's window to tell her of this intention, and how I discovered again that exquisite slender grace I knew so well.

You know the very rowing out from the shore had in it something sweet and incredible. It was as if we were but dreaming together and might at any moment awaken again, countless miles and a thousand things apart. I rowed slowly with those clumsy Swiss oars that one must thrust forward, breaking the smooth crystal of the lake, and she sat sideways looking forward, saying very little and with much the same sense I think of enchantment and unreality. And I saw now for the first time as I watched her over my oars that her face was changed; she was graver and, I thought, stronger than the Mary I had known.

Even now I can still doubt if that boat and lake were real. And yet I remember even minute and irrelevant details of the day's impressions with an extraordinary and exquisite vividness. Perhaps it is that very luminous distinctness which distinguishes these events from the common experiences of life and puts them so above the quality of things that are ordinarily real.

We rowed slowly past a great headland and into the bay at the upper end of the water. We had not realized at first that we could row beyond the range of the hotel windows. The rock that comes out of the lake is a clear dead white when it is dry, and very faintly tinted, but when it is wetted it lights warmly with flashes and blotches of color, and is seen to be full of the most exquisite and delicate veins. It splinters vertically and goes up in cliffs, very high and sculptured, with a quality almost of porcelain, that at a certain level suddenly become [Pg 332] more rude and massive and begin to overhang. Under the cliffs the water is very deep and blue-green, and runs here and there into narrow clefts. This place where we landed was a kind of beach left by the recession of the ice, all the rocks immediately about us were ice-worn, and the place was paved with ice-worn boulders. Two huge bluffs put their foreheads together above us and hid the glacier from us, but one could feel the near presence of ice in the air. Out between them boiled a little torrent, and spread into a hundred intercommunicating channels amidst the great pebbles. And those pebbles were covered by a network of marvellously gnarled and twisted stems bearing little leaves and blossoms, a network at once very ancient and very fresh, giving a peculiar gentleness and richness to the Alpine severity that had dwarfed and tangled them. It was astounding that any plant could find nourishment among those stones. The great headland, with patches of yellowish old snow still lingering here and there upon its upper masses, had crept insensibly between us and the remote hotel and now hid it altogether. There was nothing to remind us of the world that had separated us, except that old and leaky boat we had drawn up upon the stones at the limpid water's edge.

"It is as if we had come out of life together," she whispered, giving a voice to my thought.

She sat down upon a boulder and I sat on a lower slab a yard or so away, and we looked at one another. "It's still unreal," she said.

I felt awkward and at a loss as I sat there before her, as a man unused to drawing-rooms might feel in the presence of a strange hostess.

[Pg 333]

"You are so *you*," I said; "so altogether my nearest thing—and so strange too, so far off, that I feel—shy...."

"I'm shy," I repeated. "I feel that if I speak loudly all this will vanish...."

I looked about me. "But surely this is the most beautiful place in the whole world! Is it indeed in the world?"

"Stephen, my dear," she began presently, "what a strange thing life is! Strange! The disproportions! The things that will not fit together. The little things that eat us up, and the beautiful things that might save us and don't save us, don't seem indeed to have any meaning in regard to ordinary sensible affairs.... This *beauty*...."

"Do you remember, Stephen, how long ago in the old park you and I talked about immortality and you said then you did not want to know anything of what comes after life. Even now do you want to know? You are too busy and I am not busy enough. I want to be sure, not only to know, but to know that it is so, that this life—no, not *this* life, but that life, is only the bleak twilight of the morning. I think death—just dead death—after the life I have had is the most impossible of ends.... You don't want—particularly? I want to passionately. I *want* to live again—out of this body, Stephen, and all that it carves with it, to be free—as beautiful things are free. To be free as this is free—an exquisite clean freedom...."

"I can't believe that the life of this earth is all that there is for us—or why should we ever think it strange? Why should we still find the ordinary matter-of-fact things of everyday strange? We do—because they aren't—*us*.... Eating.[Pg 334] Stuffing into ourselves thin slices of what were queer little hot and eager beasts.... The perpetual need to do such things. And all the mad fury of sex, Stephen!... We don't live, we suffocate in our living bodies. They storm and rage and snatch; it isn't *us*, Stephen, really. It can't be us. It's all so excessive—if it is anything more than the first furious rush into existence of beings that will go on—go on at last to quite beautiful real things. Like this perhaps. To-day the world is beautiful indeed with the sun shining and love shining and you, my dear, so near to me.... It's so incredible that you and I must part to-day. It's as if—someone told me the sun was a little mad. It's so perfectly natural to be with you again...."

Her voice sank. She leant a little forward towards me. "Stephen, suppose that you and I were dead to-day. Suppose that when you imagined you were climbing yesterday, you died. Suppose that yesterday you died and that you just thought you were still climbing as you made your way to me. Perhaps you are dead up there on the mountain and I am lying dead in my room in this hotel, and this is the Great Beginning...."

"Stephen, I am talking nonsense because I am so happy to be with you here...."

§ 4

For a time we said very little. Then irregularly, disconnectedly, we began to tell each other things about ourselves.

The substance of our lives seemed strangely objective [Pg 335] that day; we had as it were come to one another clean out of our common conditions. She told me of her troubles and her secret weaknesses; we bared our spirits and confessed. Both of us had the same tale of mean and angry and hasty impulses, both of us could find kindred inconsistencies, both had an exalted assurance that the other would understand completely and forgive and love. She talked for the most part, she talked much more than I, with a sort of wonder at the things that had happened to her, and for long spaces we did not talk at all nor feel the need of talking, and what seems very strange to me now, seeing that we had been impassioned lovers, we never kissed; we never kissed at all; I do not even remember that I thought of kissing her. We had a shyness between us that kept us a little apart, and I cannot remember that we ever touched one another except that for a time she took me and led me by the hand towards a little place of starry flowers that had drawn her eyes and which she wished me to see. Already for us two our bodies were dead and gone. We were shy, shy of any contact, we were a little afraid of one another, there was a kind of awe between us that we had met again.

And in that strange and beautiful place her fancy that we were dead together had a fitness that I cannot possibly convey to you. I cannot give you by any writing the light and the sweet freshness of that high desolation. You would need to go there. What was lovely in our talk, being said in that setting, would seem but a rambling discourse were I to write it down,—as I believe that even now I could write it down—word for word almost, every thought of it, so fresh does it remain with me....

My dear, some moments are eternal. It seems to me [Pg 336] that as I write to tell you of this I am telling you not of something that happened two years ago but of a thing immortal. It is as if I and Mary were together there holding the realities of our lives before us as though they were little sorry tales written in books upon our knees....

§ 5

It was still in the early afternoon that we came down again across the meandering ice-water streams to our old boat, and pushed off and rowed slowly out of that magic corner back to every-day again....

Little we knew to what it was we rowed.

As we glided across the water and rounded the headland and came slowly into view of the hotel again, Mary was reminded of our parting and for a little while she was disposed to make me remain. "If you could stay a little longer," she said,— "Another day? If any harm is done, it's done."

