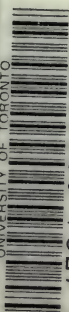


STORIES IN

GREY

Harry Pain

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00668755 2



STORIES  
IN . .  
GREY .

**NEW FICTION AT 6s.**

FERGUS HUME	-	-	The Blue Talisman
STANLEY PORTAL HYATT			Makers of Mischief
SHAN BULLOCK	-	-	Hetty—The Story of an Ulster Family
MURRAY GILCHRIST	-		The First Born
M. P. SHIEL	-	-	The Pale Ape
SEWELL FORD	-	-	Torchy
ELEANOR M. INGRAM	-		John Allard
F. HOPKINSON SMITH	-		Kennedy Square

**NEW FICTION AT 2s.**

**IN A COTTAGE HOSPITAL. A Novel.**

## GEORGE TRELAWNEY

An epoch-making novel. It is hoped this book will do for the sick poor of England what "The Jungle" did for the Chicago Workers. *This is not a novel for little people nor for fools.*

**A GIVER IN SECRET - - THOMAS COBB**

This is a new novel never before published and first issued at 2s. net.



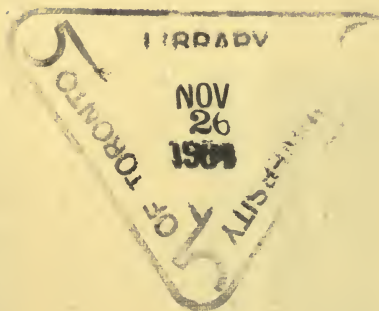
# STORIES IN GREY

By  
BARRY PAIN



T. WERNER LAURIE  
CLIFFORD'S INN  
LONDON

PR  
6031  
A25587  
1911



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
SMEATH . . . . .	I
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA . . . . .	42
BURDON'S TOMB . . . . .	69
THE UNKNOWN GOD . . . . .	111
THE LAST CHANCE . . . . .	116
HER PEOPLE . . . . .	134
ROSE ROSE . . . . .	145
SAINT MARTIN'S SUMMER . . . . .	155
THE DOLL . . . . .	162
TOO SOON AND TOO LATE . . . . .	181
LOCRI OF THE TOWER . . . . .	194
MINIATURES . . . . .	215
LINDA . . . . .	272
THE GOOD NAME . . . . .	291
THREE DIALOGUES . . . . .	295



# Stories in Grey

SMEATH

## I

PERCY BELLOWES was not actually idle, had a good deal of ability, and wished to make money. But at the age of thirty-five he had not made it. He had been articled to a solicitor, and, in his own phrase, had turned it down. He had neglected the regular channels of education which were open to him. He could give a conjuring entertainment for an hour, and though his tricks were stock tricks, they were done in the neat professional manner.

He could play the cornet and the violin, neither of them very well. He could dance a breakdown. He had made himself useful in a touring theatrical company. But he could not spell correctly, and his grammar was not always beyond reproach. He disliked regularity. He could not go to the same office at the same time every morning. He was thriftless, and he had been, but was no longer, intemperate. He was a big man, with smooth black hair, and a heavy moustache, and he had the manners of a bully.

At the age of thirty-five he considered his position. He was at that time travelling the country as a hypnotic entertainer, under the name of Dr Sanders-Bell. At each of his entertainments he issued a Ten Thousand Pound Challenge, not having at the time ten thousand pence in the world.

He employed confederates, and he had to pay them. It was not a good business at all. His gains in one town were always being swallowed up by his losses in another. His confederates gave him constant trouble.

But though he turned things over for long in his mind, he could see nothing else to take up. There is no money nowadays for a conjurer without originality, an indifferent musician, or passable actor. His hypnotic entertainment would have been no good in London, but it did earn just enough to keep him going in the provinces.

Also, Percy Bellows had an ordinary human weakness; he liked to be regarded with awe as a man of mystery. Even off the stage he acted his part. He had talked delirious science to agitated landladies in cheap lodgings in many towns.

Teston was a small place, and Percy Bellows thought that he had done very well, after a one-night show, to cover his expenses and put four pounds in his pocket. He remained in the town on the following day, because he wished to see a man who had answered his advertisement for a confederate, "Assistant to a Hypnotic Enter-

tainer" was the phrase Mr Bellows had used for it.

He was stopping at the Victoria Hotel. It was the only hotel in the place, and it was quite bad. But Percy Bellows was used to that. A long course of touring had habituated him to doubtful eggs and indistinguishable coffee. This morning he faced a singularly repulsive breakfast without quailing. He was even cheerful and conversational with a slatternly maid who waited on him.

"So you saw the show last night," he said.

"Yes, sir, I did. And very wonderful it was. There has never been anything like it in Teston, not in my memory."

"Ah, my dear. Well, you watch this."

He picked up the two boiled eggs which had been placed before him. He hurled one into the air, where it vanished. He swallowed the other one whole. He then produced them both from a vase on the mantelpiece.

"Well, I never!" said the maid. "I wonder if there's anything you can't do, sir?"

"Just one or two things," said Mr Bellows, sardonically. "By the way, my dear, if a man comes here this morning and asks for me, I want to see him." He consulted a soiled letter which he had taken from his pocket. "The name's Smeath."

Mr Smeath arrived, in fact, before Bellows had finished his breakfast, and was told he could come in. He was a man of extraordinary appearance,



He was a dwarf, with a slightly hunched back. His hands were a size too large for him, and were always restless. His expression was one of snarling subservience. At first Bellows was inclined to reject him, for a confederate should not be a man of unusual appearance and easily recognizable. Then it struck him that, after all, this would be a very weird and impressive figure on the stage.

"Ever do anything of this kind before?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Smeath. "But I've seen it done and can pick it up. I think I could give you satisfaction. You see, it's not very easy for a man like me to find work."

All the time that he was speaking, his hands were busy.

"When you've finished tearing up my newspaper," said Bellows.

"Sorry, sir," said the man. He pushed the newspaper away from him, but caught up a corner of the tablecloth. It was frayed, and he began to pull threads out of it, quickly and eagerly.

"Ever been hypnotized?" Bellows asked.

"No, sir," said Smeath, with a cunning smile. "But that doesn't matter, does it? I can act the part all right."

"It matters a devilish lot, as it happens. And you can't act the part all right, either. My assistants are always genuinely hypnotized. I employ them to save time on the stage. After I



have hypnotized you a few times, I shall be able to put you into the hypnotic state in a minute or less, and to do it with certainty. I can't depend on chance people from the audience. Many of them cannot be hypnotized at all, and with most of the others it takes far too long. There are exceptional cases—I had one at my show only last night—but I don't often come across them. Come on up with me to my room."

"You want to see if you can hypnotize me?"

"No, I don't. I know I can. I simply want to do it."

Upstairs in the dingy bedroom Bellows made Smeath sit down. He held the bright lid of a cigarette-tin between Smeath's eyes and slightly above the level of them.

"Look at that," he said. "Keep on looking at it. Keep on!"

In a few minutes Bellows put the tin down, put his fingers on Smeath's eyes, and closed them. The eyes remained closed. The little hunchback sat tense and rigid.

An hour later, in the coffee-room downstairs, Bellows made his definite agreement with Smeath.

"You understand?" said Bellows. "You'll be at the town-hall at Warlow to-morrow night at seven. When I invite people to come up on the platform, you will come up. That's all you've got to do. Got any money?"

"Enough for the present." Smeath began to

pull matches from a box on the table. He broke each match into four pieces. "But suppose that tomorrow night you can't do it?"

"There'll never be a day or night I can't do it with you now. That's definite. Now, then, leave those matches alone. I might be wanting one of them directly."

After Smeath's departure, Percy Bellowes sat for a few minutes deep in thought. In that dingy room upstairs he had seen something which he had never seen in his life before, something of which he thought that various uses might be made. He picked up the newspaper, and was pleased to find that Smeath's busy fingers had spared the racing intelligence. Then he sought out the landlord.

"I say," he said, "I've got a fancy to put a few shillings on a horse. Do you know anybody here it would be safe to do it with?"

"Well," said the landlord, "as a matter of fact you can do it with me, if you like. I do a little in that way on the quiet."

"The police don't bother you?"

"No; they're not a very bright lot, the police here. Besides, they're pretty busy just now. We had a murder in Teston the day before you came."

"Who was that?"

"A Miss Samuel, daughter of some very well-to-do people here. They think it was a tramp. See that plantation up on the hill there? That was where they found her—her head all beaten to pulp and her money gone."

"Nice set of blackguards you've got in Teston, I don't think. Well now, about this race to-day."

When Percy Bellowes left the Victoria Hotel on the following morning he was not required to pay a bill. On the contrary, he had a small balance to receive from the landlord.

"Bless you, I don't mind," said the landlord, as he paid him. "Pretty well all my crowd were on the favourite. Queer thing that horse should have fallen."

## II

AT Warlow the entertainment went very well. When it was over, Bellowes asked Smeath to come round to the hotel. They had the little smoking-room to themselves.

"You remember when I hypnotized you yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, Mr Bellowes."

"Do you remember what you did, or said?"

Smeath shook his head.

"I went to sleep, the same as I did to-night. That was all."

"Know anything about horse-racing?"

"Nothing. Never touched it."

"You mean to say you've never seen a horse-race?"

"Never."

"What did you do before you came to me?"

"I had not been in any employment for some

time. I was once in business as a bird-fancier. I had bad luck and made no money in it. You ask me a great many questions, sir."

"I do. That's because I've been turning things over in my mind. I want you to put your name to an agreement with me for three years. A pound a week. That's a good offer. A man who's been in business, and failed, ought to appreciate an absolute certainty like that."

"It would be the same kind of work?" Smeath asked.

"Pretty much the same. When I've finished this tour I am thinking of settling down in London. I should employ you there."

"No, thank you, Mr Bellows," said Smeath. "I would rather not."

"Oh, all right," said Bellows. "Make an idiot of yourself, if you like. It doesn't make a pin's-head of difference to me. I can easily find plenty of other men who would grab at it. I thought I was doing you a kindness. As you said yourself, chaps of your build don't find it any too easy to get work."

"I will work for you for six months—possibly a month or two longer than that. But, afterwards, well, I wish to return to the bird-fancying again."

"No, you don't," said Bellows, savagely. "If you can't take my terms, you're not going to make your own. If you won't sign for three years, out you get! You're talking like a fool, too. How can you go back to this rotten business in six

months? D'you think you're going to save the capital for it out of a pound a week?"

"I have friends who might help me."

"Who are they?"

"They are—well, they're friends of mine. You will perhaps give me till to-morrow morning to think it over."

"Very well. If you're not here by ten to-morrow morning to go round to the solicitor's office with me, I've finished with you. Now then, I'm going to hypnotize you again."

"What for?"

"Practice. Now then, look at me."

In a few moments Smeath sat with his eyes open, but fixed.

"Tell me what you see?" asked Bellows.

"Nothing," said Smeath. "I see nothing."

"Yes, you do," said Bellows. "There are horses with jockeys on them. They are racing. See? They get near the winning-post."

"Yes," said Smeath, dully. "I see them, but it is through a mist and a long way off. Now they're gone."

"Yesterday when I hypnotized you, you saw clearly. You actually described a race which afterwards took place. You gave me the colours. You gave me the names that the crowd shouted. You described how the favourite crossed his legs and fell. Can you do nothing of the kind to-day?"

"No, not to-day. To-day I see other things."



"What?"

"I see a street in London. There is a long row of sandwichmen. My name is on their boards. There are many fashionable people in the street. Expensive shops. Jewellers' shops, picture-galleries. I can see you, too. You have just come into the street."

"Where have I come from?"

"How can I tell? It may be your own house or offices. Your name is on a very small brass plate by the side of the door. You have got a fur coat on, and you are wearing a diamond pin. You get into a car. It is your own car, and you tell the man who opens the door for you to drive to the bank. You look very pleased and prosperous. Now the car starts. That is all. I can see no more."

Bellows leaned forward and blew lightly on Smeath's eyes. The tenseness of his muscles relaxed. He rubbed his eyes and stood up.

"Do you know what you've been saying?" Bellows asked.

"I've been saying nothing," said Smeath. "I have been asleep, as you know. You made me go to sleep."

Bellows looked round the room. His eye fell on an empty cigarette-box, lying in the fender.

"Pick that up, and hold it in your hands," he said.

Smeath looked surprised, but he did as he was told. There was a loose label on the box, and his fingers began to tear it off in small pieces.

"Now then," said Bellows, "can you tell me anything about the man who had that box, and threw it down there?"

"Of course I can't. How should I be able to do that? It's not possible."

"Very well," said Bellows. "I'm going to put you to sleep once more."

"I don't like this," whined Smeath. "There's too much of it. It's bad for one's health."

"Nonsense! Look here, Smeath. I want you for three years, don't I? Then I'm not likely to do anything that will injure your health. You'll be all right."

When Bellows had hypnotized Smeath, he again put the cigarette-box in his hands.

"And now what do you see?" he asked.

"This is quite clear. It is a short, thick-set man who takes the last cigarette out of the box and throws it down. As he smokes it, he walks up and down the room, frowning. He is puzzled about something. He takes out his pocket-book, and as he opens it a card drops to the floor."

"Can you see what's on the card?"

"Yes. It lies face upwards. The name is 'Mr Vincent.' And in the left-hand corner are the words 'Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard.' Now he closes his note-book."

"What was written in it?"

"I only saw one word—the name 'Samuel' . . . . Now a waiter comes into the room, and the man asks for a time-table."

Once more Bellows restored Smeath to his normal state.

"That'll do," he said. "That's all for to-night. You can be off now, and think over that offer of mine."

At ten on the following morning Smeath kept his appointment. He said he would sign an agreement for two years only, and that he would want thirty shillings a week.

"What makes you suddenly think you're worth thirty shillings a week?"

"I have no idea at all, but I know you need me very much. I have that feeling."

"It was three years I said, not two. If I pay you thirty shillings a week, you can sign for three years."

"I cannot. I want to get back to my birds. I will sign for thirty shillings a week for two years, or I will go away."

"Oh, very well," growled Bellows. "You're an obstinate little devil. Have it your own way. I hope to goodness I'm not going to lose money over you. I've never paid more than a pound to an assistant before. By the way, Smeath, were you ever in London?"

"Yes; several times."

"Do you know Piccadilly, or Bond Street, or Regent Street?"

Smeath shook his head.

"I have only passed through in going from one place to another. I know the names of those streets, but I've never been in them."



"Very well," said Bellows. "Come along with me, and we'll fix up the agreement."

## III

ABOUT a month later Mr Bellows, who had come up to London for the purpose, called at the office of Mr Tangent's agency in Sussex Street.

"Appointment," said Bellows, as he handed in his card, and was taken immediately into the inner office. Mr Tangent, a florid and slightly overdressed man of fifty, rose from his American desk to shake hands with him.

"Well, my dear old boy," said Tangent, "and how are you?"

"Fit," said Bellows. "Remarkably fit."

"And what can I do for you? I had an inquiry the other day that brought you to my mind. It's not much. A week, with a chance of an engagement if you catch on."

"Thanks, old man, but I don't want it. I've got on to something a bit better. What I want from you is a hundred and fifty pounds."

Tangent laughed genially.

"Long time since I've seen so much money as that. Well, well! What's it for? Tell us the story."

"I've had a bit of luck, Tangent. I've got a man booked up to me for the next two years who

is simply the most marvellous clairvoyant the world has ever seen."

"Clairvoyants aren't going well," said Tangent. "Most of them don't make enough to pay for their rent and their ads. in the Sunday papers. The fact is there are too many of them. I don't care what the line is—palmistry, crystal-gazing, psychometry, or what you like. There's no money in it."

"Let's talk sense. You say there's no money in it? Do you remember when Merion fell, and a ten-to-one chance romped home?"