"It has been beautiful," I said, "this meeting. It's just as if—when I was so jaded and discouraged that I could have put my work aside and despaired altogether,—some power had said, 'Have you forgotten the friendship I gave you?' ... But we shall have had our time. We've met,—we've seen one another, we've heard one another. We've hurt no one...."

"You will go?"

"To-day. Before sunset. Isn't it right that I should go?"

"Stay," she whispered, with a light in her eyes.

"No. I dare not."

[Pg 337]

She did not speak for a long time.

"Of course," she said at last, "you're right. You only said—I would have said it for you if you had not. You're so right, Stephen.... I suppose, poor silly little things, that if you stayed we should certainly begin making love to each other. It would be—necessary. We should fence about a little and then there it would be. No barrier—to stop us. And neither of us wants it to happen. It isn't what we want. You would become urgent, I suppose, and I should be—coquettish. In spite of ourselves that power would make us puppets. As if already we hadn't made love.... I could find it in my heart now.... Stephen I could *make* you stay...."

"Oh! Why are we so tormented, Stephen? In the next world we shall meet, and this will trouble us no longer. The love will be there—oh, the love will be there, like something that has at last got itself fully born, got itself free from some queer clinging seed-case...."

"We shall be rid of jealousy, Stephen, that inflammation of the mind, that bitterness, that pitiless sore, so that I shan't be tormented by the thought of Rachel and she will be able to tolerate me. She was so sweet and wonderful a girl—with those dark eyes. And I've never done her justice—never. Nor she me. I snatched you from her. I snatched you...."

"Someday we shall be different.... All this putting oneself round another person like a fence, against everyone else, almost against everything else; it's so wicked, so fierce.

"It's so possible to be different. Sometimes now, sometimes for long parts of a day I have no base passions at all—even in this life. To be like that always! But I can't[Pg 338] see clearly how these things can be; one dreams of them in a kind of luminous mist, and if one looks directly at them, they vanish again...."

§ 6

And at last we came to the landing, and moored the little boat and walked up the winding path to the hotel. The dull pain of separation was already upon us.

I think we had forgotten Miss Summersley Satchel altogether. But she appeared as we sat down to tea at that same table at which we had breakfasted, and joined us as a matter of course. Conceivably she found the two animated friends of the morning had become rather taciturn. Indeed there came a lapse of silence so portentous that I roused myself to effort and told her, all over again, as I realized afterwards, the difficulties that had benighted me upon Titlis. Then Miss Satchel regaled Mary with some particulars of the various comings and goings of the hotel. I became anxious to end this tension and went into the inn to pay my bill and get my knapsack. When I came out Mary stood up.

"I'll come just a little way with you, Stephen," she said, and I could have fancied the glasses of the companion flashed to hear the surname of the morning reappear a Christian name in the afternoon....

"Is that woman behind us safe?" I asked, breaking the silence as we went up the mountain-side.

Mary looked over her shoulder for a contemplative second.

"She's always been—discretion itself."

We thought no more of Miss Satchel.

[Pg 339]

"This parting," said Mary, "is the worst of the price we have to pay.... Now it comes to the end there seem a thousand things one hasn't said...."

And presently she came back to that. "We shan't remember this so much perhaps. It was there we met, over there in the sunlight—among those rocks. I suppose—perhaps—we managed to say something...."

As the ascent grew steeper it became clear that if I was to reach the Melch See Inn by nightfall, our moment for parting had come. And with a "Well," and a white-lipped smile and a glance at the Argus-eyed hotel, she held out her hand to me. "I shall live on this, brother Stephen," she said, "for years."

"I too," I answered....

It was wonderful to stand and face her there, and see her real and living with the warm sunlight on her, and her face one glowing tenderness. We clasped hands; all the warm life of our hands met and clung and parted.

I went on alone up the winding path,—it zigzags up the mountain-side in full sight of the hotel for the better part of an hour—climbing steadily higher and looking back and looking back until she was just a little strip of white—that halted and seemed to wave to me. I waved back and found myself weeping. "You fool!" I said to myself, "Go on"; and it was by an effort that I kept on my way instead of running back to her again. Presently the curvature of the slope came up between us and hid her altogether, hid the hotel, hid the lakes and the cliffs....

It seemed to me that I could not possibly see her any more. It was as if I knew that sun had set for ever.

[Pg 340]

§ 7

I lay at the Melch See Inn that night, and rose betimes and started down that wild grey gorge in the early morning light. I walked to Sachseln, caught an early train to Lucerne and went on in the afternoon to Como. And there I stayed in the sunshine taking a boat and rowing alone far up the lake and lying in it, thinking of love and friendship and the accidents and significance of my life, and for the most part not thinking at all but feeling, feeling the glow of our meeting and the finality of our separation, as one feels the clear glow of a sunset when the wind rises and the cold night draws near. Everything was pervaded by the sense of her. Just over those mountains, I thought, is Mary. I was alone in my boat, but her presence filled the sky. It seemed to me that at any moment I could go to her. And the last vestige of any cloud between us for anything we had done or failed to do in these crises of distress and separation, had vanished and gone altogether.

In the afternoon I wrote to Rachel. I had not written to her for three days, and even now I told her nothing of my meeting with Mary. I had not written partly because I could not decide whether I should tell her of that or not; in the end I tried to hide it from her. It

seemed a little thing in regard to her, a thing that could not hurt her, a thing as detached from her life and as inconsecutive as a dream in my head.

Three days later I reached Milan, a day before the formal opening of the Peace Congress. But I found a telegram had come that morning to the Poste Restante to banish[Pg 341] all thought of my pacific mission from my mind. It came from Paris and its blue ribbon of text ran:

"Come back at once to London. Justin has been told of our meeting and is resolved upon divorce. Will do all in my power to explain and avert but feel you should know at once."

There are some things so monstrously destructive to all we hold dear that for a time it is impossible to believe them. I remember now that as I read that amazing communication through—at the first reading it was a little difficult to understand because the Italian operator had guessed at one or two of the words, no real sense of its meaning came to me. That followed sluggishly. I felt as one might feel when one opens some offensive anonymous letter or hears some preposterous threat.

"What *nonsense!*" I said, faint-heartedly. I stood for a time at my bedroom window trying to shake this fact altogether off my mind. But it stayed, and became more and more real. Suddenly with a start I perceived it was real. I had to do things forthwith.

I rang the bell and asked for an *Orario*. "I shan't want these rooms. I have to go back to England," I said. "Yes,—I have had bad news." ...

§ 8

"We've only got to explain," I told myself a hundred times during that long sleepless journey. The thundering wheels so close beneath my head echoed: "Explain. Oh yes! Explain! Explain! Explain!"

[Pg 342]

And something, a voice to which I would not listen, urged: "Suppose they do not choose to believe what you explain."

When I sat face to face with Maxwell Hartington, my solicitor, in his ink-splashed, dirty, yellow-grained room with its rows of black tin boxes, I could no longer ignore that possibility. Maxwell Hartington sat back in his chair after his fashion, listening to my story, breathing noisily through his open mouth, perspiring little beads and looking more out of condition than ever. I never knew a man so wine-sodden and so sharp-witted.