"Remember it? I've good reason to. I'd backed Merion both ways, and didn't see how I was going to lose."

"Well, I backed the winner. Not being a Croesus like yourself, I only had five bob on. I backed him, because my clairvoyant saw the whole thing, and described it to me before the race was run."

"Can he do it again?"

"He has not been able to do it again yet. He has seen what happened in the past many times, and he has never been wrong. He is exceptional. He is only clairvoyant when he is hypnotized. In the normal state he sees nothing. He's an ugly little devil, a dwarf, and if I bring him to London he'll make a sensation. What's more, he'll make money. Pots of money. I know the crowd you've been talking about. They're a hit-or-miss lot. They're no good. This is something quite different.

We shall have all the Society women paying any fee I like to consult him. There's a fortune in it."

Tangent lit a cigarette, and pushed the box across to Bellows. "What is it you propose to do?" he asked.

"Rooms in Bond Street. Good furniture. Uniformed servant. Sandwichmen at first. Once the thing gets started, it will go by itself. Any woman who has consulted him once is absolutely bound to tell all her friends. The man's a miracle. I'll tell you another thing I'm going to do. When the next sensational murder turns up, and Scotland Yard can't put their hands on the man who did it, I'm going to turn my chap on to the job. I'll bet all I've got to sixpence that we find the man."

"There was the case of that girl — Esther Samuel."

"Yes, I remember that. But by this time most of the public have forgotten it. A better chance is bound to turn up soon."

"I don't see how you're going to start on a hundred and fifty."

"I'm not, my boy. I've got money of my own that I'm putting into it as well."

"Let's see," said Tangent, picking up a pencil. "What did you say was this man's name and address?"

Bellows laughed. "Oh, no, you don't," he said. "At present that's my business. Make it your

own business as well and you shall be told everything."

"I don't know why you should call it business at all. You ask me to lend you a hundred and fifty. You offer no security. All I've got is your story that you've found a clairvoyant who's really good."

"Very well. If you satisfied yourself that the man was really good, would you lend the money then?"

"On terms, yes. But they'd have to be satisfactory terms."

"They would be. Well, you shall see for yourself. The man's waiting in a cab downstairs."

"You might have said that before."

"Why? Anyhow, I'll go and bring him up now."

It was a chilly morning, and Smeath shivered in a thick overcoat, which he refused to remove. No time was wasted on preliminaries. Bellows hypnotized him at once.

"Now then, my boy," said Bellows. "You shall see for yourself. Give me any article which you or someone else has worn, or has frequently handled."

Tangent opened a drawer in his desk, and produced a lady's glove. "That," he said, "was left in my office a week ago. Let's see what he makes out of it."

Bellows put the glove in Smeath's hands. Smeath began to pull the buttons off it. He

dragged and tore at the glove like a wild animal at its prey. Then suddenly he began to speak.

"I see a handsome woman with bright golden hair. I think the hair has been dyed. It has that appearance. She is talking with Mr What's-his-name in this room. Each is angry with the other. She is accusing him of something. Suddenly—yes—she picks up an ink-bottle and throws it at him. Ink all over the place. He bangs on a little bell, and a man comes in who looks like a clerk. That is all. I cannot see any more."

"Wake him up and send him down to the cab again," said Tangent. "Then we can talk."

"Now," said Bellows, when they were alone together. "Had he got that right?"

"Absolutely. The woman was Cora Vendall. She wanted a particular berth, and thought I ought to have got it for her. She's fifty-six if she's a day, and not in any way suitable for it. If I had proposed it, the people would simply have laughed at me. She did get into a blind fury with me, and she did throw the ink at me. She's been made to pay for that, and she's been told not to show her powdered nose inside my office again. Your man is remarkable, Bellows. There can be no two opinions about it. There is certainly money in him."

"You will find the hundred and fifty, then?"

"Yes, I'll do that. Mind, I must have a word to say in the management. The right sort of people will have to be got to see that man. Once



that has been done, I do believe you're right, and the thing will go by itself."

"What interest do you want?"

"I don't want interest. What I do is to buy for a hundred and fifty pounds a share in your profits from your agreement with the clairvoyant."

"You shall have it. It's a jolly good thing I'm putting into your way, Tangent. I had never meant to part with a share, and I'd sooner pay you fifteen per cent. on your money. However, if you insist, you can take a sixteenth."

"Rats!" said Mr Tangent, impolitely. "This is not everybody's business. Step across to the Bank of England, and see how much they'll advance you on it. There are three of us in it. Him and you and me. I'm going to take a third. Do just as you like about it. If I go into it I can make it a certainty. I can get the right people to see the man."

"A third's too much. You must be reasonable, Tangent. I discovered him."

"A man once discovered a gold-mine. He had no means of getting the gold out. He was a thousand miles from anywhere, and he was all alone. He died on the top of his blessed gold-mine. However, I'm not arguing. I'm simply telling you. Give me a third, and my cheque and the agreement will be ready this time to-morrow morning. Otherwise, no business."

Mr Bellows hesitated, and then gave in.

## IV

AT six o'clock on a summer evening, in a well-furnished room that overlooked the traffic of Bond Street, Smeath and his employer sat and quarrelled together. Both of them wore new clothes, but Bellowes had the air of prosperity, and Smeath had not.

"It's no good to talk to me," whined Smeath. "I know what I'm saying. Where an essential consideration has been intentionally concealed, an agreement cannot stand. You never told me I was a clairvoyant."

"No," said Bellowes, "I did not. And I don't tell a man what the colour of his hair is, either. Why? Because he knows it already. You knew that you were a clairvoyant."

"I did not. I swear I did not!" said Smeath, raising his voice.

"Now, don't get excited. Don't squeal."

"I'm not squealing. Do you think that if I'd known, I would ever have come to you for a wage like that? We've had fourteen people here to-day. What did they pay?"

"Mind your own business!"

"But it is my own business. And as you wouldn't tell me, I've taken my own steps to find out. Not one of them paid less than a guinea. You had as much as five guineas from some. And here am I with thirty shillings a week. I can get

that agreement set aside. I can prove what I'm saying. I had never been hypnotized until I met you."

"Look here," said Bellows. "Let us get this fixed up once for all. I don't know who's been cramming you up with these fairy-tales about my fees, but I don't get what you think, or anything like it. I get so little, that I don't want to waste any of it on lawyers. Besides, it would do the business no good, and it would do you no good. I should leave you, and then where would you be? Remember that you are not clairvoyant until I make you clairvoyant."

"You think, perhaps, I have not read what the newspapers say about me? I can find a hundred hypnotists very easily. But there is no other man who's clairvoyant as I am."

"And there is no other man who can run a show as I can. Who brought the newspaper men here? Who paid for the advertisements? Who did pretty well everything? However, I'm not going to argue. If you want more money, you can have it. Name your figure. If it is in any way reasonable, you shall have it, on the understanding that this is the last advance you get. If it is unreasonable, you'll get nothing. You can take the thing into the Courts, and I'll fight it. And, mark my words, Smeath. If I do, you may get a surprise. You know nothing at all about hypnotism. You may find yourself in the witness-box saying things that you did not intend to say. Now, then, name your figure."



The little man took time to think it over. He rubbed his chin with his fingers reflectively. He seemed on the point of speaking, and then stopped. Suddenly he snapped out :

"I want four pounds a week !"

"It's simply bare-faced robbery," said Bellows. "But you shall have it. Mind you, you will have to sign another paper to-morrow, and this time there shall be no doubt about it."

"If you pay me that, I'll sign anything. With four pounds a week I can keep some very good birds again. But you are right that it is bare-faced robbery, and I am the man who is being robbed."

There had been many disputes between the two men during the six weeks that they had been associated. It was by Tangent's directions that Bellows acted in the present quarrel.

"It would be better to pay the little devil twenty pounds a week, and keep him, than to refuse and lose him," said Tangent. "I believe he's right, and that your precious agreement isn't worth the paper it's written on. Anyhow, I'll get a new agreement ready. Pay him what he wants, and he'll sign it."

"Well," said Bellows, doubtfully, "if you say so you're probably right. But in that case we ought to get an extension of time out of him."

"No," said Tangent, "the chap's suspicious of you. He hates you. If you try any sort of monkeying, he'll be off. Besides, with the fees you're charging, two years will about see it through.

There are not such a vast number of people who can afford the game."

"As things go at present, it looks as though it might last for ever. You should see the engagement-book. We've got appointments booked for two months ahead. It isn't only a game you see. It's not just a pastime for fashionable women. We get men from the Stock Exchange, business men of all sorts, racing-men. Yesterday morning we had the Prime Minister's private secretary. He didn't give his right name, but Smeath was on to it, and then he admitted it."

"Hot stuff, Smeath. Do you get much out of him in the way of prophecy? Foretelling the future?"

"Not very often. He has done some wonderful things that way, but more usually he deals with something that is past."

"Why don't you get him to foretell your own future, Percy?"

Bellows shook his head.

"Not taking any," he said. "He shall have a shot with you if you like."

But Tangent also refused.

Their business had certainly progressed very rapidly. Tangent arranged a report in a newspaper. He communicated with one or two doctors whom he knew to be interested in the subject. He sent a couple of popular actresses to Smeath. He arranged a special séance for a Cabinet Minister, whose principal interest was psychology.

After the first week they no longer employed sandwichmen and advertisements. The ball had begun to roll. Everybody who came to Smeath sent somebody else. Everybody in Society was talking about the hideous little dwarf and his marvellous powers. Bellows was regarded as a showman and a charlatan, but Smeath was clearly the genuine thing.

Despite their mutual dislike, Bellows and Smeath both lived in the same house—the Bloomsbury lodging-house. It was Bellows who had insisted on this. He had never felt quite safe about Smeath, and even after the new agreement had been signed he had his suspicions. He was afraid that Smeath would run away. Bellows occupied fairly good rooms on the first floor. Smeath had one room at the top of the house, but this happened to suit him. Through his windows he could get out on to a flat, leaded roof. There he made friends with the pigeons and sparrows. The maid-servant at the house, who one day saw him out on the roof with the birds all round him, said that it was witchcraft.

“They were ’opping about all over ’im. Sometimes he put one down and called another up. I never saw anything like it in my life before.”

She had the hatred of the unusual which is prevalent amongst domestic servants, and gave notice at once. But before the month was up she had grown quite accustomed to seeing Smeath playing with the birds, and the notice was revoked.

## V

BELLOWES still used for business purposes the name of Sanders-Bell, but he no longer called himself a doctor. He was meeting too many real doctors, and Tangent had advised against it. The room in Bond Street was divided in two by a curtain. The outer part served as a waiting-room, and here, too, Bellows had his bureau. In the inner part of the room the actual interview between the client and the clairvoyant took place. Their usual hours were only from eleven to one and from two to four, but Bellows would sometimes arrange for a special interview at an unusual hour and an increased price. On these occasions he always took care to pacify Smeath. Sometimes he gave him money, and sometimes other presents; on one occasion he gave him a big book about birds, with coloured illustrations, and Smeath remained docile and in a good temper for days afterwards.

"Yes," said Bellows. "You have complained once that I was robbing you. You can't say that now. You have fixed your own salary. If there is the least little bit of extra work to be done, you always get something for it. You are not as grateful as you ought to be, Smeath. Where would you have been without me? What were you doing before you came to me?"

"Nothing. For some weeks I had been very hungry. I make no complaint against you, but



when my time's up I shall stay no longer. I go back to the birds again."

"It would be more sensible of you," said Bellows, "if you banked your money. What did you want to buy that great owl for? He makes the devil of a row at night. We shall have people complaining about it."

"She is a very good friend to me, that owl," said Smeath. "I am teaching her much. She will be valuable."

At this moment there was the sound of a footstep on the stairs, and Smeath stepped behind his curtain.

The man who entered was not at all the type of client that Bellows generally received. He was a thick-set man of common appearance, and he was unfashionably dressed. He did not look in the least as if he could afford the fee. Bellows saluted him somewhat curtly.

"It is ten minutes to eleven, sir, and our hour for beginning is eleven. However, as you have called, if you like to pay the fee now—two guineas—I will make an appointment for you, but I'm afraid it will have to be in nine weeks' time."

The visitor looked reflective, turning his seedy bowler hat round in his hands.

"Don't think that would do," he said. "Nine weeks—that's a very long time. Couldn't Mr Smeath see me to-day? Couldn't he make an exception?"

"Only by giving you a special appointment.

And for that a very much higher fee is charged."

"How much?" asked the man.

"He could give you ten minutes at one o'clock to-day. But the charge for that would be six guineas. You see, Mr Smeath is only clairvoyant while in the hypnotic state, and that cannot be repeated indefinitely."

The visitor took an old-fashioned purse from his hip-pocket. He pulled out a five-pound note, a sovereign, and six shillings

"There you are," he said. "Please book me ten minutes with Mr Smeath at one o'clock to-day."

"Very good," said Bellows, opening the engagement-book. He looked up, with his pen in his hand. "What name shall I put down?"

"I am Mr Vincent."

"You'll be careful to be punctual, of course. Mr Smeath will be ready exactly at one o'clock."

"I shall be here," said the man.

He had no sooner gone than Smeath emerged from behind the curtain again. "What on earth did you do that for?" he asked excitedly.

"Keep your hair on, Smeath. It's all right. I'm going to buy you a big cage for that owl of yours."

"I do not want any cage. My birds are not kept in cages. It is not the extra work that I mind. It is that I cannot do anything for that man. I tell you he is dangerous."

"In what way dangerous?"

"I don't know. He is dangerous to me."

"He looked to me an honest man enough. He had the appearance of a chap up from the country. Probably wants to know what his best girl is doing. I shouldn't worry about it if I were you. Don't stand in the way of business, Smeath. You don't know what the expenses are here. I've got to pay the rent next week, and if I told you what that was, you wouldn't believe it. If you don't want the bird-cage, you shall have something else."

But it was necessary to show Smeath a sovereign, and to present him with it before he would consent. Even then, he did so with great reluctance.

Clients with appointments came in, and the ordinary business of the morning began. Smeath no longer spoke when in the clairvoyant state, for he was often consulted upon matters requiring secrecy, and what he said might have been heard by other clients in waiting. He had a writing-block, and scribbled down on it in pencil what he saw.

At one o'clock precisely Mr Vincent returned, and was at once brought behind the curtain. Smeath sat there motionless. His eyes were open, but he did not look up at Mr Vincent.

"Now then, sir," said Bellows. "What is it you want?"

Mr Vincent drew from his pocket a comb wrapped in paper. It was of the kind that women wear in their hair, and it had been broken.

"I want him to tell me about the girl who wore this at the time when it was broken."

Bellows placed the comb in Smeath's hands. Smeath held it for a moment, and then the fingers relaxed, and it dropped to the floor.

Bellows again placed it in his hand, and this time Smeath flung it from him. But immediately he began to write, Mr Vincent watching him narrowly as he did so. He wrote with an extraordinary rapidity. Presently Bellows, who had been standing behind him, and reading what he wrote, asked Mr Vincent to wait in the outer part of the room. As soon as he was alone with Smeath, he took the writing-block out of his hands, tore the sheet from it, folded it, and put it in his pocket. Then he rejoined Vincent.

"I am extremely sorry, sir," said Bellows, "that the experiment has failed completely. There is perhaps some kind of antipathy between Mr Smeath and yourself. These things do occasionally happen. I find that he can tell you nothing at all, and under the circumstances, I should perhaps return your fee."

Vincent did not seem particularly surprised.

"Very well," he said. "I had hardly expected to get what I wanted, but I thought I might as well try. I paid you six guineas, I think. You seem to be treating me fairly, and I have given you a certain amount of trouble. Supposing you return me five of them."

The money was handed over, and Vincent departed. Bellows went back to Smeath and brought him out of the trance. Smeath shivered.



"Is he here still?"

"No. Gone."

"Was it all right?"

"It was quite all right."

"I'm glad he's gone," said Smeath. "I was horribly afraid of something. Now I can go out and get my lunch, and I have to buy food for the birds too."

"I shouldn't spend too much money on it if I were you," said Bellowes.

Smeath laughed.

"It is not very expensive," he said. "And I have made one extra sovereign. Why not?"

"Because, in future, Smeath, you are going to work for me for much less money—for a pound a week, to be precise."

"I shall not," said Smeath, loudly.

"I told you once before not to squeal. I don't like it. You will do exactly as I say, and for a very good reason. If you don't you will be taken to prison, and you will be tried before a judge, and you will be hanged, Smeath. Hanged for the murder of Esther Samuel in the woods at Teston."

## VI

"WHAT makes you say that? How do you know it?" asked Smeath. The fingers of his big hands locked and separated and locked again. His eyes were

fixed intently on Bellows. He looked excited, but not frightened.

"How do I know it?" echoed Bellows. "I have it here in your own handwriting." He tapped his breast-pocket. "You do not remember what happened when you were hypnotized. I put a broken comb into your hands. It was a comb which the murdered woman had worn. You began to write at once. You've put the rope round your neck, Smeath."

"And that man—the man that I knew to be dangerous?"

"Mr Vincent? I told him that the experiment had failed, and returned his fee. He knows nothing. So long as you do exactly what I tell you, you are quite safe."

"Who was he, this Vincent?"

Bellows shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know? Possibly one of the Samuel family. Possibly a 'tec. If I had given him what he had paid for, we should have had the police in here by now. I have saved your skin for you, Smeath. Don't forget it."

"Will you read it out to me, the thing that I wrote down?"

"No. It tells one everything, except the motive."

"The motive was obvious enough. I was hungry and had no money. I had tramped to Teston and reached there two days too soon. I had nowhere to go, and I lived and slept in the woods. I begged from the girl at first, and if she had given

me a few pence she might have been alive now. She was not the least bit afraid of me. Why should she have been? I was small, misshapen, and looked weak. She was tall and strong. As she turned away from me, she said the tramps in the neighbourhood were becoming a nuisance, and she would send the police after me. Even then I only meant to hit her once, but that is a queer thing—you cannot hit a human being once. You see the body lying at your feet, and you have to go on striking and striking. When I knew she must be dead, I flung the stick down. I took nothing but the money, nothing which could be traced. Even the money made me so nervous that I hid most of it—buried it in a place where I could find it again. If the police had found me, there would only have been a few coppers in my possession, and I did not look like a man who could have done it. But they never did find me.”

“I see. That was why, when I offered to advance your railway fare, you told me you had money. You had a pair of new boots on when you turned up at Warlow. I remember what an infernal squeaking row they made on the platform. Well, you’ve done for yourself, Smeath. You’ve got to work for me on very different terms now.”

“No,” said Smeath. “That is not so.”

“Very good. I’ll write my note to Mr Vincent now. He’ll do the rest.”

“No you won’t, and I’ll tell you why. You can destroy me very likely, but if you do, you’ll destroy

your own livelihood. And you always take very good care for yourself, Mr Bellows."

"Destroy my livelihood?" said Bellows, thumping on the table with his fist. "That's where you make your mistake, you little devil! Because you're useful, you think you're indispensable. You're not. There's a reward of two hundred pounds out for anyone who finds the murderer of Esther Samuel. I'm a born showman. With two hundred pounds capital I can chuck this and start something else that will pay me just as well."

"It looks as if I shall have to give in. Well, there's no help for it. I must get a much cheaper room, of course."

"No, you won't. You'll stop in the same house as me. D'you think I haven't worked it all out? After you've paid your rent, you've a shilling a day for food, and better men have lived on less. I'm not going to give you a chance to bolt. And mark my words, Smeath, if you do bolt, the very moment I find you've gone I give you up. Don't imagine you can get away. There are not many men of your build. The police would have you for a certainty within twenty-four hours."

"Then I become a slave; I can do nothing. There were other birds that I meant to buy. And in time I could have started a business again. That must all go."

"Quite so. That must all go. In fact, before a fortnight is out I expect you'll sell that big white owl of yours. You'll grudge him his keep."

"It is a she-owl, and I shall not let her go. She can do things that would surprise you."

"Can she?" said Bellows. "It might be rather effective if you brought her down here. She would impress clients."

"I shall not. I keep her for myself!"

"Don't talk like a fool! You are forgetting that I hold you between my thumb and finger. If I tell you to wring that bird's neck you will have to do it."

Smeath rose to his feet in fury.

"Where's my hat?" he said. "Give me my hat!"

Bellows stood in front of the door.

"What's the matter with you? Where are you off to?"

"Checkmate for you, Mr Bellows. I am going now to give myself up. Where is your two hundred pounds reward, eh? Where is the money that you make out of the clairvoyant?"

"Sit down, and don't talk in that silly way. I never told you to kill the bird. I was only speaking in your interests when I said I doubted if you could afford to keep it. As a matter of fact, I don't care a pin's head about it either way. If you set so much store by it, keep it by all means."

"In that case," said Smeath, "I will go on working for you, and on the terms that you have said."

"That's all right; and now you can go out to



lunch. Remember that you have to be back at two o'clock. If you are not here by ten minutes past two, I shall send the police to look for you."

"I shall be here, Mr Bellows."

Every Saturday morning at half-past nine Tangent called on Bellows in Bond Street, to look over the books and to collect his share of the profits. Tangent had no great faith in Mr Bellows. Smeath was never allowed to be present on these occasions.

On the Saturday after Mr Vincent's visit, Tangent was well pleased with the results.

"Mind you," he said, "the little dwarf isn't doing so badly out of it either. He gets his regular four pounds a week. This week I see he's had one pound ten in cash for extra work, and you're charging twelve-and-six for a present to him. What was the present?"

"Oh, a bird of sorts. The little beggar's simply mad about birds. That did more good than if I'd given him the actual cash."

"Oh, I'm not grumbling, Bellows," said Tangent, surveying with complacency the diamond ring on his finger. "If, by giving him a trifle extra now and then, you can keep his goodwill, it's quite worth our while to do it. No man will work for nothing, and I suppose he finds this clairvoyance game rather exhausting. Not over and above good for the health, eh?"

"He says it's exhausting. He seems to me well enough."

When Tangent had gone Bellows smiled. To swindle Tangent was a real pleasure to him, even apart from the profit he made for himself. He remembered the terms which Tangent had forced him to accept for the provision of capital for the enterprise.

The introduction of a large white owl into the Bloomsbury lodging-house could have but one effect. The maid-servant gave notice at once on general principles. It was Smeath this time who persuaded her to remain.

"You must not be afraid of the white owl," he said. "Owls are wise birds. She knows who my friends are, and who my enemies are. You are my friend, and she will never hurt you. She will let you feed her and stroke her feathers. They are very, very soft, the feathers of an owl."

In a week's time Jane was neglecting her work to play with the white owl out on the leads.

## VII

FOR several weeks no change took place. Smeath did his work with patience and docility. He addressed Mr Bellows with respect. He made very little objection to private engagements. As a munificent reward, on two occasions Bellows took him out to luncheon, and once presented him

with some Sunday tickets for the Zoo, which he himself did not want. Every Saturday Tangent inspected, with satisfaction, some purely fantastic accounts. Bellows was specially careful that Smeath and Tangent should never meet, lest the discrepancy between the statements in the books and the actual facts should be discovered.

And then business began to fall off. There was no excessive drop, but the previous standard was not quite maintained. That astute showman, Mr Bellows, decided that something would have to be done. Some new feature would have to be introduced, to set people talking again.

"Smeath," he said one day, "didn't you tell me something once about a white owl?"

"Yes," said Smeath, "I have one."

"It does tricks, don't it?"

"It does a few things," said Smeath, grudgingly. "You do not want it. You said that you would leave me my owl."

"You needn't get into a stew about it, and do for goodness' sake keep those great hands of yours still. They get on my nerves. Nobody wants to take your blessed owl away from you. The only thing that I was wondering about was whether it might not be worth while to keep the bird here, instead of at your lodgings."

"No, sir! No, Mr Bellows! It is in my leisure time that I want my owl."

"Well, I was talking to Mr Tangent about it, and he thought it was a good idea; in fact, he

said I ought to have done it before. We must think about it. I have been pretty easy with you, Smeath."

"Also, I've worked very hard for you."

"You've done what you were told, and of late you've given me no trouble. You might let Tangent and myself have a look at the bird, anyhow. It would be effective, you know—the dwarf clairvoyant and the great white owl on the back of his chair. Tangent spoke of a poster. I'll tell him to give us a call in Bloomsbury on Sunday morning."

"I do not want my owl to be taken away. It lives there on the leads outside my window. Here it would be unhappy. How could I leave it here all night alone?"

"Don't be unreasonable, Smeath. You will see more of the bird then than you do now."

"No," said Smeath. "The greater part of the time when I'm here I'm like a dead man, and know nothing."

Bellows had quite realized that this was the point on which Smeath would have to be handled carefully.

"Look here," he said, "I wouldn't do anything to hurt the bird. At anyrate, let Mr Tangent and myself see it. Let us see if it can really do the things that that girl Jane jabbars so much about. If Tangent and I think it would be an asset to the show, I am prepared to go quite beyond our agreement. I'll give you two or three shillings for

yourself, Smeath. You can give yourself a treat. You've not been having many treats lately; in fact, you look just about half starved."

It was true. The little dwarf had grown very thin. His eyes seemed to have got bigger and brighter. There was a look in them now which would have made Bellows suspicious if he had noticed it.

"Jane," said Smeath, as he met her on the stairs that night, "they are coming on Sunday morning to see my owl."

"Then they'll see miracles," said Jane, with confidence.

"And they're going to take it away."

"If that bird goes, I goes!"

Smeath burst into a peal of mirthless laughter.

Mr Tangent arrived in a taxi-cab at the Bloomsbury lodgings at eleven on the following Sunday morning. He was in a bad temper, and swore and grumbled profusely.

"So I've got to turn out on Sunday morning and work seven days a week, just because you're such a damn bad showman, Bellows? You've let the thing down. The books on Saturday were perfectly awful."

"I'm not a bad showman, and it's not my fault. The weather's been against us, for one thing. And, besides, no novelty lasts for ever. We must put something else into it to buck it up, and we must get that poster out."

"That means more expense. I don't see why



we should keep on paying Smeath four pounds a week if business is falling off. And as for that rotten old owl of his, I'm no great believer in it. It will look all right on the poster, but it will do no good in your Bond Street rooms. I know those tricks. The bird picks out cards from a pack, or shams dead, or some other nursery foolery. Stale, my boy, hopelessly stale."

"According to what I hear, the bird does none of those things. It's a new line."

"Is it? I'll bet a dollar it ain't. However, tell Smeath to bring it down, and let's get it over."

"Smeath won't bring it down. We shall have to go up to it. He makes a great favour of showing it to us at all. And, if you will take my tip, you'll say nothing to Smeath beyond a good-morning. I can tell you he wants devilish careful handling about this bird of his. If you interfere, you'll spoil it. All you've got to do, if you think it at all remarkable, is to say to me that it might possibly do. I shall understand. Now then, come along up!"

"All those stairs!" groaned Tangent. He was a heavy and plethoric man. When they reached Smeath's room he stood for a minute, panting.

The room was ordinarily dingy enough. It was a fine morning, and the sun streamed in through the window. On the leads outside they could see the great white owl perched on the bough of a tree which had been fixed there. Smeath, with his hat off, stood beside it, and seemed to be talking to it.

Around his feet were a flock of pigeons and sparrows. He nodded to the two men, and then gave one wave of his hands. The pigeons and sparrows flew off and left him alone with the white owl.

"Funny sight!" grunted Tangent. "Devilish funny sight!"

Smeath opened the window, and called into the room :

"Good-morning, gentlemen! Will you come out?"

"Don't much like it," said Tangent. "I've no head for this kind of thing."

"Oh, you're all right!" said Bellows. "You needn't go anywhere near the edge."

He placed a chair for him, and Tangent climbed out on to the roof, followed by Bellows.

"I will leave you to look at the bird by yourselves, gentlemen," said Smeath, and stepped down into the room.

"Then who's going to make the bird do its tricks?" asked Tangent. "It's a fine-looking beggar, anyhow. Seems about half asleep. Tame enough." He passed his jewelled hand over the snowy plumage on the bird's breast. "There's a feather-bed for you," he said, laughing.

The bird opened its eyes, and leaped straight into the face of Bellows. Its plumage half stifled him, its sharp claws tore his eyes. He screamed for help.

Tangent, in horror, had flung himself down flat on the leads, covering his face. Within the room

Smeath stood with folded arms, watching the scene with the utmost calmness.

Bellows tore at the bird with his hands, but step by step it forced him back. There came one final scream from him, and then two seconds of silence, and then the thud as his body struck the stones below. Up above, the white owl flew swiftly away.

The dwarf rubbed his hands and laughed. And then, changing his expression to one of extreme dismay, went to the help of the prostrate Tangent.

# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA

## I

### BEFORE BIRTH

I AM a literary idea. Unborn as yet, I have not the incarnation of paper and printing ink which will be mine hereafter. I am conscious. I have knowledge without the usual apparatus for its acquisition and storage. I see without eyes, and hear without ears. I move as I will, and material things cannot hinder my movements. They are swifter than light, and just as swift as thought. You know, of course, that if an idea is going to come to you, neither locked doors nor iron walls will prevent it; it arrives inevitably and insuperably; you are to be its parent and make it come into the world. You may be ranked as a genius because you are its parent, and (this amuses me) you will think that you are its parent because you are a genius.

To the large eyes of the imagination I might be pictured, in my unborn state, as a Puck-like phantom; only the imagination can see me until I select my parent. Ideas have that privilege. Human beings—on very slight evidence—believe that they do not select their parents; but, on the

other hand, they believe—on no evidence at all—that they do select their ideas. I am not prescient, but I fancy that the man whom I select for my parent should be a very happy man. I am a perfectly brilliant idea. I am new, and I am a master; the world will say it. I shall bring fortune and fame to my parent. Even now—when I am unborn and cannot tell the precise form that I shall take—I exult in my own utter goodness. This is, of course, vain. But then humility is only one of the impositions of the weak majority upon the strong minority, to enable the weak majority to keep up a self-respect to which facts do not entitle it.

I decided to come here. Before me lies a vast mass of building materials, sorted out into houses and the like, and known on the eighteenpenny folding map as “London and its Environs.” It swarms. It is too large. Let me see what is immediately before me.

Before me is No. 23 Harriet Terrace, Fulham. It is a new terrace of thirty-pound houses, and there is no external difference, except the number, between 23 and the rest. It is the residence of Albert Weeks, literary hack. Shall I enter, and bid Albert Weeks be my parent? I should bring him money and reputation. He would be able to live in a better house than this; people would come to him and say, “Albert Weeks, where *did* you get that perfectly splendid idea?” He would taste popularity, smile complacently, and subscribe



to a press-cutting agency. Shall I select him or not? He might possibly, after he had become my parent, be unable to reach the same level again. But that disaster rarely happens. Ideas and sheep follow where there are ideas and sheep in front of them; genius is more often chronic than acute. I do not think that I should have to reproach myself with having caused him ultimately the bitterest failure—the failure of a man who once succeeded. But shall I select him?

Albert Weeks is married, of course, and has three children. His wife is well-meaning, but, I fear, a trifle under-educated. He met her in the old days when he was on a kind of a spree; his love-making was a kind of a spree; there was a touch of sheer spree even in his marriage. It was all irresponsible — enthusiastic — desperate; and the spree is well out of their lives for ever and ever—unless I interfere. They are still heart-fond of each other, though she has ceased to remark on his cleverness and sometimes is almost snappish, and he has no time to pet her because he is so busy for so little remuneration.