"That's all very well, Stratton," he said, "between ourselves. Very unfortunate and all that sort of thing. But it doesn't satisfy Justin evidently; and we've got to put a different look on it if we can, before we go before a jury: You see——" He seemed to be considering and rejecting unpalatable phrases "They won't understand."

"But," I said, "after all—, a mere chance of the same hotel. There must be more evidence than that."

"You spent the night in adjacent rooms," he said dryly.

"Adjacent rooms!" I cried.

He regarded me for a moment with something bordering on admiration. "Didn't you know?" he said.

"No."

"They've routed that out. You were sleeping with your two heads within a yard of one another anyhow. Thirty-six you had, and she had thirty-seven."

"But," I said and stopped.

Maxwell Hartington's admiration gave place I think to a slight resentment at my sustained innocence. "And Lady Mary changed rooms with her secretary two nights[Pg 343] before—to be near the vacant room. The secretary went into number 12 on the floor below,—a larger room, at thirteen francs a day, and one not exposed to the early daylight...."

He turned over a paper on his desk. "You didn't know, of course," he said. "But what I want to have"—and his voice grew wrathful—"is sure evidence that you didn't know. No jury on earth is going to believe you didn't know. No jury!—— Why,"—his mask dropped—"no man on earth is going to believe a yarn like that! If that's all you have, Stratton——"

§ 9

Our London house was not shut up—two servants were there on board-wages against the possibility of such a temporary return as I was now making—Rachel was away with you three children at Cromingham. I had not told her I was returning to London, and I had put up at one of my clubs. Until I had had a second interview with Maxwell Hartington I still would not let myself think that it was possible that Mary and I would fail with our explanations. We had the common confidence of habitually unchallenged people that our word would be accepted. I had hoped indeed to get the whole affair settled and abolished without anything of it coming to Rachel's ears. Then at my

leisure I should be able to tell her exactly how things had come about. But each day made it clearer that things were not going to be settled, that the monstrous and the incredible was going to happen and that Justin had set [Pg 344] his mind implacably upon a divorce. My sense of complete innocence had already been shaken by Maxwell Hartington; I had come to perceive that we had been amazingly indiscreet, I was beginning to think we had been criminally indiscreet.

I saw Maxwell Hartington for a second time, and it became clear to me I must abandon any hope of keeping things further from Rachel. I took my luggage round to my house, to the great astonishment of the two servants,—they had supposed of course that I was in Italy—and then went down on the heels of a telegram to Rachel. I forget the wording of that telegram, but it was as little alarming as possible; I think I said something about "back in London for documents; shall try to get down to you." I did not specify any particular train or indeed state definitely that I was coming that day.

I had never been to Cromingham before. I went to the house you occupied on the Esplanade and learnt that you were all upon the beach. I walked along the sea-wall scrutinizing the various bright groups of children and nursemaids and holiday people that were scattered over the sands. It was a day of blazing sunshine, and, between the bright sky and the silver drabs of the sand stretched the low levels of a sea that had its customary green-grey touched for once with something of the sapphire glow of the Mediterranean. Here and there were gay little umbrella tents or canvas shelters, and a bather or so and pink and white wading children broke the dazzling edge of foam. And I sought you with a kind of reluctance as though finding you would bring nearer the black irrational disaster that hung over us all.

And when I found you at last you were all radiantly [Pg 345] happy and healthy, the prettiest of families, and only your mother was touched with any gravity deeper than the joy of sunshine and sea. You and Mademoiselle Potin—in those days her ministrations were just beginning—were busy constructing a great sea-wall that should really and truly stop the advancing tide. Rachel Two was a little apart, making with infinite contentment an endless multitude of conical sand pies with her little tin pail. Margaret, a pink inarticulate lump, scrabbled in the warm sand under Jessica's care. Your mother sat and watched you—thoughtfully. And before any of you knew that I was there my shadow fell across you all.

You accepted my appearance when I ought to have been in Italy with the unquestioning confidence with which you still take all my comings and goings. For you, Italy, America, any place is just round the corner. I was kissed with affection but

haste, and you got back to your sand-works as speedily as possible. I inspected Rachel Two's mounds,—she was giving them the names of her various aunts and uncles—and patted the crowing Margaret, who ignored me. Rachel had sprung to her feet and kissed me and now hovered radiant over me as I caressed you youngsters. It was all so warm, so real, that for an instant the dark threat that hung over us all vanished from my skies, to return with the force of a blow.

"And what has brought you back?" said Rachel. "I had expected a month of widowhood. What can have brought you back?"

The dancing gladness in her eyes vanished swiftly as she waited for an answer to her question. She caught the note of tragedy from my face. "Why have you come back from Italy?" she asked in an altered voice.

[Pg 346]

"Rachel," I said taking her arm, with a desolating sense of the futility in my gesture of protection; "let us walk along the beach. I want to tell you something— Something rather complicated."

"Is there going to be war, Stephen?" she asked abruptly.

It seemed then that this question which merely concerned the welfare of a hundred million people or so and pain, destruction and disaster beyond measure, was the most trivial of digressions.

"No," I said. "I haven't thought about the war."

"But I thought—you were thinking of nothing else."

"This has put it out of my head. It's something— Something disastrous to us."

"Something has happened to our money?"

"I wish that was all."

"Then what is it?" Her mind flashed out. "It has something to do with Mary Justin."

"How did you know that?"

"I guessed."

"Well. It is. You see—in Switzerland we met."

"You *met!*"

"By accident. She had been staying at the hotel on Engstlen Alp."

"You slept there!" cried Rachel.

"I didn't know she was in the hotel until the next day."

"And then you came away!"

"That day."

"But you talked together?"

"Yes."

"And for some reason—— You never told me, Stephen! You never told me. And you met. But—— Why is this, disaster?"

[Pg 347]

"Because Justin knows and he means to divorce her—and it may be he will succeed...."

Rachel's face had become white, for some time she said nothing. Then slowly, "And if he had not known and done that—I should never have known."

I had no answer to make to that. It was true. Rachel's face was very still, and her eyes stared at the situation laid bare to her.

"When you began," she choked presently, "when she wrote—I knew—I felt——"

She ceased for fear she might weep, and for a time we walked in silence.

"I suppose," she said desperately at last, "he will get his divorce."

"I am afraid he will."

"There's no evidence—you didn't...."

"No."

"And I never dreamt——!"

Then her passion tore at her. "Stephen my dear," she wept, "you didn't? you didn't? Stephen, indeed you didn't, did you? You kept faith with me as a husband should. It was an accident—a real accident—and there was no planning for you to meet together. It was as you say? I've never doubted your word ever—I've never doubted you."

Well, at any rate I could answer that plainly, and I did.