The front room in which he is sitting is rather sordid. They call it the drawing-room, sometimes substitute it for the nursery, and habitually use it as his study. There is a quaint gathering of antagonistic furniture. He bought as little furniture as possible at first—because he was no fool and knew that they would have to be economical—and he has added to it since on occasions when he

could not possibly afford it. There are, for instance, two chairs from a drawing-room suite—two only. These are covered with pale green velvet, and the velvet is covered with dust. On the chair nearest to the table at which he is writing stands a chipped cup of cold tea, surmounting the dust and the velvet. The cold tea seems to be looking upward with a grey, patient eye at the gaudy paper lampshade, the photogravure of "The Prodigal Son," and the smoked ceiling. It is a room that must always have had crumbs in it. House-flies go long distances in order to die in this room. They have died conspicuously and frequently in it. In one corner broken and bygone bamboo has now definitely despaired of ever signifying refinement; and in the one piano-sconce which is not broken lingers the stump of a candle that has wept its composite heart out over the stained keyboard—wept for the death of the flies, and the despair of the bad bamboo, and the general deadliness of everything.

There is on the table a handsome, black-spotted wedding present of an inkstand. In front of it sits Albert Weeks at work. He is rather a small man with sandy hair, and the frock-coat which he has given up wearing out-of-doors, or when, as his wife says, "there are people." There are not any now, for he is alone in the room. The expression of his face is careful. He has to be careful, because the editor of *The Inner Circle* was by no means satisfied with his last batch of paragraphs, and he

cannot afford to be deprived of the guinea a week which he receives from that very fashionable journal.

The editor had said—though more rudely, technically and briefly—that either Mr Albert Weeks would have to convey a more convincing impression of his intimate acquaintance with high society or *The Inner Circle* would dispense with his valuable services. The words that the Editor—who was rather less fashionable than his penny panting paper—actually used were, “More *savvy*, or outside only, my dear boy, and don’t you forget it.”

What are you to do when you are too good to know the butler, and not good enough for the butler’s master to know you? This is what, I perceive, Albert Weeks is doing, writing laboriously :—

“The season is dying fast, and I am sure that most of my readers will agree with me that it has been an unusually brilliant one. So everybody was saying to me at Lady Ballingham’s last night. By the way, Lady Ballingham must have the secret of eternal youth; last night she looked more beautiful than ever. As for her house in Park Lane, I have always considered it to be quite the most charming town-house that I have seen in the whole course of my experience. Well, the long round of delightful and luxurious—”

Here he is interrupted, because his worn-out, striving, vulgar, respectable, loving, sharpish wife

had come into the room with a blue paper in her hand.

"Supper, Albert; come on now. Oh, you ain't touched your tea, and I was particular to bring it. Are you comin'? 'Ennery 'as broke the soap-dish in the nursery; that's what the cryin' was about. This here is Bilderspin's for what he did to the kitchen range. It's high—one-seventeen-six."

That is the last straw. His editor has bothered him. His work has bothered him. He is very tired. A paragraph—which was really coming out very nicely—has been interrupted. Money is very scarce. And supper is mere mutton, and his wife looks rather ill, and Bilderspin is one-seventeen-six. The combination overpowers him. The little man throws down his pen, stamps his foot, and swears like a mad blackguard — swears profusely.

His wife takes a step backward, as if to get out of the room. Then her face becomes twisted, she sits down on the music-stool, and suddenly begins to cry. She is shaken with sobs. "Oh, Albert! Oh, Albert!" she says, over and over again, and then: "How can you be so cruel? Aren't things bad enough without that?"

Then he goes quickly to her, and is remorseful. He is not angry with her, of course. It is only that things are going so badly. He takes her hand. She regains her composure. She is sure that he is quite overworked, but he ought not to give way; on the contrary, he should 'ope for the



best. There is a good deal of make-believe cheerfulness over the mere mutton subsequently.

Now, then, shall I make this man my parent? If I crept through that sandy hair into the whitey-grey brain, what a change there would be. He would be conscious that he had got a new, tremendous, imperial idea. He would put down his knife and fork, finish the beer in his glass at one gulp, explain hurriedly to his wife that he was really inspired this time, and rush wildly at the handsome inkstand and his work. By the following midday I should be in manuscript. In six weeks Albert would be famous. In six months he would have real money and no debts, and there would be more money to come. There would be a new soap-dish, new furniture, new dresses for his wife. 'Ennery would have toys and a go-cart; Albert would, on little occasions, have Heidsieck. They would be off to the seaside for a fortnight, and do the thing well, and the personal paragraphs would say that Mr Weeks and his family were spending the winter in Brighton, "where it is to be hoped that this new and brilliant author will not allow his pen to be idle." No, I definitely decide that I will *not* make Albert Weeks my parent. I am not a philanthropist; I am only an idea. I do not want to benefit Albert Weeks, and I do want to satisfy my own whim. My own whim definitely refuses Albert Weeks.

At the same time, I am in a great hurry to be born. I have knowledge, but it is limited. For



instance, I believe that I am an idea for a short story, but I am not sure. I know I am a miraculously good idea, but I do not know in what way I am miraculously good. I yearn to see myself in my final form. I must positively get born.

Well, let me examine elsewhere.

Here, I observe, the traffic is being partially disturbed by a long funeral procession coming briskly back from the cemetery. In the first coach is a young man alone. He is in deep mourning. He has drawn the window-blinds down. His hat is placed on the front seat. He himself is kneeling on the floor of the coach; his arms sprawl over the back seat; his eyes are glaring, hot with unshed tears; he bends his head and bites the wrist of one hand. I knew his name at once and something about him. He is the Hon. Charles Turnour Wylmot. Away in the cemetery lies the still body of Maud Farradyce, whom Wylmot was to have married two months hence if she had lived. The agony of his grief would not be doubted by anyone who saw him now.

Yet Wylmot is a man who has always doubted himself. He is haunted with the thought that he is a sham. He once doubted his love for his books, and had himself put up for a sporting club which neither interested him nor desired his membership. The reactionary fit was bitter, but it was short. As with his books so with his writing. In proud moments he believes that he is going to be a leader; he pays for his pride with

days of depression when he doubts whether he is even capable of being a decent follower. As with his writing so with his love. A few weeks ago he asked himself seriously if he was not merely trying to be romantic, if he really loved this Maud Farradyce who was to be his wife. That doubt went before the pretty yellow-headed girl died. And now he does not doubt his sorrow.

Yes, the Hon. Charles Turnour Wylmot shall be my parent. He shall bring me into the world. Now, as he sprawls in that mourning-coach, his wild, aching brain shall become possessed of me. It is a delightful whim.

In I go.

## II

### BIRTH

THE Hon. Charles Turnour Wylmot has, later in the same day, in the solitude of his comfortable chambers overlooking Piccadilly, just recovered from rather an unpleasant fit of hysteria. Albert Weeks would have thanked God for me, but Wylmot positively does not want to be my parent. He would cheerfully sacrifice a year's income if by so doing he could definitely get me out of his head. But he cannot. I am going to be born, and this is the first part of the process.

The trouble is that I am inappropriate—horribly and grotesquely inappropriate; for I have dis-

covered more about myself, and I find that I am a humorous idea. I am the newest, the most delicious, the most inevitably humorous idea that ever has been or ever will be. The bare thought of me brings a deep satisfaction right away down in the very pit of one's appreciations. At first I am too great for laughter, but the laughter comes. It comes in chuckles; it swells and grows to shaking paroxysms. Here, in this room, but half an hour ago, Wylmot at last reached the full appreciation of me. It had been growing upon him ever since the moment in the mourning-coach when I first came to him. There had been at intervals sudden smiles over his face, succeeded by an expression of agonized shame and contrition. But at the full appreciation of me he gave up the struggle and began to laugh. He threw back his head; he stamped one foot; he held his sides with both hands; he roared; he howled helplessly. He staggered about the room, doubled up with convulsions of laughter; he tried to stop, but could not; he tried again, and for one moment gravity secured a foothold; then it slipped and off he went once more, worse than ever, roaring, howling, screaming, purple in the face.

His laughter stopped quite suddenly, as great fits of laughter often do, as if it had been cut short with a clean stroke of a knife. He took out his watch, glanced at it, and—just as he had realized the full humour of me—realized the full horror of the situation. Three short hours before he had

stood beside an open grave, wherein he did then most truly believe that all his interest and all the brightness of his life lay. He had wanted the world to stop because Maud Farradyce was gone, and there was nothing else of importance. He had heard the robed priest, Maud's cousin, reciting in a voice that tried to be steadier than it was: "From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." He had become unconscious then of the service, unconscious of anything but the burning in his heart. Someone had touched him on the shoulder when it was time to go.

That was three hours ago.

And yet he had just finished a fit of the wildest, most uncontrollable laughter. He had been allowing himself to be amused. It was just here that Wylmot had that unpleasant attack of hysteria.

He has recovered from it, and has composed himself. His face is very white now, and he looks rather like a man under a curse. He gets out his writing materials. "Maud," he says softly, "you are not minding, are you? This damned thing has got into my head. I didn't want to think of anything humorous, but this came to me. Maud, it would make the dead laugh—it is *too* funny—and I don't want to think about it any more. That is why I am going to write it all out. Then perhaps I may be able to put it aside. Oh, Maud, don't think that I'm irreverent and unfeeling. My heart is dead and with you. I hate myself for having laughed, but I had to. I will get rid of



this idea that's haunting me, and then I don't think I shall ever laugh again."

He sits down, and at the top of the page writes in a large hand, "Ellen." It is the title of the story which is to embody me. He writes fast for half an hour, and then a servant brings in the lighted lamps.

"Will you dine in to-night, sir?" he asks, when Wylmot looks up from the paper.

"Yes—no—I don't know." He speaks a little absent-mindedly, with one hand on his forehead, shading his eyes, as though he held the idea there and were afraid that it would escape. I have no intention of escaping. "I'm busy; if I want to dine I'll go to the club. That will be all to-night."

"Very good, sir."

The moment the servant has gone, the pen dashes down on the paper again, as though it had gained an additional impetus by being kept back for a minute. He does not dine out; he does not go to the club. He writes at lightning speed, only pausing to laugh from time to time more wildly than ever. He laughs and writes, writes and laughs, on and on, until he finds that the lamps are going out, and glances at his watch. It is five o'clock in the morning, and the stack of paper in front of him is the finished story—me myself—me, the magnificently humorous idea.

He draws back the curtain and lets the wan London daylight into the room. He realizes that he feels very exhausted and shaky, goes to the



sideboard in an adjoining room, and gets himself some brandy. He drinks two glasses of it in rapid succession; then he goes off to bed. He is too tired for any further emotion. Laughter and tears alike will be a closed book to him until he has slept. He falls to sleep at once, and sleeps long—heavily, dreamlessly.

And I lie on the table in the study, new-born, in a snow-white manuscript incarnation. Will my reluctant parent burn me in the morning?

### III

#### AFTER BIRTH

No, I am safe—safe in a foolscap envelope, directed, sufficiently stamped, whirled about by postal arrangements.

It happened in this way. Wylmot came into the study rather late next morning. He looked beaten, humiliated, tired, and half-starved. He cast one vindictive glance at me, and passed into the next room, where breakfast was ready for him. He was rather a long time over breakfast. When the emotional heart is completely broken up, the ordinary blood-pumping heart will still go on with its work. So with the other organs. Sorrow postpones appetite rather than destroys it. Wylmot had no dinner on the day of Maud's funeral; he had quite a nice breakfast on the following morning.

He came back to me at last, and I knew that he meant to destroy me. His face was intentionally rigid, the lip set firm, the eye merciless. Yet somewhere at the back of that merciless eye lurked a quite different, milder expression. The fried sole and eggs had done their carnal work; an incongruous geniality was struggling upward in him; he was going through the disgusting experience of feeling the better for his food. However, he poked the fire fiercely; then he lit a pipe, with the air that he did not care about it, but did not think it worth while to omit it. And then he picked me up, to hurl me in the fire. As he held me in his hand, his eye rested for one second on the front page.

In that one second my young life hung in the balance. It was a moment of terrible excitement for me. The eye glanced through a few lines, and I felt a shade safer. The eye twinkled. Then I knew that it was all over, and that my future was assured; Wylmot would not burn me. His habit of doubting himself had triumphed once more.

Of course, after that he had nothing to do but to sit down before the fire and argue it out with himself. The story should be published in *The Cosmopolitan*. Why not? It was unhappy, incongruous, wretched that a humorous idea should have come to him yesterday of all days. But he had not sought for it. He had even struggled to the utmost to put the thing out of his head. After all, if there was any harm done—if there had been

any sign of want of feeling on his part—that lay far more in the writing than in the publication of the story. He would never put his name to it, of course. No one should be able to say that Maud's lover took the loss of her lightly. And he would take no remuneration for it. He would forward the amount of the cheque that he received from *The Cosmopolitan* to some charity. Besides, what right had he to keep that story from the public? It might not be—probably was not—so splendidly and amazingly good as he had imagined, but still he knew something of his business, and he knew that it would be likely to be popular. It might cheer many who were ill and depressed, and add something to the sum of human happiness. And he did not think that the critics, with their Athenian longing to see and to hear some new thing, would miss noticing the novelty and spirit of it. Indeed he had mingled feelings of philanthropy and self-abnegation as he sat down to write (on deep-edged paper) a little note to the editor of *The Cosmopolitan*.

To a certain extent he deceived himself. If Albert Weeks had voluntarily surrendered, on sentimental grounds, his honorarium for a short story, there would have been something in the sacrifice. But Wylmot had a private income, more than sufficient for all his needs, and to him the surrender of the cheque meant nothing. His surrender of the reputation which he believed would attach to the author of "Ellen" did amount

to something, for he had the weakness *cui etiam saepe boni indulgent* ; but it did not amount to very much, because it is an exceedingly rare thing for a single short story to attract any attention at all, and although Wylmot believed in the chance of "Ellen," he knew that it was not more than a thousand-to-one chance. Nor was there very much in his doubt whether he had the right, for the sake of his personal sorrow, to deny the public an enjoyment.

The real reason that swayed him was paternal love. He had made me and seen that I was very good. He could not commit infanticide. He liked to explain himself, but his curious mixture of intense humility and some subtle vanities always made a desperate business of it whenever the real explanation was some simple thing.

His note to the editor of *The Cosmopolitan* ran as follows :

"MY DEAR ROGER,—If you will read the enclosed story, you will understand how gladly I could have sent it to you a few weeks ago. As I did not do so then, I do so now—but, as you will imagine, with the greatest possible reluctance. I send it, because I do really think that it is the kind of thing that I have often heard you say you want. The only condition I make is that my name shall not be put to it, or disclosed in connection with it. I send it you to-day, instead of waiting, because I am leaving England, and I am trying to



put my house in order before I go, and to clear up such business as I have on hand. But I am sure you will appreciate how eager I am to get to some place—any place—where solitude and silence are possible. I fear that this will be my last contribution to *The Cosmopolitan*. If it were not so melodramatic to say so, I would tell you that from henceforth I am practically dead.—Yours ever,

“C. T. WYLMOT.”

Now I think it must be acknowledged that, for a man who was not, as a rule, a liar, this letter is from a liar's point of view distinctly creditable.

I hold that letter in my own, somewhat corpulent, manuscript embrace. It and I together, in the twilight seclusion of a foolscap envelope, are at present being whirled through postal machinery.

It is all over. My embodiments have been multiplied, since *The Cosmopolitan* has sold out seven editions of the number which contains me, to a marvellous extent. I have been a phenomenal and unprecedented success. In the library of the country house, in the rectory, in Mayfair drawing-rooms, in Bloomsbury parlours, in working-men's clubs, in public-house bars, in England, in America, in the Colonies—everywhere where English, or an approximation to it, is spoken—I am the subject of discussion. There is a touch of the universal about me, and already the translators are busy. Enthusiastic critics have been more screamingly



enthusiastic than ever before about me; the severest critics have unbent. I have the additional attraction of a mystery. Only two people really know who wrote me—Wylmot, my author, and Roger Birman, his editor—and neither of them will tell. On the authorship of "Ellen" only two people have dared to question Birman: his assistant-editor and his proprietor. Birman has told neither, and quarrelled with both; it is the day of his glory, and he can afford to quarrel with almost anybody. *Canards* on the subject of my authorship have flown over the country in dense flocks. Albert Weeks has, as usual, drawn his long-bow at a venture; and, as usual, missed the joints of the harness. This is his little paragraph on the subject:

"The secret of the authorship of 'Ellen' has been wonderfully well kept. There are probably not more than twenty people in London who really know it. When the secret is told, and—unless unforeseen circumstances occur—it will be told very soon, there will be howling and gnashing of teeth among various uninformed paragraphists who have been spreading their rumours on the subject. As an instance of the importance which the author attaches to the secret, I may say that one of the twenty 'in the know' is a butler who became possessed of the information by accident, and that he is to be rewarded for his silence with an annuity of £200. More than this I am, unfortunately, not permitted to say at present."

Of course, I knew from the first that I was exceedingly good, but still it is very pleasant to have it acknowledged. My success is a joy to me; it is also a joy to Birman; it is also a joy—and this is really terrible—to the Hon. Charles Turnour Wylmot. For in this latter case I fear the reaction. Letters, forwarded by the secret hand of Birman, have come to him from the office of *The Cosmopolitan*. For many editors have been anxious to communicate with the author of "Ellen," care of *The Cosmopolitan*. He has answered none of them. Yet, just for a minute, he has hesitated. At this time he carefully abstains from any thought of Maud; if such a thought arises, he puts it out of his head again feverishly. That is the trouble—he dare not think about Maud.

. . . . .

Maud is apparently not to be denied. The power of the dead has come forth. Wylmot's heart and brain are filled with Maud now. He sees her eyes on him, and hears her voice in day-dreams and night-dreams. He is alone in his rooms, doing nothing, frightened, sickened, humiliated; it seems to him that he had once the belief that, with all his faults, he was at least a man of feeling and honour, and that he has now lost the belief, and that he cannot live without it.

He starts from the chair, and paces the room slowly in utter agony; his brows are contracted; his eyes ache; sometimes his hands close convul-

sively ; sometimes he draws a deep breath, like one who is enduring a torture that kills.

It is the reaction. It began yesterday.

Yesterday he noticed that he felt uneasy whenever he looked at the little oil-painting of Maud that hung above his mantelpiece. He thought that must be because the portrait did no true justice to her, or because it distressed him that any other eyes but his own should see Maud's picture. During the whole period of joy in the funny successful story that he wrote on the night that Maud was buried, he had been ready with shoals of euphemistic cheerful arguments to prove that he was acting finely. Yet, as a matter of fact, the uneasiness that he felt arose from a kind of fear. He decided to lock the portrait away with her letters in the bureau. As he was doing so, his eye fell on the first note that he had ever received from Maud—merely an invitation to dinner, written to save her mother the trouble, written in shy, formal language, and commencing with "Dear Mr Wylmot." An impulse seized him to look again, by way of contrast, at the last letter that he had ever had from her. It was written in pencil, just at the beginning of Maud's sudden and fatal illness. It began thus :—

"They tell me I am very ill, Charley, and they won't let me write more than just a little letter. They say that they will send you a longer letter themselves all about the illness. Oh, my poor dear one, I must tell you ! I got it out of the

doctors that they think I am going to die, perhaps. But I'm not! You've made my life so sweet that I won't leave it. I can't die and be taken away from you. Do not be despairing, my lover; doctors so often make mistakes, you know, and I am sure that I shall get better. How could I die when you've made living so well worth while? Oh, dear lover, did any man ever love so finely and nobly as you! I don't deserve you—no, I don't."

The letter shook in Wylmot's trembling hand. It was with difficulty that he read on:—

"I cried so much last night, and you weren't there to comfort me, and I was so lonely. Why—"

He had to stop there. His throat moved involuntarily, and he was on the verge of sobbing. Moving slowly and quietly, he put the letters back in the bureau and the portrait back in its place on the wall. He sat down in front of the portrait and gazed at it—a pretty, yellow-haired girl with mournful eyes, who had loved him well and thought him noble. And God had taken her and left him to the composition of an intensely humorous story. Now that he has lost the belief in himself as a man of feeling and honour he cannot live without it. Late at night he goes out. He goes down to the Embankment with the intention of killing himself.

He does not do it because he arrives there just in time to stop another man from killing himself. The other man, a stranger to Wylmot, is a



young man with sandy hair—to wit, Mr Albert Weeks.

“I think,” says Wylmot, speaking firmly, but with a curious smile on his face, “you had better come back with me to my rooms and talk this over.” He stops a passing cab.

“What’s it got to do with you?” Weeks begins.

“You happen to have saved my life.”

“That’s a lie. You saved mine, though I didn’t want your damned interference. You pulled me back as I was on the parapet. What do you mean by saying *I* saved *your* life?”

“Ah!” Wylmot says, with the same dreary smile, “that is what I want you to come and talk about. I also had intended to commit suicide. Surely that is sufficient introduction. Come now; get into the cab.”

At Wylmot’s chambers the servant, with an anxious expression on his face, let them in. It vanished as he saw Wylmot. He had been nervous about his master, and he was glad to see him no longer alone and looking in better spirits.

“Have you dined?” Wylmot asked Weeks.

“I don’t care for it,” Weeks answered doggedly.

“No? Nor do I. We will suppose dinner. Francis, bring coffee. Yes, and we will have a bottle of the port.” Francis recognized the force of the definite article.

Albert Weeks felt mazed and wondering. Were the events of the last few days that had driven him



to desperation unreal, or was this unreal? The two men had drawn their chairs up in front of the fire. Albert Weeks sipped the fragrant coffee and blinked his eyes; he was in a kind of dream. Through it he heard Wylmot speaking.

"Yes, if it had not been for you, I should have drowned myself to-night. The sight of another man on the verge of committing exactly the same act suddenly showed me that suicide was running away. One should not run away. It is not brave, though brave men have done it through sudden panic. You have placed me under a very great obligation to you."

Weeks shook his head. "You saved me too."

"No, no, I saved you from an isolated act. You saved me from an entirely wrong principle. I do not know whether I make myself clear. But I feel the obligation deeply, and I will speak of it again afterwards. In the meantime you should know my name." He handed Weeks a card.

Weeks glanced at it and said: "I have no card, but my name is Albert Weeks, and I used to live at No. 23 Harriet Terrace, Fulham. I was a journalist. I failed. I used to be on *The Inner Circle* but I got kicked off. Do you know *The Inner Circle*?"

"I've seen the posters, but I cannot say that I've ever read it."

"It's nothing much to read, but it was all I had to live on. I'm married, with children. It was very difficult to get along. Sometimes I got a

short thing taken elsewhere, not often. I borrowed a little money on my furniture. When I got kicked off *The Inner Circle* I couldn't pay the interest due, and so the Jews took the furniture. My wife and the children have gone to her married sister—a Mrs Warboys. She wouldn't have me, and she grudges the shelter that she gives my wife and children; they'll come to the workhouse. So I haven't lived anywhere the last two days. To-night I sold the last thing I had. It was my mother's wedding-ring. I thought I'd buy myself a good dinner before I died."

"Then why didn't you?"

"Oh, I'd got into the habit of giving my wife anything that I happened to make, so I went into a post-office and sent it off to her without thinking."

"Go on," said Wylmot.

"Well, there wasn't much more. In the letter I sent from the post-office, I told her I had a berth to go abroad, and if I *could* make anything I would send it. I've cut my name off the linen. If I'd once got into the river, there would have been nothing to identify me by. So she'd have got used gradually to being without me. And her married sister would have felt she'd more claim for support if she had no husband."

"Now I must tell you about myself."

"Well, of course, I know a little about you. I've seen signed things by you in *The Cosmopolitan*. I was never one of the lucky ones—they wouldn't take me on the swell magazines."

"Did you read 'Ellen'?"

"Read it and roared over it."

"So did I."

"They kept the secret well. I suppose they didn't tell you who wrote it?"

"No, they never told me. Fill your glass again."

Albert Weeks did so. The wine was warming him, giving him a little more self-confidence and geniality.

"This is beautiful port," he said, "really beautiful port. I can't understand why you should have wanted to commit suicide. You have no money troubles?"

"None."

"You live in these comfortable chambers in perfect luxury, with a butler and everything. You can get your stuff taken by the very best papers. I don't say that you've made a real hit, like the man who wrote 'Ellen,' but you must be good to get into *The Cosmopolitan*."

"It's so much better, you know, Weeks, to be a good man than to be a good author. I had done a disgraceful thing. It did not involve public disgrace; it was not, in the eyes of the law, an offence at all. But it took away my self-respect, and I did not feel as if I could live without it. It was driving me mad. I would rather not speak of the details."

"Certainly not," said Weeks.

"Now I want to talk over some plans for you, but I must first write a letter. Will you excuse

me?" The letter was soon written, and given to Francis to post.

"Now then," said Wylmot, standing before the fire, "as we have finished our wine we will smoke. A cigar? It seems to me indicated. As I said before, without intending it, you have placed me under a very great obligation. I feel sure that you, as a gentleman, will understand that I should like to show my sense of the position. As some slight acknowledgment of the great service that you have rendered me, I have just sent instructions to my solicitors by which you will, on my decease, receive a legacy of one thousand pounds. You want money now, and I want to give it you, but of course you would not consent to the humiliation of receiving a present of money. A legacy is a different matter; and one can take a legacy."

"I—I do not know how to thank you," said Weeks. "I could not, of course, have accepted a present of money."

"Now I must tell you my plans for you. You love your wife?"

"She and the children are—well, they're naturally the principal thing."

"Now it is quite evident to me that it is your duty to take them into the country for a holiday. You look overworked."

"Oh, I worked pretty hard, but it didn't come to anything. I failed."

"Very likely from overwork. Your wife and children, too, will want a change. You must be



away at least two months. When you come back, I will give you a letter to the editor of *The Cosmopolitan*; he will do, I may say, a good deal for me. If you can write, he will let you write. If not, he will find some other remunerative occupation for you. And, I think, you would probably like to discharge any pecuniary obligation that you may be under to Mrs Warboys."

"I should. But it is impossible. There is no money."

"Oh, some arrangement can easily be made. Let me see. Why not borrow a hundred from me, giving me your I.O.U.? Even if it is not convenient for you to pay before my decease, the sum to which you are entitled under my will—"

"Stop," said Weeks. "It doesn't take me in. You're giving me money; I take it with gratitude. You've saved my life, and you've made it possible for me to go on living. And you've done it all so kindly, treating me as an equal, and no one's been like this to me for a long time—and, damn it, I can't even speak about it!" He rose and turned to the window with a sob in his throat.

Albert Weeks holds a sub-editorial post on *The Cosmopolitan* now. He has a very comfortable little flat in South Kensington. Wylmot did his best to live without self-respect. He lasted a few years wearing himself out with work. He died of something quite commonplace.

But I am still remembered. I am still the standard of humour to which nothing more recent approaches.



## BURDON'S TOMB

### I

#### THE EARTHQUAKE

MRS LANGLEY and her companion, Miss Gilderay, both thought rather well of Mr Agravine. It was their first visit to Egypt, and Mr Agravine's greater experience had been of use to them. He was quiet and without presumption, an elderly man with tired and rather magnetic eyes. "He has a story, of course," said Miss Gilderay.

"We all have," said Mrs Langley; "and we never tell them."

Miss Gilderay blushed. She was plain, kindly, sincere, and thirty-five. Mrs Langley was five years older and looked five years younger. She was not beautiful, but everybody said she had nice eyes and a pretty figure.

"I am glad he is coming on the *Rameses*," said Mrs Langley. "He is useful. He has done it all before, and he knows more than the dragomans. Of course, Mr Castle is useful too. A frightful nuisance, though."

"Oh, frightful!" Miss Gilderay assented. "Still, one feels sorry for him."

In the lounge of the hotel after dinner that

night Mr Agravine spoke to them about Sir Felix Burdon's tomb. The tomb was thus spoken of by careless people in Cairo and Luxor, but Sir Felix had merely been its excavator, and the work of excavation was not yet quite complete. It was the tomb of a high priest who had died in Thebes twelve hundred years before Christ was born. It was of considerable size and importance, and its mural paintings were interesting and well-preserved. Mr Agravine wished particularly to see this tomb, and said he should try if anything could be arranged through the dragoman on the boat. He was describing some interesting points about this tomb when young Mr Castle came up and joined the group. He was always doing that, and sometimes he was a nuisance. He was a young man of twenty-eight, travelling by himself and paying a good deal for excess luggage. He was possessed of many and elaborate clothes. Chance propinquity at the hotel dinner had introduced Mr Agravine, and Mr Agravine had in turn presented Mr Castle. This had been at Mr Castle's request, for he had very nearly decided to fall in love with Mrs Langley. She was just enough interested in him to flirt with him, and only just. To-night she sent him away at once. "Go and find out the name of that very beautiful girl with the red hair."

The girl with the red hair was travelling with two elderly ladies, who were set in a totally different key from her. The old ladies were Victorian.

The girl looked as if she had walked straight out of a German fairy tale.

Mr Castle did not know his way about at all. At the end of the evening he had not got the required information. He came back to Mrs Langley, and, though she laughed, she sent him away again. She was definitely not going to speak to him any more until he could tell her what she wanted to know.

Chance gave it to him next morning. He happened to see the girl come out of her room, and he noted the number. He had only to look now at the numbers in the hall and see what name was attached. He went to Mrs Langley in triumph. "I've got it," he said. "She is Miss Averil."

"Who is?"

"The red-haired girl that you wanted to know about. She is travelling with two sisters—Miss Bryans. They are probably her aunts."

"I don't think I care," said Mrs Langley. "It was really her first name that I wanted to know."

The subject turned up again on the first day of their departure from Cairo on the *Rameses*. Miss Averil and her two aunts happened also to be going on to Assouan on the *Rameses*, and Mrs Langley, in a comparatively short space of time, had taught Miss Bryan an entirely new patience. As she walked the deck that evening after dinner with Mr Castle by her side she said, "What an idiot you are, if you do not mind my saying so."

You never found out that girl's name at all. I give two minutes to it, and find out everything myself."

"And what is her first name?" asked Mr Castle, patiently.

"Well, you ought to know. You ought to be able to deduce it from looking at her."

"Yseult?" suggested the young man.

"Oh, goodness, no. Her name is Zoe. Don't you think that's right?"

"No," said Mr Castle. "Zoe is a maid of Athens, very nearly as black as the ace of spades."

"Rubbish! Anyhow, Zoe Averil is not a maid of Athens. She is a maid of Oxford. And what Oxford has done to deserve it I don't know. Her aunts are highly cultivated and belong to a Browning society. Now, why don't you find out interesting things and tell them to me? You never seem to know anything."

She sent him to fetch French coffee for her, and when he brought it decided that she would take Turkish coffee that night. Really, she did not treat him very well. Her manner with Mr Agravine was quite different.

On the day that they arrived at Luxor Mr Agravine told them that there was quite a chance that they would be able to see Burdon's tomb. The dragoman of the boat had been Sir Felix Burdon's dragoman during his first season in Egypt. He had assisted him since in some trouble that Sir Felix had had with his labourers. It was quite possible that he would be able to arrange it.