"And you know, Stephen," she said, "I believe you. And I *can't* believe you. My heart is tormented. Why did you write to her? Why did you two write and go on writing? And why did you tell me nothing of that meeting? I believe you because I can't do anything but [Pg 348] believe you. It would kill me not to believe you in a thing that came so near to us. And yet, there it is, like a knife being twisted in my heart—that you met. Should I have known of your meeting, Stephen—ever? I know I'm talking badly for you.... But this thing strikes me suddenly. Out of this clear beautiful sky! And the children there—so happy in the sunshine! I was so happy. So happy. With you coming.... It will mean shames and law-courts and newspapers, losses of friends, losses of money and freedom.... My mother and my people!... And you and all the work you do!... People will never forget it, never forgive it. They will say you promised.... If she had never written, if she had kept to her bargain——"

"We should still have met."

"Stephen!... Stephen, you must bear with me...."

"This is a thing," I said, "that falls as you say out of the sky. It seemed so natural—for her to write.... And the meeting ... it is like some tremendous disaster of nature. I do not feel I have deserved it. It is—irrational. But there it is, little Rachel of my heart, and we have to face it. Whatever happens we have to go on. It doesn't alter the work we have to do. If it clips our wings—we have to hop along with clipped wings.... For you—I wish it could spare you. And she—she too is a victim, Rachel."

"She need not have written," said Rachel. "She need not have written. And then if you had met——"

She could not go on with that.

"It is so hard," I said, "to ask you to be just to her—and me. I wish I could have come to you and married you—without all that legacy—of things remembered.... [Pg 349] was what I was.... One can't shake off a thing in one's blood. And besides—besides——"

I stopped helplessly.

§ 10

And then Mary came herself to tell me there would be no divorce.

She came to me unexpectedly. I had returned to town that evening, and next morning as I was sitting down in my study to answer some unimportant questions Maxwell Hartington had sent me, my parlormaid appeared. "Can you speak," she asked, "to Lady Mary Justin?"

I stood up to receive my visitor.

She came in, a tall dark figure, and stood facing me in silence until the door had closed behind her. Her face was white and drawn and very grave. She stooped a little, I could see she had had no sleep, never before had I seen her face marked by pain. And she hesitated.... "My dear!" I said; "why have you come to me?"

I put a chair for her and she sat down.

For a moment she controlled herself with difficulty. She put her hand over her eyes, she seemed on the verge of bitter weeping....

"I came," she said at last.... "I came. I had to come ... to see you."

I sat down in a chair beside her.

"It wasn't wise," I said. "But—never mind. You look so tired, my dear!"

She sat quite still for a little while.

Then she moved her arm as though she felt for me[Pg 350] blindly, and I put my arms about her and drew her head to my shoulder and she wept....

"I knew," she sobbed, "if I came to you...."

Presently her weeping was over.

"Get me a little cold water, Stephen," she said. "Let me have a little cold water on my face. I've got my courage now again. Just then,—I was down too low. Yes—cold water. Because I want to tell you—things you will be glad to hear."

"You see, Stephen," she said—and now all her self-possession had returned; "there mustn't be a divorce. I've thought it all out. And there needn't be a divorce."

"Needn't be?"

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I can stop it."

"But how?"

"I can stop it. I can manage—— I can make a bargain.... It's very sweet, dear Stephen, to be here talking to you again."

She stood up.

"Sit at your desk, my dear," she said. "I'm all right now. That water was good. How good cold things can be! Sit down at your desk and let me sit here. And then I will talk to you. I've had such a time, my dear. Ah!"

She paused and stuck her elbows on the desk and looked me in the eyes. And suddenly that sweet, frank smile of hers swept like sunshine across the wintry desolation of her face. "We've both been having a time," she said. "This odd little world,—it's battered us with its fists. For such a little. And we were both so ridiculously[Pg 351] happy. Do you remember it, the rocks and the sunshine and all those twisted and tangled little plants? And how the boat leaked and you baled it out! And the parting, and how you trudged up that winding path away from me! A grey figure that stopped and waved—a little figure—such a virtuous figure! And then, this storm! this *awful* hullabaloo! Lawyers, curses, threats—. And Stella Summersley Satchel like a Fury of denunciation. What hatred that woman has hidden from me! It must have accumulated.... It's terrible to think, Stephen, how much I must have tried her.... Oh! how far away those Alps are now, Stephen! Like something in another life.... And here we are!—among the consequences."

"But,—you were saying we could stop the divorce."

"Yes. We can. I can. But I wanted to see you,—before I did. Somehow I don't feel lonely with you. I had to see you.... It's good to see you."

She looked me in the face. Her tired eyes lit with a gleam of her former humor.

"Have you thought," she asked, "of all that will happen if there is a divorce?"

"I mean to fight every bit of it."

"They'll beat you."

"We'll see that."

"But they will. And then?"

"Why should one meet disaster half way?"

"Stephen!" she said; "what will happen to you when I am not here to make you look at things? Because I shan't be here. Not within reach of you.... There are times when I feel like a mother to you. Never more than now...."

And then with rapid touches she began to picture[Pg 352] the disaster before me. She pictured the Court and our ineffectual denials, she made me realize the storm of

hostility that was bound to burst over us. "And think of me," she said. "Stripped I shall be and outcast."

"Not while I live!"

"But what can you do for me? You will have Rachel. How can you stand by me? You can't be cruel to Rachel. You know you can't be cruel to Rachel. Look me in the face, Stephen; tell me. Yes.... Then how can you stand by me?"

"Somehow!" I cried foolishly and stopped.

"They'll use me to break your back with costs and damages. There'll be those children of yours to think of...."

"My God!" I cried aloud. "Why do you torment me? Haven't I thought enough of those things?... Haven't I seen the ruin and the shame, the hopeless trap, men's trust in me gone, my work scattered and ended again, my children growing up to hear this and that exaggeration of our story. And you——. All the bravery of your life scattered and wasted. The thing will pursue us all, cling to us. It will be all the rest of our lives for us...."

I covered my face with my hands.

When I looked up, her face was white and still, and full of a strange tenderness. "I wouldn't have you, Stephen—I wouldn't have you be cruel to Rachel.... I just wanted to know—something.... But we're wandering. We're talking nonsense. Because as I said, there need be no divorce. There will be no divorce at all. That's what I came to tell you. I shall have to pay—in a way, Stephen.... Not impossibly. Don't think it is anything impossible...."

[Pg 353]

Then she bit her lips and sat still....

"My dear," I whispered, "if we had taken one another at the beginning...."

But she went on with her own thoughts.

"You love those little children of yours," she said. "And that trusting girl-wife.... Of course you love them. They're yours. Oh! they're so deeply—yours.... Yours...."

"Oh my dear! don't torture me! I do love them. But I love you too."

"No," she said, "not as you do them."

I made a movement of protest.

"No," she said, whitely radiant with a serenity I had never seen before in her face. "You love me with your brain. With your soul if you like. I *know*, my poor bleeding Stephen!—Aren't those tears there? Don't mind my seeing them, Stephen.... Poor dear! Poor dear!.... You love *them* with your inmost heart. Why should you mind that I see you do?... All my life I've been wrong, Stephen, and now I know too late. It's the things we own we love, the things we buy with our lives.... Always I have been hard, I've been a little hard.... Stephen, my dear, I loved you, always I have loved you, and always I have tried to keep myself.... It's too late.... I don't know why I am talking like this.... But you see I can make a bargain now—it's not an impossible bargain—and save you and save your wife and save your children——"

"But how?" I said, still doubting.

"Never mind how, Stephen. Don't ask me how now. Nothing very difficult. Easy. But I shall write you no more letters—see you—no more. Never. And that's [Pg 354] why I had to come, you see, why I was able to come to you, just to see you and say good-bye to you, and take leave of you, dear Love that I threw away and loved too late...."

She bit her lip and faced me there, a sweet flushed living thing, with a tear coursing down her cheek, and her mouth now firm and steady.

"You can stop this divorce?" I said, "But how, Mary?"

"No, don't ask me how. At a price. It's a bargain. No, no! Don't think that,—a bargain with Justin, but not degrading. Don't, my dear, let the thought of it distress you. I have to give earnest.... Never, dear, never through all the dusty rest of life again will you and I speak together. Never! Even if we come face to face once more—no word...."

"Mary," I said, "what is it you have to do? You speak as if—— What is it Justin demands?"

"No! do not ask me that.... Tell me—you see we've so much to talk about, Stephen—tell me of all you are going to do. Everything. Because I've got to make a great vow of renunciation—of you. Not to think again—not even to think of you again.... No, no. I'm not even to look for you in the papers any more. There's to be no tricks this time. And so you see I want to fill up my mind with you. To store myself with you. Tell me your work is worth it—that it's not like the work of everyone. Tell me, Stephen—*that*. I want to believe that—tremendously. Don't be modest now. That will be cruel. I want to believe that I am at last to do something that is worth doing, something not fruitless...."

"Are you to go into seclusion," I asked suddenly, "to be a nun——?"

[Pg 355]

"It is something like that," she said; "very like that. But I have promised—practically—not to tell you that. Tell me your soul, Stephen, now. Give me something I may keep in my mind through—through all those years of waiting...."

"But where?" I cried. "What years of waiting?"

"In a lonely place, my dear—among mountains. High and away. Very beautiful, but lonely. A lake. Great rocks.... Yes,—like that place. So odd.... I shall have so much time to think, and I shall have no papers—no news. I mustn't talk to you of that. Don't let me talk to you of that. I want to hear about this world, this world I am going to leave, and how you think you are going on fighting in the hot and dusty struggle—to make the world cool and kind and reasonable, to train minds better, to broaden ideas ... all those things you believe in. All those things you believe in and stick to—even when they are dull. Now I am leaving it, I begin to see how fine it is—to fight as you want to fight. A tiresome inglorious lifelong fight.... You really believe, Stephen?"

§ 11

And then suddenly I read her purpose.

"Mary," I cried, and stood up and laid my hand upon her arm, "Tell me what is it you mean to do. What do you mean to do?"

She looked up at me defensively and for a moment neither of us spoke.

"Mary," I said, and could not say what was in my thoughts.

[Pg 356]

"You are wrong," she lied at last....

She stood up too and faced me. I held her shoulder and looked into her eyes.

The gong of my little clock broke the silence.

"I must go, Stephen," she said. "I did not see how the time was slipping by."

I began to entreat her and she to deny. "You don't understand," she said, "you don't understand. Stephen!—I had hoped you would understand. You see life,—not as I see it. I wanted—all sorts of splendid things and you—begin to argue. You are shocked, you refuse to understand.... No. No. Take your hands off me, Stephen dear, and let me go. Let me go!"

"But," I said, stupid and persistent, "what are you going to do?"

"I've told you. Stephen. I've told you. As much as I can tell you. And you think—this foolish thing. As though I could do that! Stephen, if I promise, will you let me go?..."

§ 12

My mind leaps from that to the moment in the afternoon, when torn by intolerable distresses and anxiety I knocked and rang, and again knocked at the door of the house she occupied in South Street, with the intention of making one last appeal to her to live—if, indeed, it was death she had in mind. I had let her go from me and instantly a hundred neglected things had come into my head. I could go away with her, I could threaten to die with her; it seemed to me that nothing in all the world mattered if only I could thrust back the dark hand of death to which[Pg 357] she had so manifestly turned. I knew, I knew all along that her extorted promise would not bind her. I knew and I let the faintest shadow of uncertainty weaken and restrain me. And I went to her too late. I saw instantly that I was too late when the door opened and showed me the scared face of a young footman whose eyes were red with tears.

"Are you Doctor——?" he asked of my silence.

"I want——" I said. "I must speak to Lady Mary."

He was wordless for a moment. "She—she died, sir," he said. "She's died suddenly." His face quivered, he was blubbing. He couldn't say anything more; he stood snivelling in the doorway.

For some moments I remained confronting him as if I would dispute his words. Some things the mind contests in the face of invincible conviction. One wants to thrust back time....

[Pg 358]

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

The Arraignment of Jealousy

§ 1

I sit here in this graciously proportioned little room which I shall leave for ever next week, for already your mother begins to pack for England again. I look out upon the neat French garden that I have watched the summer round, and before me is the pile of manuscript that has grown here, the story of my friendship and love for Mary and of its tragic end, and of all the changes of my beliefs and purposes that have arisen out

of that. I had meant it to be the story of my life, but how little of my life is in it! It gives, at most, certain acute points, certain salient aspects. I begin to realize for the first time how thin and suggestive and sketchy a thing any novel or biography must be. How we must simplify! How little can we convey the fullness of life, the glittering interests, the interweaving secondary aspects, the dawns and dreams and double refractions of experience! Even Mary, of whom I have labored to tell you, seems not so much expressed as hidden beneath these corrected sheets. She who was so abundantly living, who could love like a burst of sunshine and give herself as God gives the world, is she here at all in this pile of industrious inexpert writing?

[Pg 359]

Life is so much fuller than any book can be. All this story can be read, I suppose, in a couple of hours or so, but I have been living and reflecting upon and reconsidering the substance of it for over forty years. I do not see how this book can give you any impression but that of a career all strained upon the frame of one tragic relationship, yet no life unless it is a very short young life can have that simplicity. Of all the many things I have found beautiful and wonderful, Mary was the most wonderful to me, she is in my existence like a sunlit lake seen among mountains, of all the edges by which life has wrought me she was the keenest. Nevertheless she was not all my life, nor the form of all my life. For a time after her death I could endure nothing of my home, I could not bear the presence of your mother or you, I hated the possibility of consolation, I went away into Italy, and it was only by an enormous effort that I could resume my interest in that scheme of work to which my life is given. But it is manifest I still live, I live and work and feel and share beauty....