The dragoman did arrange it. Chance favoured him. Sir Felix was waiting for some heavy timbers, and meanwhile the work of excavation had ceased. He cursed the dragoman sincerely. He said most insulting and improbable things about the dragoman's ancestry. He told him that if he ever suggested such a thing again he would break his head with a stick; but none the less he permitted him to bring up his gang from the *Rameses* on the following day. They were not, of course, to enter the two chambers of the tomb which Sir Felix used as his living-room and stores.

The party from the *Rameses*, about thirty in number, crossed the river from Luxor and rode five miles. They halted and dismounted at the top of the long slope which led down to the tomb.

Led by the dragoman, the procession of tourists passed down the sandy slope into the darkness, under a crest piled with great rocks. Then came the burning of magnesium wire and the dragoman's lecture—a little sketchy, because he did not know the tomb—on the paintings and inscriptions. He was most impressive. "This tomb never been shown before, ladies and gentlemen. Special permit. No other dragomans can show it."

He scooped up two inquiring Germans, who would have made a dash for that part of the tomb which they had been particularly requested not to enter, and shepherded his party out into the open again—all but five of them.



Just as these five were leaving, they found themselves confronted by a man in grey flannel trousers and an old Norfolk jacket of brown canvas. He reminded Mrs Langley at once of Don Quixote. He began to speak to them about what they had seen, and he spoke with evident knowledge and authority.

Miss Gilderay whispered a word to Mrs Langley, and Mrs Langley said, "I suppose so," and turned to the stranger:—

"You are Sir Felix Burdon, are you not?"

"Yes, that's my name."

"I asked you because we wanted so much to thank you for letting us come in here. It's too interesting for words. I hope we haven't been interrupting your work?"

"Not at all," said Sir Felix. "We don't start digging again till to-morrow. I was just waiting for some stuff to come up from Luxor. I shall be living here for the next two months, you know."

"Living here?" said Miss Gilderay. "Actually in this tomb?"

"Why not? In here or in a tent just outside. I make myself very comfortable, and it saves the bother of going backwards and forwards."

"It seems wonderful. I supposed that you lived on the *Lotus*. We saw it just above Luxor."

"Last year I used the dahabeeyah a good deal, and I am meaning to dine and sleep there to-night; but the *Lotus* leaves to-morrow for Assouan,

taking some friends of mine who are to go on to the Second Cataract."

As he spoke he glanced over the party. Mr Castle carried Mrs Langley's camera and fly-whisk. Mrs Langley looked charming and Miss Gilderay earnest, and a pretty girl with red hair was talking to Mr Agravine on one side.

"I tell you what," said Sir Felix, cheerfully; "there's a very interesting bit of painting in that second chamber on the left there, and I think your dragoman missed it. I should really like to show you that. I will get candles."

"It's very, very kind of you," said Mrs Langley. "But won't they be waiting for us?"

"Oh, I hope so. Your dragoman knows that you are speaking with me, and therefore he must wait. We shan't keep them five minutes."

He dived away into the darkness as he spoke, and returned with a box of candles.

As they were lighting their candles it chanced that he heard Mr Agravine's name mentioned.

"I wonder," said Sir Felix, "are you Mr Agravine, the collector, the great authority on Corot?"

"A great authority on nothing, I'm afraid. But I've been a collector of pictures all my life, to my sorrow."

"But why to your sorrow?"

"A long story, and I should be ashamed to tell it."

"When we get back to the boat," said Miss Gilderay, as she lighted her candle, "the rest will be very jealous of us."

"What on earth for?" asked Sir Felix, laughing.

"Because we have special privileges. The others have only had a dragoman; we get the real explorer."

"Can't understand jealousy," said Sir Felix, "even if it's anything of importance."

"Why not?" Mrs Langley asked.

Sir Felix shrugged his shoulders.

"To the ancient Egyptian," he said, "death was the only important thing that happened to him in his life. Once one gets that point of view one ceases to be jealous."

"But it's rather amazing that you should have that point of view," said Miss Gilderay.

"Oh, well, explanations are long and tiresome things. Now, then, here is the thing I wanted to show you. Hold your candles up very high, please. That's right. It's really an astonishingly modern idea, considering the date at which it was painted. You see that figure—"

He never finished that sentence. The floor of the chamber seemed to sway upwards. They staggered against one another. Miss Gilderay caught at a sliding surface of wall, and fell to the ground grotesquely. There was a sharp hissing sound, followed by a roar like a cannonade, that drowned their exclamations. Then came a heavy thud—thud, as of some titanic hammer beating down soft earth. And then all was still. Sir Felix alone still held his lighted candle in his hand. The other candles had fallen and gone out.

Sir Felix helped Miss Gilderay to her feet again, and assured himself that nobody was hurt. They found and relit their candles.

"But what on earth was it? What terrible thing has happened?" cried Miss Gilderay.

"It appeared to me," said Mr Agravine, "like a shock of earthquake. It was as if a mountain had come down on us."

"That is probably what has happened. If you don't mind waiting a moment, I'll go and see what I can find out. I'll be back as soon as I can."

It seemed a long time before he returned. They spoke together in awed tones, speculating on the chances. When Sir Felix came back to them, he saw white, grave faces, but no sign of panic. He hesitated. He had practically to pronounce a death-sentence on these five people and on himself. And then Mrs Langley spoke.

"You have bad news, I see," said Mrs Langley. "But we have expected it. The entrance to the tomb is blocked?"

"That is so," said Sir Felix. "It is bad for me, because I brought you back here. The rest of your party are safe outside. However, we must see if we can work a way out. I have a pick and a couple of shovels here."

"Can't we do anything too?" asked Miss Gilderay.

"Nothing at the moment, I think. Make yourselves as comfortable as you can there."

He pointed to the chamber which had been furnished as his own living-room.

The men returned to the entrance-hall, stripped to the waist, and began their labour. It was absolutely ineffective, and Sir Felix had known from the first that it would be ineffective. But everything had to be tried. The sand and rubble fell in on them, and they could make no way. At last they gave it up.

"Will you call the ladies who were with you?" said Sir Felix. "They had better know."

## II

### • THE CONFESSION OF SIR FELIX BURDON AND OF MR CASTLE

DECK-CHAIRS had been found for the three women. Agravine and Castle sat on the ground, their backs to the wall. Sir Felix remained standing. There were plenty of candles and the hall was brightly lit.

"Tell us now," said Mrs Langley, "what the chances are."

"We will look at the best side first," said Sir Felix. "We are five miles from Luxor, and Luxor is on the rail. The tools and the men needed for an attempt at rescue ought to be available and to be here within a very few hours. You're with Thomas Cook & Son, and they won't lose any-



body if they can help it, and they are pretty potent people in Egypt. The natives will probably be scared, and may be reluctant to come to work here. But baksheesh and the hide-whip are good arguments. I think we will take it for granted that everything that can be done to save us will most certainly be done."

"I see," said Zoe Averil, "that you think it will be of no use."

"I do, but I may be wrong. I am guided by the sounds we heard and by my knowledge of the conformation of the ground round here. I believe that we're buried too deep for them to reach us in less than a week's work. You must remember that they will probably find it difficult at first even to determine the point at which they shall dig. I've been talking it over with Mr Agravine, and we don't think that the air here will last more than three or four days. So now you see what I've done."

"You must not say that again," said Mrs Langley. "Nobody here would be mad enough to hold you in any way responsible. Besides, we've talked it over—Miss Gilderay, Zoe Averil and myself—and we also had come to the conclusion that there was very little hope. As it happens, we three, more, perhaps, than most women, can take this quietly and wait for death without making any fuss."

"Yes," said Zoe. "I see you're looking at me, and I know I've been crying. But that was because of my people, and not for myself at all."

So far as I myself am concerned—I'll tell you a secret—I'm glad."

"How horrible!" said Agravine.

And then they began to discuss together the best arrangements that could be made for the three days left to them. On one point they were unanimous. Those days were to be made as easy as possible. The candles that lit them, and the flame of the spirit stove, would burn up air. But the tomb was to remain lit, and they would eat and drink, though to-morrow they would die. And when there were signs that the last moments were approaching they would not prolong the period of headache and malaise and nausea. Sir Felix had a charcoal stove, which he used for cooking on in the open. If this were lit all would soon be over.

There was not the slightest fear of any suffering from hunger or thirst. The chamber which Sir Felix used for his store-room had already been filled for the season, and even a modified luxury would be possible. The women claimed for themselves the slight household work that there would be to do. Sir Felix used paper plates and dishes that would not need to be washed, and when used could be thrown, with all other refuse, down the deep shaft at the farther end of the tomb. At night the men would camp in the entrance-hall, on deck-chairs. The women would fare a little more easily, dividing such bedding as there was among them in the room at the other end of the tomb. The big tank had been filled, and there was bottled

water for drinking besides. The only thing that seemed likely to distress them was the waiting, the actual waiting for three days before death came.

At present they did not feel this at all. The earthquake shock had thrown them into something approaching stupor. Now came the reaction. They were excited, and talked eagerly. There was much to be done. The floor of the big hall had to be sprinkled with water, that the dust might not bother them. A table and seats had to be improvised, and a meal prepared. Young Castle, under direction, opened tins. Miss Gilderay busied herself at the spirit stove. Mr Agravine and Sir Felix were occupied with a little rough carpentry. There was much activity and good temper. There was even laughter at minor mishaps. It was an astounding and fantastic picnic in the very face of death.

Presently Mrs Langley came up to Sir Felix.

"Zoe—Miss Averil—and I have found among your stores a big package of native costumes—women's costumes. May we use them?"

"Of course you may. But please ask permission for nothing again. All that is here is common property. It belongs to all of us. I was commissioned by a lady in England to get those dresses for her. And the commission bored me terribly. Now I feel grateful to that lady."

An hour later they all met at dinner. The materials of the repast had mostly come out of tins, but Miss Gilderay had been very clever. The

champagne was excellent, though two of the men were compelled to drink from tea-cups. Mr Castle's voice began to be heard rather frequently. There was a faintly triumphant note in it, and it was not entirely due to champagne. The propinquity of Mrs Langley affected him.

At the end of the repast Mr Castle opened a gold cigarette-case and presented it to Mrs Langley. She did not appear to see it, taking no notice of it. Selecting a cigarette himself, he took from his pocket a gold matchbox. All his waistcoat-pocket furniture was of pure gold, and silver was nothing accounted.

"Wait one moment, Mr Castle," said Sir Felix. "What do you think about it, Agravine? It's not as if we could open the windows and make the whole thing fresh again to-morrow."

"By Jove! I hadn't thought of that," said Castle, and returned the cigarette to his case.

"Well," said Agravine, "our principle was that we were to make it as easy for ourselves as possible. This hall is fairly lofty as compared with the smaller chambers. Suppose we permit each person one cigarette after dinner to-night, and then see what it is like to-morrow morning? I imagine we shan't notice it, but, if we do, we can set one of the smaller chambers of the tomb apart as a smoking-room, hanging something over the entrance."

"Good!" said Sir Felix. "I think you are right." He produced his own cigarette-case, and



Mrs Langley and Miss Gilderay both took cigarettes from it. Zoe Averil did not smoke.

There was a little buzz of conversation, and then a sudden silence. And into the silence broke the clear, silvery voice of Zoe Averil.

"I want to ask you something, Sir Felix. You look rather anxious, and I don't understand anxiety when the end is so certain. What is it you are afraid of for us?"

"I'll tell you frankly. I'm afraid of reaction. I have got no words to say how splendid I think you three women have been. You all seem without fear. But we have many hours before us yet. There will be little or nothing to do. Here we shall be in prison together glaring at one another. If our cheerfulness broke down, if we ceased to be good-tempered, if we got too long for the end—well, it's possible."

"Tell us your story, Sir Felix," said Mrs Langley.

"My story? What do you mean?"

"The story of yourself."

"I've never yet told it. I'd never meant to tell it at all. Yet, now that I come to think about it, I don't know that it wouldn't ease my mind to make a confession before I died. You will none of you think very well of me when you've heard it, and so I must make one condition. There is not to be one word of comment."

To this all agreed.

"I am at present thirty-eight years of age. When I was a boy of fourteen, early one summer



morning I wrecked the whole of my life. It is in consequence of what I did, or failed to do, then that I succeeded to the baronetcy—if that is worth anything—and became a rich man, and have never since had one moment of complete happiness. What I've got to tell you is that I was a coward. Even now, in similar circumstances, I think I might be a coward again. There are people who have no fear. There are people who are brave enough for the ordinary things of life, but have one special fear which overmasters them. I believe there are many such, and I was one of them. With some men the overmastering horror is connected with fire. They live in dread of it. They never go to an hotel or a house for the first time without looking from their windows to find what they would do in case of fire. The thing haunts them. My case was different. I was supposed to be a particularly courageous and high-spirited boy, but I also was haunted—by the dread of drowning. I was afraid of the water. As a child, when I first saw the sea I screamed with terror. As I got older and went to school I had to get over this to some extent. I managed, with the greatest agony to myself and with the strictest concealment of my real feelings, to learn to swim. In the summer holidays I bathed every morning with my elder brother in the river before breakfast. I used to pretend that I loved it. And yet every day it was all I could do to get myself to go in. There, can't you guess the rest of it? No, don't speak."

He took a sip of champagne, and continued his story.

On the morning in question Adrian, his elder brother, who was an expert swimmer, had remained long in the water after Felix had left it. Suddenly Adrian was attacked by cramp and cried for help.

"I was unable to move," said Sir Felix. "I stood there on the bank half-dressed, looking at him, and I was actually unable to move. I could not make myself do it. I pictured him dragging me down into the green water. I also began to call loudly for help. I told myself that when he was insensible, and it would be safe for me to tackle him, I would go in and rescue, but it was not till I heard steps and became afraid of being found on the bank that I managed to fall into the water. I never reached my brother. Fear had taken all the power from my muscles. I could not swim at all. I went down at once. When we were taken out by the men who came in answer to my call, he was dead and I was insensible. I recovered, told a lying story, and let people praise my heroism. Can you wonder that the recollection of that morning has haunted me all my life? I, who hate cowardice and lies and selfish brutality, have to look upon myself as a coward, a liar, and a murderer. Since then I have done everything I could, short of actual suicide, to end it. In South Africa the Boer bullets and the enteric took better men and left me free. Here in Egypt I found a fascination. Here also

lived people who all their lives through had looked forward to their death. Excavation, too, has its risks, or can be made to have them. I have shirked none of them. I have even invented them. And all the time I have had to put a good face on things before the world. I dared not let people know what I really was. I joined in sports, I laughed at jokes, I pretended to be interested in all manner of things. It is a relief unspeakable to me that from this moment, for the few hours that will elapse before I die, I need pretend no longer. I have shown myself as I am."

There was complete silence when he finished speaking. It had been agreed that there was to be no word of comment. Then openly, across the table, Mrs Langley stretched out her hand to him, and he held it for a moment. Miss Gilderay, rising, with Zoe Averil close to her, began to clear away things. Mr Agravine, helping them, sought and found an occasion to say something absolutely commonplace.

Suddenly Mr Castle brought his hand down on the table.

"Wait a minute," he said. "If you don't mind, I mean. If I don't do it now, I never shall."

"What is it, Mr Castle?" asked Mr Agravine.

"My name's not Castle, but that's no matter. It's the only name you'll ever know me by. I've got a story to tell—a true story. The night's young, and in any case we shall be getting a long sleep soon."

"Don't get excited about it, Mr Castle," said Mrs Langley, quietly. "We are quite willing to hear you."

Those who had risen from their places sat down again, and the young man began.

"I suppose I ought to blame myself alone for what I am going to tell you, but I don't. I blame my father more than myself. He's a solicitor in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I dare say you'd know the name if I gave it. I have been on bad terms with him all my life. All my life he has kept me short of liberty and short of money. He forced me to take, or to pretend to take, his views in religion and politics and everything. It was only by hypocrisy that I could make life with him tolerable. He insisted upon it that I should follow his profession, although he knew that I hated it. I don't care now whether I'm laughed at or not, and I'll tell you what I wanted to be. I wanted to be an actor. He would not hear of that, of course. He'd given me a good education, public school and Oxford, and I was to go into his office. I hated it, but I did what I was told. I went through my articles, I passed all necessary examinations. I became admitted as a solicitor, and then, for years, I did the work of managing clerk for him for about half a managing clerk's salary. At twenty-seven I had very little more freedom than I had at seventeen. I was not allowed a latch-key. I had to give an account of everything that I did and almost everything that I thought.



It would have been just if I had been taken into partnership, but my father would not hear of that. I was to inherit the business when he died, and until then I might wait. So it went on. Month after month of formal and uninteresting routine. Month after month of snubs and checks. If ever a man hated his father, I hated mine. Well, he'd screwed down the safety-valve, and after that it was his own look-out. What happened was inevitable."

He paused a moment, irresolute.

"Go on," said Mrs Langley.

"Oh, I'm not going to shirk it. One day last July my father handed me the firm's cheque for nine hundred pounds. I was to cash it and go on to the office of another solicitor to complete a purchase on behalf of a client. It was the kind of thing I had often done before. As you know, of course, payment is generally made in Bank of England notes. Until the moment when I had that cheque in my hands I had formed no plan at all. I had had a specially exasperating week with my old father, and was determined that something would have to be done. As I slipped that cheque into my pocket I decided what it should be. I got cash for the cheque, taking the greater part of it in small notes and twenty pounds in gold. I was very well known at the bank. If I had asked for the whole of it in gold I doubt if it would have aroused any suspicion. Then I got into a cab and drove round to one or two shops and



bought a dressing-case and some other things. The change had begun already. My father did not permit me to take cabs when a 'bus would serve, or a 'bus when it was an easy walk, though he never went anywhere except in a cab himself. I knew that the last place in which they would look for me would be in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and so I went to a small hotel in Holborn. For two or three days I lay low and watched the papers carefully morning and evening, expecting to find some account of my disappearance. There was never a word about it, and then I knew that I was quite safe. My father had not taken the view that I had been abducted by thieves, but that I myself was a thief. To save his name and the name of his firm he would be quite willing to pay that nine hundred out of his own pocket. I laughed at the thought of that. It occurred to me, however, that he would probably have put private detectives on to me, and for some weeks I was careful, going out only at night in closed cabs. It was dull, because I knew nobody. I still watched the papers, and still found no allusion to myself. I had expected a veiled notice in the agony column of the *Times*, but there was nothing. The old man had evidently determined to cut me off altogether. At last, one night, more because I was sick of the solitude than because I thought it was safe, I crossed over to Calais by the night boat. I remained in Paris for a few weeks, and then started off on a kind

of walking tour. I made a good many acquaintances and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I never had the slightest qualm of conscience, and I am not sure that I have any now. I said to myself that I had not stolen the nine hundred pounds, I had merely drawn my back pay. I got plenty of amusement, and incidentally I improved my French. On my return to Paris I happened to be in Cook's office one day and heard a man inquiring about Egypt. It was now November. My walking tour had cost me very little, and I still had plenty of money left. That is how I came here. There is my story, and you can think what you like."

"Thank you for telling us," said Mrs Langley. "It is better to make no other comment."

"I notice," said Mr Castle, bitterly, "that you do not give me your hand."

"I do not," said Mrs Langley.

"You can treat me as a leper if you like."

"Nor do I do that."

Miss Gilderay broke in hastily. "But what did you mean to do when the money was all gone?"

"I was willing to do anything, except to arise and go to my father. If I had found an opportunity I should have taken it. If I had found none I should probably have committed suicide. Burdon's tomb has spared me my pains."

And from that time onward Mr Castle began to give trouble.

## III

THE CONFESSION OF MISS GILDERAY AND OF  
MRS LANGLEY

THE night seemed interminable. Sir Felix Burdon, an old campaigner, slept well enough in his deck-chair, but all the others were restless. In the passage one candle burned. Its flame, absolutely motionless in the still and yellow air, was like a piece of burnished metal. At the farther end of the tomb, in the chambers where the women slept, low voices could be heard at intervals all through the first hours of night.

At five in the morning all was still. Mr Agravine, who had tried a thousand positions, had found one in which he was able to sleep. Castle, who had stretched himself at full length on the sandy floor, lay with his face on one arm, breathing heavily.

Suddenly Castle sprang to his feet.

"I want to get out of this," he shouted wildly. "I'm not going to die like a rat in a trap. Let me out. I've got money to spend, I tell you. I must get out."

Sir Felix Burdon, awakened by the noise, sprang to his feet. He was rather angry.

"Hold your row," he said. "D'you want to wake everybody? If you start that screaming again, I'll gag you."

Castle collapsed. He sat on the floor, with his head in his hands, rocking to and fro. "Give me a drink and I'll keep quiet," he said. "If I can't get out, give me a drink."

"Oh, go and get what you want," said Sir Felix, contemptuously.

Agravine, who had lighted his candle, watched the scene with grave and dispassionate eyes.

Castle went off to the stores. They could hear him moving about there. Presently he returned with a cup and a bottle of whisky. His exceedingly elaborate knife contained a corkscrew amongst other implements, and he drew the cork.

"Why don't you all join me?" he asked. "Best thing you can do."

The other men refused, as briefly as possible. Castle poured the whisky into the cup and began sipping it.

"This is doing me good," he said. "I was suffering from chill. That is what it was. Might happen to anybody. This is the finest thing on earth, taken medicinally."

Nobody paid any attention to him. For half an hour he went on sipping steadily, then he drove the cork into the bottle with one blow of his fist, and flung himself at full length on the sand again. A moment later he was snoring. Sir Felix and Mr Agravine were both awake now. They glanced at him and their eyes met.

"Yes," said Agravine. "I'm afraid he's a skunk."

He was all right in the hotel and all right on the boat. But this experience has tried him a little too high. What ought we to do?"

Sir Felix shrugged his shoulders. "I don't see that we can do anything. It's only a short time now, anyhow. I don't know if it's my fancy, but the air here seems to me to be worse and closer already. If he wants to die like a hog, he must. Of course, if he gets noisy, we shall have to take some measures, but as long as the stuff makes him sleep—well, he's best asleep."

And then for a while they dozed fitfully. At seven o'clock they could hear sounds of movement at the farther end of the tomb, and then Zoe Averil appeared at the entrance of the hall. She wore a long native robe of dark blue.

"We're making some tea," she said. "Shall I bring you some?"

"That would be very kind of you," said Sir Felix. "I hope you've slept."

"I slept very well indeed. I had a little room all by myself. But I think the other two did not sleep so well. Miss Gilderay looks very tired and worn out."

Miss Gilderay and Mrs Langley brought in the tea, but waited only for a moment and then went back to their own quarters. Hot tea, a wash in cold water, and a change of clothing refreshed the two men. They sat up and talked in low voices, while Castle still lay and snored.

"An experience like this," said Agravine, "makes



one realize what an absolutely fantastic and foolish thing property is. One begins to wonder why one ever attached any importance to it. As you know, I simply gave up my life to the acquisition of one form of property — beautiful things — pictures. How absolutely absurd! Nothing of it is any good to me now, and I cannot take it along with me. Here in this small, imprisoned society for a few hours we lose the sense of property altogether. I am wearing one of your shirts, Sir Felix. It doesn't seem to me to matter in the least whose shirt it is. I really hardly thanked you. Community of goods becomes quite easy when one knows that one will soon be dead. And," he added sardonically, "becomes still easier when one man in the society finds all the goods, and the rest simply do the communing."

Sir Felix laughed. He pointed with his foot to the prostrate Castle. "Shall we wake the beggar," he said, "and let him clean himself up a bit?"

"No," said Agravine. "The longer he sleeps, the better his nerves will be when he wakes."

An hour later Castle awoke of his own accord. He certainly did seem very much better. He was ashamed of himself and apologetic.

"Afraid I kicked up rather a row last night. Sorry. I suppose my nerves gave way. I shall be all right now that I have had a sleep."

"Oh, yes," said Sir Felix, kindly. "You'll be all right. You've missed some very good tea by

your slumbers. I dare say they'll make some more for you."

"Thanks," said Castle. "I don't want to trouble them. I'll wait till they join us."

Meanwhile he proceeded with his toilet, and accomplished the rather difficult task of cutting himself with a safety razor. Of his own accord he washed the cups which had been used, and took them and the whisky bottle back to the store-room. There he found Zoe Averil and Miss Gilderay, and remained talking with them for a little time. Presently the whole party gathered together again round the trestle-table in the entrance-hall of the tomb.

The table was laid just as neatly and carefully as if it had really mattered. The women had seen to that. Zoe Averil still wore the native robe, the other two were in their ordinary clothes.

Castle was quite good-humoured at lunch and very talkative; it was fairly obvious that he was drinking too much. Suddenly Miss Gilderay, who sat next to him, said, in a low voice, "I used to do that, too."

"Do what?"

"I'll tell you." She raised her voice and addressed the others. "I was just saying to Mr Castle that I, too, have a confession which I might make. It does not seem to be fair that you, Sir Felix, and you, Mr Castle, should tell the worst of yourselves, and that I should still let you believe the best of me."

"I don't want you to suppose," said Sir Felix, "that there's the slightest compulsion upon you to say even one word. You mustn't feel bound to disclose anything."

"Down here, so near the end, disclosure is really very easy. You see, it does not matter any more. I shall not be mixing with other people. I have not got to pretend that I am almost without fault. The only thing I am afraid of is that you will laugh at me, or want to laugh at me. I've got no illusions about myself. I know that I am not pretty and never have been pretty. I am elderly, and it must seem absurd for me to speak of romance and love."

"I feel sure," said Mr Agravine, "that we shall not want to laugh at you. No one ever wants to laugh at anything which is quite genuine."

"Hear, hear," said Castle, rapping noisily on the table.

Miss Gilderay moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue, looked at them unflinchingly, and began to speak.

"My father was the vicar of a London church which was in its way rather celebrated. The music was very good. The ritual was very ornate, and the sermons were very short. My father was a good musician and a very fair man of the world. He understood business thoroughly, and the greater part of his income was derived from careful speculations. There was a stockbroker in his congregation, an old man called Baldwin, who thought very

highly of my father—as, indeed, most people did—and he used to advise him. My father was very careful that the world in general should know nothing of these business transactions, but to me he always defended them. He said that there were many calls upon his charity, and that one could only give in proportion to one's income. If he made money in Steel Commons, then he had the more to give away. He reminded me that some of the apostles themselves got their living as fishermen. It did not seem to me the same thing at all, but I did not criticize him. I was too fond of him to be critical.

“I used to help my father a good deal, doing all his secretarial work for him. I would type out his sermon and his instructions to his broker all in the same morning.

“The choir of the church was for the most part paid, and paid by my father out of his own pocket. He said it was almost impossible to get good music except from professionals. But one day he came to me in a state of great delight. He had found a new and admirable singer, a tenor, who was willing to give his services for nothing. ‘He’s a gentleman,’ said my father, and paused. ‘Or almost,’ he added. I laughed, and told him that I knew that kind.

“When I saw the new tenor—Henderson his name was—I still felt that I knew that kind. He had good looks of rather a common description. His eyes were too small, his face too fat. He was slightly under the average height, I should



say. I was quite prepared to take no interest in him whatever.

"And then I heard him sing, and forgot the man in the voice. He had a real tenor, and his singing was perfectly true. Somehow it was impossible to hear it without believing that behind that voice there was a beautiful and noble temperament. As a matter of fact, I know now that this is one of the commonest of illusions. Music has its special beauty, which is quite isolated. It does not imply any other beauty of any kind.

"But that was ten years ago. Every Sunday I heard that man sing. I do not think now that I fell in love with the man, but I fell in love with the voice, and began to make inquiries about him, and found nothing very romantic. He was employed in an insurance office and was doing very well. He was unmarried and lived with his two sisters. One Sunday night he had been taking the solo part in the anthem, and I suppose that I was more than usually impressed. At any rate, when I got home I wrote a foolish letter and sent it to him.

"It was my belief that I had not committed myself in any way. I had given no address and put no signature. In case my hand-writing should be recognized I had typed the letter.

"Some weeks later my father thought he should take some notice of this Mr Henderson, and told me to ask him to dinner. He came, and every minute I liked him less and less. In the drawing-room afterwards he got a chance to speak with me apart.



"‘You do all your father’s typing for him, don’t you?’ he said.

"I assented. I had typed lists and notices for the use of the choir, which, of course, he would have seen.

"‘You ought to have a new letter “f” put on that machine,’ he said. ‘The top of it’s got broken off. I notice these little things. I have noticed that broken “f” in everything that you have typed.’

"I did not lose my head. I said it was very likely, that the machine was always open, and that it was my belief that one of the housemaids used it to type her love-letters on. I said that I would have the ‘f’ key put right, but that I could not make out how on earth he came to have noticed it. This was as good as I could do, but it did not deceive him, and I saw that it had not deceived him. Before the evening was over I hated him far more than I had ever loved him.

"I spent a sleepless night in an agony of humiliation, and next day I was tortured with neuralgia. That was the beginning of it. To relieve the pain of the neuralgia, for the first time in my life I drank wine."

"Look here, Miss Gilderay," said Sir Felix, "we quite understand. You need not tell us the rest of it."

Miss Gilderay smiled mournfully. "I am not going to tell you the whole story. It is quite loathsome. I do not think I could do it. It is the story of endless effort and endless failure. The thing became public at last, and my father had to leave that parish. He died a few months afterwards, and I suppose his death saved me.

At any rate, I have been able to do the most difficult thing of all. I am not what I once was, neither am I an abstainer. I drank a glass of wine at lunch just now. I shall drink another at dinner. But don't imagine that I am proud of my victory over myself. I could not be that, knowing as I do at what cost it was bought. Nor can it ever blot out of my mind the shame of so much previous defeat. I have spoken of it with a reason, though."

She looked full at Mr Castle. "All right, all right," he said impatiently. "All these things have a physiological explanation."

"Yes," said Mr Agravine. "And what explains the physiology?"

Mr Castle glared and said nothing. Zoe Averil changed her place and now sat next to Miss Gilderay.

"It always seemed to me a pity," Mr Agravine continued, "that any convention which is entirely false should be generally accepted. That is the case of the convention that divides people into saints and sinners. There are no saints, and in a sense there are no sinners. We are human beings, defective, but with some goodness. If we could only get that to be recognized, if that were the general opinion of society, society would be all the better for it."

"I've often thought," Sir Felix said, "that the case is very hard of a man who goes to prison once. What happens to him when he comes out? By most people he is not forgiven, and in the other cases forgiveness is patronage. Both are as bad as can be. And yet I don't see what other

line is to be taken. To treat crime solely as disease is more amiable than practical."

"I have no panacea," said Mr Agravine. "I can't make a new heaven and a new earth. But in my time I have often wished I could make a new earth."

"The fact of the case is," said Mrs Langley, "that one can't make any general rules at all. We can only deal with special cases as they arrive as intelligently and as humanely as possible."

"I see," said Mr Castle, "that you take a very superior standpoint, Mrs Langley. You pose as a righteous person, who is to do her best for people like—well, like Miss Gilderay and myself."

"I do not pose at all," said Mrs Langley. "I was not thinking of how I should judge, but of how I should wish to be judged. If you want to know, I have already made my confession. Miss Gilderay has been a friend of mine for three years past. Last night I told her something that I had never told her or anybody else before. I am not going to tell you any more now, except that some time after my marriage I went through a week of madness. My punishment has been that I have had to be a coward, that I have had to join in the general combination against more than one woman, though I knew that they were little if at all more guilty than myself. You have made me face this shame before you men. Now are you content?"