It seems to me more and more as I live longer, that most poetry and most literature and particularly the literature of the past is discordant with the vastness and variety, the reserves and resources and recuperations of life as we live it to-day. It is the expression of life under cruder and more rigid conditions than ours, lived by people who loved and hated more naïvely, aged sooner and died younger than we do. Solitary persons and single events dominated them as they do not dominate us. We range wider, last longer, and escape more and more from intensity towards understanding. And already this astounding blow begins to take its place among other events, as a thing [Pg 360] strange and terrible indeed, but related to all the strangeness and mystery of life, part of the universal mysteries of despair and futility and death that have troubled my consciousness since childhood. For a time the death of Mary obscured her life for me, but now her living presence is more in my mind again. I begin to see that it is the reality of her existence and not the accidents of her end that matter most. It signifies less that she should have flung out of life when it seemed that her

living could only have meant disaster to herself and to all she loved, than that all her life should have been hampered and restricted. Through all her life this brave and fine and beautiful being was for the most part of her possibilities, wasted in a splendid setting, magnificently wasted if you will, but wasted.

§ 2

It was that idea of waste that dominated my mind in a strange interview I had with Justin. For it became necessary for me to see Justin in order that we should stamp out the whispers against her that followed her death. He had made it seem an accidental death due to an overdose of the narcotic she employed, but he had not been able to obliterate altogether the beginnings of his divorce proceedings. There had been talk on the part of clerks and possible witnesses. But of all that I need not tell you here; what matters is that Justin and I could meet without hatred or violence. I met a Justin grey-haired and it seemed to me physically shrunken, more than ever slow-speaking, with his habit of attentive silences more marked and that dark scar spread beyond his brows.

[Pg 361]

We had come to our parting, we had done our business with an affectation of emotional aloofness, and then suddenly he gripped me by the arm. "Stratton," he said, "we two—— We killed her. We tore her to pieces between us...."

I made no answer to this outbreak.

"We tore her to pieces," he repeated. "It's so damned silly. One gets angry—like an animal."

I became grotesquely anxious to assure him that, indeed, she and I had been, as they say, innocent throughout our last day together. "You were wrong in all that," I said. "She kept her faith with you. We never planned to meet and when we met——. If we had been brother and sister——. Indeed there was nothing."

"I suppose," he said, "I ought to be glad of that. But now it doesn't seem to matter very much. We killed her... What does that matter to me now?"

§ 3

And it is upon this effect of sweet and beautiful possibilities, caught in the net of animal jealousies and thoughtless motives and ancient rigid institutions, that I would end this writing. In Mary, it seems to me, I found both womanhood and fellowship, I found what many have dreamt of, love and friendship freely given, and I could do

nothing but clutch at her to make her my possession. I would not permit her to live except as a part of my life. I see her now and understand her better than when she was alive, I recall things that she said and wrote and it is clear to me, clearer perhaps than it ever was to her, that[Pg 362] she, with her resentment at being in any sense property, her self-reliant thought, her independence of standard, was the very prototype of that sister-lover who must replace the seductive and abject womanhood, owned, mastered and deceiving, who waste the world to-day. And she was owned, she was mastered, she was forced into concealment. What alternative was there for her? What alternative is there for any woman? She might perhaps have kept her freedom by some ill-paid work and at the price of every other impulse in her swift and eager nature. She might have become one of those poor neuters, an independent woman.... Life was made impossible for her and she was forced to die, according to the fate of all untimely things. She was destroyed, not merely by the unconsidered, undisciplined passions of her husband and her lover, but by the vast tradition that sustains and enforces the subjugation of her sex. What I had from her, and what she was, is but a mere intimation of all that she and I might have made of each other and the world.

And perhaps in this story I have said enough for you to understand why Mary has identified herself with something world-wide, has added to herself a symbolical value, and why it is I find in the whole crowded spectacle of mankind, a quality that is also hers, a sense of fine things entangled and stifled and unable to free themselves from the ancient limiting jealousies which law and custom embody. For I know that a growing multitude of men and women outwear the ancient ways. The blood-stained organized jealousies of religious intolerance, the delusions of nationality and cult and race, that black hatred which simple people and young people and common people cherish against all that is not in the likeness[Pg 363] of themselves, cease to be the undisputed ruling forces of our collective life. We want to emancipate our lives from this slavery and these stupidities, from dull hatreds and suspicion. The ripening mind of our race tires of these boorish and brutish and childish things. A spirit that is like hers, arises and increases in human affairs, a spirit that demands freedom and gracious living as our inheritance too long deferred, and I who loved her so blindly and narrowly now love her spirit with a dawning understanding.

I will not be content with that compromise of jealousies which is the established life of humanity to-day. I give myself, and if I can I will give you, to the destruction of jealousy and of the forms and shelters and instruments of jealousy, both in my own self and in the thought and laws and usage of the world.

THE END

ADVERTISEMENTS

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Abner Daniel	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Adventures of a Modest Man	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	<i>A. Conan Doyle</i>
After House, The	<i>Mary Roberts Rinehart</i>
Ailsa Paige	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Air Pilot, The	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Alton of Somasco	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Andrew The Glad	<i>Maria Thompson Daviess</i>
Ann Boyd	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Anna the Adventuress	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Armchair at the Inn, The	<i>F. Hopkinson Smith</i>
As the Sparks Fly Upward	<i>Cyrus Townsend Brady</i>

At the Mercy of Tiberius	<i>Augusta Evans Wilson</i>
At the Moorings	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Aunt Jane of Kentucky	<i>Eliza Calvert Hall</i>
Awakening of Helena Richie	<i>Margaret Deland</i>
Bandbox, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Bar 20	<i>Clarence E. Mulford</i>
Bar 20 Days	<i>Clarence E. Mulford</i>
Barrier, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Battle Ground, The	<i>Ellen Glasgow</i>
Bella Donna	<i>Robert Hichens</i>
Beloved Vagabond, The	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Ben Blair	<i>Will Lillibridge</i>
Beth Norvell	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Betrayal, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Beulah (Illustrated Edition)	<i>Augusta J. Evans</i>
Bob Hampton of Placer	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Bob, Son of Battle	<i>Alfred Ollivant</i>
Brass Bowl, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Broad Highway, The	<i>Jeffery Farnol</i>

Bronze Bell, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Buck Peters, Ranchman	<i>Clarence E. Mulford</i>
Butterfly Man, The	<i>George Barr McCutcheon</i>
By Right of Purchase	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Cabbages and Kings	<i>O. Henry</i>
Calling of Dan Matthews, The	<i>Harold Bell Wright</i>
Call of the Blood, The	<i>Robert Hichens</i>
Cape Cod Stories	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Cap'n Eri	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Cap'n Warren's Wards	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Cardigan	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Car of Destiny, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Carpet From Bagdad, The	<i>Harold MacGrath</i>
Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine	<i>F. R. Stockton</i>

Chaperon, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Circle, The	<i>Katherine Cecil Thurston</i>
Claw, The	<i>Cynthia Stockley</i>
Colonial Free Lance, A	<i>Chauncey C. Hotchkiss</i>
Coming of the Law, The	<i>Charles Alden Seltzer</i>
Conquest of Canaan, The	<i>Booth Tarkington</i>
Conspirators, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Cordelia Blossom	<i>George Randolph Chester</i>
Counsel for the Defense	<i>Leroy Scott</i>
Cry in the Wilderness, A	<i>Mary E. Waller</i>
Dark Hollow, The	<i>Anna Katharine Green</i>
Day of Days, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Depot Master, The	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Derelicts	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Desired Woman, The	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Destroying Angel, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Divine Fire, The	<i>May Sinclair</i>
Dixie Hart	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Dominant Dollar, The	<i>Will Lillibridge</i>

Dr. David	<i>Marjorie Benton Cooke</i>
Enchanted Hat, The	<i>Harold MacGrath</i>
Excuse Me	<i>Rupert Hughes</i>
54-40 or Fight	<i>Emerson Hough</i>
Fighting Chance, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Financier, The	<i>Theodore Dreiser</i>
Flamsted Quarries	<i>Mary E. Waller</i>
For a Maiden Brave	<i>Chauncey C. Hotchkiss</i>
Four Million, The	<i>O. Henry</i>
From the Car Behind	<i>Eleanor M. Ingraham</i>
Fruitful Vine, The	<i>Robert Hichens</i>
Gentleman of France, A	<i>Stanley Weyman</i>
Get-Rich-Quick-Wallingford	<i>George Randolph Chester</i>
Gilbert Neal	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Girl From His Town, The	<i>Marie Van Vorst</i>
Glory of Clementina, The	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Glory of the Conquered, The	<i>Susan Glaspell</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

God's Good Man	<i>Marie Corelli</i>
Going Some	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Gordon Craig	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Greyfriars Bobby	<i>Eleanor Atkinson</i>
Guests of Hercules, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Halcyone	<i>Elinor Glyn</i>
Happy Island (Sequel to Uncle William)	<i>Jennette Lee</i>
Havoc	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Heart of the Hills, The	<i>John Fox, Jr.</i>
Heart of the Desert, The	<i>Honore Willsie</i>
Heather-Moon, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Her Weight in Gold	<i>George Barr McCutcheon</i>
Herb of Grace	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Highway of Fate, The	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Homesteaders, The	<i>Kate and Virgil D. Boyles</i>
Hopalong Cassidy	<i>Clarence E. Mulford</i>
Honor of the Big Snows, The	<i>James Oliver Curwood</i>

House of Happiness, The	<i>Kate Langley Bosher</i>
House of the Lost Court, The	<i>C. N. Williamson</i>
House of the Whispering Pines, The	<i>Anna K. Green</i>
Household of Peter, The	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker	<i>S. Weir Mitchell, M.D.</i>
Husbands of Edith, The	<i>George Barr McCutcheon</i>
Idols	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Illustrious Prince, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Imposter, The	<i>John Reed Scott</i>
In Defiance of the King	<i>Chauncey C. Hotchkiss</i>
Indifference of Juliet, The	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
Inez (Illustrated Edition)	<i>Augusta J. Evans</i>
Infelice	<i>Augusta Evans Wilson</i>
Initials Only	<i>Anna Katharine Green</i>
Iron Trail, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Iron Woman, The	<i>Margaret Deland</i>
Ishmael (Illustrated)	<i>Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth</i>
Island of Regeneration, The	<i>Cyrus Townsend Brady</i>
Japonette	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>

Jane Cable

George Barr McCutcheon

Jeanne of the Marshes

E. Phillips Oppenheim

Jennie Gerhardt

Theodore Dreiser

Joyful Heatherby

Payne Erskine

Judgment House, The

Sir Gilbert Parker

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Keith of the Border

Randall Parrish

Key to the Unknown, The

Rosa N. Carey

King Spruce

Holman Day

Knave of Diamonds, The

Ethel M. Dell

Lady and the Pirate, The

Emerson Hough

Lady Betty Across the Water

C. N. and A. M. Williamson

Land of Long Ago, The

Eliza Calvert Hall

Langford of the Three Bars

Kate and Virgil D. Boyles

Last Trail, The

Zane Grey

Last Voyage of the Donna Isabel, The	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Leavenworth Case, The	<i>Anna Katherine Green</i>
Life Mask, The	<i>Author of "To M. L. G."</i>
Lighted Way, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Lin McLean	<i>Owen Wister</i>
Little Brown Jug at Kildare, The	<i>Meredith Nicholson</i>
Lonesome Land	<i>B. M. Bower</i>
Lord Loveland Discovers America	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Lorimer of the Northwest	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Lorraine	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Lost Ambassador, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Love Under Fire	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Macaria (Illustrated Edition)	<i>Augusta J. Evans</i>
Maid at Arms, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Maid of Old New York, A	<i>Amelia E. Barr</i>
Maids of Paradise, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Maid of the Whispering Hills, The	<i>Vingie E. Roe</i>
Maid of the Forest, The	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Making of Bobby Burnit, The	<i>Geo. Randolph Chester</i>

Mam' Linda	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Marriage	<i>H. G. Wells</i>
Marriage a la Mode	<i>Mrs. Humphrey Ward</i>
Master Mummer, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Masters of the Wheatlands	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Max	<i>Katherine Cecil Thurston</i>
Mediator, The	<i>Roy Norton</i>
Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes	<i>A. Conan Doyle</i>
Missioner, The	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Miss Gibbie Gault	<i>Kale Langley Boshier</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Miss Philura's Wedding Gown	<i>Florence Morse Kingsley</i>
Miss Selina Lue	<i>Maria Thompson Daviess</i>
Mollie's Prince	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Molly McDonald	<i>Randall Parrishy</i>

Money Moon, The	<i>Jeffery Farnol</i>
Motor Maid, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Moth, The	<i>William Dana Orcutt</i>
Mountain Girl, The	<i>Payne Erskine</i>
Mr. Pratt	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Mr. Pratt's Patients	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Mrs. Red Pepper	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
My Friend the Chauffeur	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
My Lady Caprice	<i>Jeffery Farnol</i>
My Lady of Doubt	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
My Lady of the North	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
My Lady of the South	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Mystery Tales	<i>Edgar Allen Poe</i>
Mystery of the Boule Cabinet, The	<i>Burton E. Stevenson</i>
Nancy Stair	<i>Elinor Macartney Lane</i>
Ne'er-Do-Well, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Net, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Night Riders, The	<i>Ridgwell Cullum</i>
No Friend Like a Sister	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>

Officer 666	<i>Barton W. Currie and Augustin McHugh</i>
Once Upon a Time	<i>Richard Harding Davis</i>
One Braver Thing	<i>Richard Dehan</i>
One Way Trail, The	<i>Ridgwell Cullum</i>
Orphan, The	<i>Clarence E. Mulford</i>
Out of the Primitive	<i>Robert Ames Bennet</i>
Pam	<i>Bettina Von Hutten</i>
Pam Decides	<i>Bettina Von Hutten</i>
Pardners	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Parrot & Co	<i>Harold McGrath</i>
Partners of the Tide	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Passage Perilous, The	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Passionate Friends, The	<i>H. G. Wells</i>
Paul Anthony, Christian	<i>Hiram W. Hays</i>
Peter Ruff	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Phillip Steele	<i>James Oliver Curwood</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Phra the Phoenician	<i>Edwin Lester Arnold</i>
Pidgin Island	<i>Harold MacGrath</i>
Place of Honeymoons, The	<i>Harold MacGrath</i>
Pleasures and Palaces	<i>Juliet Wilbor Tompkins</i>
Plunderer, The	<i>Roy Norton</i>
Pole Baker	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Pool of Flame, The	<i>Louis Joseph Vance</i>
Polly of the Circus	<i>Margaret Mayo</i>
Poppy	<i>Cynthia Stockley</i>
Port of Adventure, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Postmaster, The	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Power and the Glory, The	<i>Grace McGowan Cooke</i>
Price of the Prairie, The	<i>Margaret Hill McCarter</i>
Prince of Sinners, A	<i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>
Prince or Chauffeur	<i>Lawrence Perry</i>
Princess Passes, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Princess Virginia, The	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>

Prisoners of Chance	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Prodigal Son, The	<i>Hall Caine</i>
Purple Parasol, The	<i>George Barr McCutcheon</i>
R. J.'s Mother	<i>Margaret Deland</i>
Ranching for Sylvia	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Reason Why, The	<i>Elinor Glyn</i>
Redemption of Kenneth Galt, The	<i>Will N. Harben</i>
Red Cross Girl, The	<i>Richard Harding Davis</i>
Red Lane, The	<i>Holman Day</i>
Red Pepper Burns	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
Red Republic, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Refugees, The	<i>A. Conan Doyle</i>
Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary, The	<i>Anne Warner</i>
Rise of Roscoe Paine, The	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Road to Providence, The	<i>Maria Thompson Daviess</i>
Robinetta	<i>Kate Douglas Wiggin</i>
Rose in the Ring, The	<i>George Barr McCutcheon</i>
Rose of the World	<i>Agnes and Egerton Castle</i>
Rose of Old Harpeth, The	<i>Maria Thompson Daviess</i>

Round the Corner in Gay Street	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
Routledge Rides Alone	<i>Will Levington Comfort</i>
Rue: With a Difference	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
St. Elmo (Illustrated Edition)	<i>Augusta J. Evans</i>
Seats of the Mighty, The	<i>Gilbert Parker</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Second Violin, The	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
Self-Raised (Illustrated)	<i>Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth</i>
Septimus	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Set in Silver	<i>C. N. and A. M. Williamson</i>
Sharrow	<i>Bettina Von Hutten</i>
Shepherd of the Hills, The	<i>Harold Bell Wright</i>
Sheriff of Dyke Hole, The	<i>Ridgwell Cullum</i>
Ship's Company	<i>W. W. Jacobs</i>
Sidney Carteret, Rancher	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>

Sign at Six, The	<i>Stewart Edward White</i>
Silver Horde, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Simon the Jester	<i>William J. Locke</i>
Sir Nigel	<i>A. Conan Doyle</i>
Sir Richard Calmady	<i>Lucas Malet</i>
Sixty-First Second, The	<i>Owen Johnson</i>
Slim Princess, The	<i>George Ade</i>
Speckled Bird, A	<i>Augusta Evans Wilson</i>
Spirit in Prison, A	<i>Robert Hichens</i>
Spirit of the Border, The	<i>Zane Grey</i>
Spoilers, The	<i>Rex Beach</i>
Strawberry Acres	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
Strawberry Handkerchief, The	<i>Amelia E. Barr</i>
Streets of Ascalon, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
Sunnyside of the Hill, The	<i>Rosa N. Carey</i>
Sunset Trail, The	<i>Alfred Henry Lewis</i>
Susan Clegg and Her Friend Mrs. Lathrop	<i>Anne Warner</i>
Sword of the Old Frontier, A	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Tales of Sherlock Holmes	<i>A. Conan Doyle</i>

Tarzan of the Apes	<i>Edgar Rice Burroughs</i>
Taste of Apples, The	<i>Jennette Lee</i>
Tennessee Shad, The	<i>Owen Johnson</i>
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	<i>Thomas Hardy</i>
Texican, The	<i>Dane Coolidge</i>
That Affair Next Door	<i>Anna Katharine Green</i>
That Printer of Udell's	<i>Harold Bell Wright</i>
Their Yesterdays	<i>Harold Bell Wright</i>
Throwback, The	<i>Alfred Henry Lewis</i>
Thurston of Orchard Valley	<i>Harold Blindloss</i>
To M. L. G.; Or, He Who Passed	<i>Anonymous</i>
To Him That Hath	<i>Leroy Scott</i>

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

**Ask your dealer for a complete
list of A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction**

Torn Sails	<i>Allen Raine</i>
Trail of the Axe, The	<i>Ridgwell Cullum</i>

Trail to Yesterday, The	<i>Charles Alden Seltzer</i>
Treasure of Heaven, The	<i>Marie Corelli</i>
Truth Dexter	<i>Sidney McCall</i>
T. Tembarom	<i>Frances Hodgson Burnett</i>
Turnstile, The	<i>A. E. W. Mason</i>
Two-Gun Man, The	<i>Charles Alden Seltzer</i>
Uncle William	<i>Jeanette Lee</i>
Under the Red Robe	<i>Stanley J. Weyman</i>
Up From Slavery	<i>Booker T. Washington</i>
Valiants of Virginia, The	<i>Hallie Erminie Rives</i>
Vanity Box, The	<i>C. N. Williamson</i>
Vane of the Timberlands	<i>Harold Bindloss</i>
Varmint, The	<i>Owen Johnson</i>
Vashti	<i>Augusta Evans Wilson</i>
Wall of Men, A	<i>Margaret Hill McCarter</i>
Watchers of the Plains, The	<i>Ridgwell Cullum</i>
Way Home, The	<i>Basil King</i>
Way of An Eagle, The	<i>E. M. Dell</i>
Weavers, The	<i>Gilbert Parker</i>

West Wind, The	<i>Cyrus Townsend Brady</i>
Wheel of Life, The	<i>Ellen Glasgow</i>
When Wilderness Was King	<i>Randall Parrish</i>
Where the Trail Divides	<i>Will Lillibridge</i>
Where There's A Will	<i>Mary Roberts Rinehart</i>
White Sister, The	<i>Marion Crawford</i>
Wind Before the Dawn, The	<i>Dell H. Munger</i>
Window at the White Cat, The	<i>Mary Roberts Rinehart</i>
Winning of Barbara Worth, The	<i>Harold Bell Wright</i>
With Juliet in England	<i>Grace S. Richmond</i>
With the Best Intentions	<i>Bruno Lessing</i>
Woman in the Alcove, The	<i>Anna Katharine Green</i>
Woman Haters, The	<i>Joseph C. Lincoln</i>
Woodcarver of 'Lympus, The	<i>Mary E. Waller</i>
Woodfire in No. 3, The	<i>F. Hopkinson Smith</i>
Wrecker, The	<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>
Younger Set, The	<i>Robert W. Chambers</i>
You Never Know Your Luck	<i>Gilbert Parker</i>