"You know perfectly well that I had intended nothing of the kind."

He moved away from the table, and sat in the farthest corner of the hall with his back to the

others. Presently he took a cigarette from his case and lit it.

"I say," said Sir Felix. "Just put that down, will you, and stick your heel on it."

Mr Castle scowled, but did as he was told. The others rose and began to clear away the things on the table.

#### IV

#### THE CONFESSION OF MR AGRAVINE AND THE STORY OF MISS AVERIL: AND SO TO A CONCLUSION

THE three women spent most of the afternoon in their own quarters. In the hall Mr Agravine, with his pocket-knife in his hands, sat and carved a peach stone; he was astonishingly clever at work of that kind. Sir Felix wrote with the writing-block on his knee. If, as seemed likely, their bodies were ultimately dug out, he wished to leave behind him some instructions with reference to his property, and also with reference to the excavation work which he had in hand. Castle did nothing but sit in sulky silence.

At five o'clock Sir Felix looked at his watch. "Agravine," he said, "we've been shut up now for twenty-six hours. What d'you think of it?"

"I think another twenty-two hours will see the end of it. Before that time we shall have to light the charcoal stove and finish quickly. Have you got it ready?"

"Not yet. Come along to the store-room, and I'll show you how the thing works."



Castle followed the two men and stood watching them, his hands in his pockets. Once or twice he asked a brief question. The visit to the store-room gave him an opportunity to resume possession of the whisky bottle. Before dinner-time he had finished it. The other two men remonstrated with him, but he said gloomily that a man condemned to death had the right to eat and drink what he liked. He refused to join the others at dinner.

In truth dinner had become a farce. Confinement and oppressive air had destroyed the appetite of all of them. Even their conversation was at first quite without animation. But presently Miss Gilderay said :

"Do you know what Zoe Averil has been telling us this afternoon? She says that she hears somebody coming."

"Don't laugh at me," said Zoe Averil. "I'm quite sure."

Sir Felix looked across at Mr Agravine. Were they all of them going mad, then?

"I don't see the possibility of it," said Sir Felix.

Suddenly from his corner Mr Castle burst into a loud laugh. "What else did you expect?" he shouted. "It is the high priest come back to see the Christians who have defiled his tomb, and to watch their last agony."

"I think," said Mr Agravine, "that you would do better to be quiet, Mr Castle."

Castle growled that in future he would do what he liked.



"The question rather is," said Miss Gilderay, "if we want anybody to come—I mean, if we want to be rescued. I don't think I do particularly. Life does not hold very much for a plain and unmarried woman of my age, and yet—"

"Yes," said Mrs Langley, "and yet. I know what you mean. Instinct is too strong for us. We thought we were sick of the world, but we would both go back to it if we could."

"I also," said Sir Felix.

"Not me," shouted Castle. "Not me. I would go back alone, but not with the rest of you. You all know too much. One would never be safe. At least, you think you know too much. That story I told you was make-up, to draw you all on. Idiots! Fools!"

Sir Felix stood up. "Get out of this, Mr Castle. We cannot have you with us."

Castle did not move till Sir Felix was quite near him. Then he rose and lurched out of the hall and down the passage, flinging himself into one of the chambers at the side.

They went back to the point at which he had interrupted them. "Personally," said Mr Agravine, "I think I should be contented either way. The effect of being buried alive for a few hours has been to show me that the whole of my life has been a mistake. I have been a collector, as you know. True, I have collected beautiful things. That makes no difference. Property has been my master. Property has made me do base and degrading things. Of one thing I am certain. If

by any chance Miss Averil were right, and we were rescued, I would change my way of life. My pictures should go to the nation. I would be the slave of property no longer."

"I don't think I quite understand," said Mrs Langley, "what you mean by that."

"I will tell you. It can hardly be called a confession. It is really too paltry for that. I was hypnotized, fascinated, by the collector's mania, and that drove me into stupidities."

"Still," said Mrs Langley, "tell us. It will make the time pass."

"I suppose," said Mr Agravine, "that it is not the love of beautiful things which degrades. I hope not, for I have always had that love. Degradation comes, not from love, but from possession, and that applies to more things than pictures. Until quite recently I was not a wealthy man. All that I could possibly spare was spent in the acquisition of what might be called stagnant capital. The possession of a thousand-pound picture costs a man forty pounds a year, whether he knows it or whether he does not. I was frequently hard pressed for money. I was frequently tortured by being compelled to relinquish some purchase on which I had set my heart.

"Such things do one no good. Again, I have not been a picture-dealer in the accepted sense of the word, but I have often sold one beautiful thing in order to acquire something which I thought more beautiful. I made the greatest profit that I possibly could. I brought commerce very near

to a swindle. One instance particularly lingers in my memory. It was a thing which I did quite deliberately, and it now seems to me both cruel and absurd to have done it. A friend of mine told me that he knew an old Frenchman living at Eastbourne who wished to dispose of a picture. He knew nothing of its history, but believed it to be good. He wanted an expert opinion upon it, and I was an expert. To oblige my friend I went down to Eastbourne one Saturday to see this Frenchman—Janvier his name was. Janvier was a bachelor living in a small house, with just sufficient income of his own. In all matters of art I soon found that he was absolutely ignorant, but none the less he had from time to time bought pictures, some twenty of them. He brought out his great prize, the picture which he believed to be good, and I was able to tell him at once whereabouts in the National Gallery he would be able to find the original of which it was rather a poor copy. But among the twenty there was one other picture which I saw at once I should have to buy. I asked him about it. 'It was sold me,' he said—he spoke admirable English—'as being, in all probability, by Corot.'

"I laughed, and told him that a great many pictures were sold in that way, and that if Corot had lived to a hundred years and painted every minute of his time he could not have covered all the canvases that have since been assigned to him. All the same, that picture was a genuine and very fine Corot, and I knew it.

"‘I gave ten pounds for it,’ said Janvier, ‘and I would not take less than twenty.’

"I told him that a hundred per cent. seemed rather a large profit to expect, but after a certain amount of grumbling I wrote him a cheque for twenty and took the picture back to town with me. It is one of the best things in my collection and it is worth a very large sum, and I am heartily ashamed of it."

"But," said Miss Gilderay, "is there, after all, anything dishonest about it? If the people who are ignorant try to do business with the people who are expert, has not the expert got the right to profit by it?"

"It ought not to mean that he should buy a fine Corot for twenty pounds. Do you still hear someone coming, Miss Averil? For I assure you that if we are ever released Janvier shall have his picture back."

"Well," said Sir Felix, "we have all told our stories now except Miss Averil. And she is too young to have any story to tell."

"I have done good things and bad things, but nothing very good or very bad," said Zoe.

"And yet," said Sir Felix, "you said you were not sorry that this had happened, and that your life was to come to an end."

"That is true. But it is the future, and not the past, from which I was eager to escape. I will tell you just a little thing, a scrap of family history. My parents died when I was a child, and one of my earliest recollections is that I was rather proud



of my hair, because an artist had admired it and had asked to paint me, and that my mother told me not to be proud of it, and that if I knew it would be a cause of grief to me. I did not know. She was speaking of a tradition which had been in our family for six generations. It was only a year ago that in some papers of my father's I came upon the story. From time to time during the last six generations a girl had been born in the Averil family with hair like mine, and in every case she had come to disaster. In most of the cases recorded she had died insane. During their lifetime my father and mother had said nothing of this to me, and I believed that, if my father had not died so suddenly, he would have destroyed those papers, in order to spare me. Ever since I read them I have been haunted. For it is true that I am not quite normal. Every now and then, not at my own wish, and often to no serious purpose, I have had what Mrs Langley calls that special sense. I have seen things that were happening far away. It's a pity, because I love life."

"And if we are rescued?" said Mr Agravine.

"What is to be is to be. If I had meant to take my life, I should have done so a year ago. If I am rescued, I shall go back and meet whatever fate has got for me. And I think we shall be rescued, for now I hear far more distinctly the sound of people coming. Listen! Can you not all hear it?"

For a moment all held their breath. There was a tense, deep silence. And then suddenly Mr Agravine rose and put his ear to the wall.



"It is so," he said. "Come here, Burdon, and listen."

Sir Felix listened for a moment.

"There can be no mistake about it. That is the sound of picks. There are many of them at work. In a few hours now they should get through to us."

"Wouldn't it be a good thing if I went and told Mr Castle?" said Zoe Averil. "I think it was he who most wanted to get back to the world again."

"No," said Sir Felix. "Don't do that. I will go and tell him myself."

He went, and in a few moments returned. He said nothing until Miss Gilderay questioned him.

"Yes," he said. "I've told him."

"Hasn't that made any difference?" asked Mrs Langley. "What did he say?"

"He says that the spirit of the high priest is in him, and that this is his tomb. Nothing else. Mad, of course. But he is perfectly quiet. He will probably recover when he gets out of this."

The women had a feeling that their rescuers should find them ready, and that everything should be in order. Helped by Sir Felix and Mr Agravine, they cleared the table out of the hall altogether. In the chamber where he lay, they could hear Mr Castle breathing heavily, as though asleep.

About an hour later, as Sir Felix and Mr Agravine sat listening to the sound of the picks, the women entered. Mrs Langley was drawing on her gloves and carried her camera. Zoe had changed into her own clothes again. Miss Gilderay had rearranged her hair. They were all quite ready.

"This is good of you," said Sir Felix. "It will be much pleasanter if we five all wait together. There is only another hour or two now. Listen!"

They could hear the blows of the picks. They sat down, and for a time talked a little, wondering who had organized the rescue and how it had been accomplished. And presently, because the air was very heavy and they had been short of sleep the night before, and a great strain had been taken off their minds, they became drowsy.

"I believe I'm going to sleep," said Miss Gilderay, leaning back in her deck-chair,

"I too," said Sir Felix. "Why not? It will help to pass the time of waiting."

Soon they were so soundly asleep that they did not hear the stealthy footsteps from the adjoining chamber.

Silent and barefooted, carrying the glowing charcoal stove in his hands, Castle crept into the store-room. With deep breaths he drew in the poison. He turned to tear down the curtain that filled the entrance to the room, in order that the fumes might spread and all might die together. But before he could reach it he swayed and fell, and lay motionless.

And now the picks broke down into the entrance-hall of the tomb. Through the opening streamed in a glorious sunlight that made the candle flames pale, and fresh, untainted air. And with these came fresh life and fresh courage to face it—for all, save that dead boy lying behind the curtain by the charcoal stove.

## THE UNKNOWN GOD

THE air of the primitive and remote island was soft and languorous. Its population consisted of a man and woman, brown-skinned, and without any of the blessings of education and religion. This afternoon the population had been bathing, and now lay on the sand in the sun.

"Presently," said the man, "we will go and look at the boat which has drifted ashore."

"Presently," said the girl, lazily. "It is a good boat."

"Very good boat," echoed the man. "It will be useful to us." And immediately he fell asleep.

In a moment or two the girl awakened him. She was in a philosophical humour, and there is not much fun in being philosophical all by yourself.

"Are you happy?" she asked.

"I do not know," said the man. "I have never thought about it."

"Then you are happy," she said with decision. "People who think about it are not. I, for example, am not."

"If we now roused ourselves a little and caught a few fish—"

"No," said the girl, decisively, "I wish to talk."

The man sighed.

"Do you not know what it is to wish to be taken out of yourself, and to become somebody else—to be full of inspiration from the gods? These days and nights that are always the same are becoming a burden to me. I want to be different for a little while."

"It is not possible," said the man. "There are gods undoubtedly. It was always the opinion of our forefathers that there were gods, but the gods never interfere with us and we cannot get at them. Therefore they do not concern us, and it is much better to catch a few fish."

The girl, looking as if she might burst into tears at any moment, said that she hated fish, and that she hated her island, and that she hated herself.

"I wish to meet with one of the gods," she said. "I wish to talk with someone who is more than mortal. Tell me what the gods look like."

"As to that," said the man, "more than one opinion has been expressed. There are some who say that the gods are like big men, taller than the palm trees, of gigantic strength. There are others who say that the gods cannot be seen, and that it is only by their influence within us that they may be recognized. To talk of things which we do not know is very foolish. If you will not catch fish, let us go and look at the boat."

The woman arose rather sullenly, and followed him.

They found in the boat a tin containing biscuits. They had never seen biscuits before, but a little investigation showed them the use to which they



should be put. They bored holes in them and hung them round their necks.

They found, moreover, a large square bottle, containing a colourless fluid. The girl removed the cork, dipped her finger in the fluid, and touched her tongue.

"Of what does it taste?" asked the man, anxiously.

"Of fire and sleep and sin," answered the girl.

"In that case," said the man, "I will go and fetch our drinking-cups."

The drinking-cups were two halves of the shell of a cocoanut, smooth and polished by much use. The man filled them, and they drank in slow sips. A drink which tastes of fire and sleep and sin cannot be taken hastily. As she filled their cups for the second time, the girl observed that she believed there was a god in that bottle.

Next morning the girl awoke and zigzagged from the point where she had fallen down the beach to the sea. She kept her head under water for the longest possible time. Then she rose to the surface and swam slowly and lazily. Presently the man's head shot up by her side. He also had been down below.

"There can be no doubt about it at all," said the girl. "We have found the unknown god, and by his influence within us he may be recognized."

"I do not feel at all good this morning," said the man.

"Nor I," said the girl. "But last night was



magnificent. Never have I danced so long and so wildly. Never have I laughed so much."

"I had an impression," said the man, as he swam by her side, "that I was being unusually witty."

"No," said the girl, "I do not think it was that. Everything was amusing. I laughed at the sea, I laughed at the boat, I laughed at the trees. You also laughed."

"I remember it," said the man. "The entire world had suddenly become ridiculous. But this morning I do not feel at all good." He dived under a wave with the girl after him, and presently they lay side by side on the sand.

"It is about this time in the morning," said the girl, "that we generally catch fish for our breakfast, but to-day I do not wish to catch fish for my breakfast, and I think I do not wish to eat anything more as long as I live."

"I have the same feeling," said the man. "Why then should this be if indeed it was a god that we found in the boat?"

"Because," said the girl, "if with great force you pull the bough of a tree in one direction and then let go, it will swing with great force in the other direction. Because last night we were exalted, therefore this morning we are abased. I am willing. I pay the price. Why do you get up? Where are you going?"

"I am going," said the man, "to see if by any chance there is still left in the bottle a little of that drink which tastes of fire and sleep and sin."

"Lie down again," said the girl. "There is not any left. I have looked into the matter myself."

Two days later the man and the girl built up a rough altar of white stones on the beach, and on the top of the altar they placed the bottle in which the god had lived. The perfume of his presence was still there. The man thinks now that the girl spends too much time in the contemplation of it. And what will happen when the missionaries land?

## THE LAST CHANCE

### I

DAWN was coming. Birds were waking and twittering in the Embankment Gardens. A cool breeze swept out the heavy and sultry air of the night. In another half-hour Mr Horrocks would be able to extinguish the lights at his coffee-stall. Meanwhile, in an interval of business, he talked to a young man who had been a regular customer of his for many nights past. Mr Horrocks did not remain idle while he talked. He wiped his counter down, and gave certain thick cups and saucers as much washing as he thought would be good for them. He was a placid and portly man of fifty, much respected by his customers. If two of these scarecrows of the night had a difference, they would occasionally ask Mr Horrocks to adjudicate, and from his decisions there was no appeal.

The young man who was talking to Horrocks was in rags, but he was not altogether ill-looking. He had melancholy eyes and a gentle expression. His speech was the speech of an educated man.

"I can find nothing to do," he said. "I'm at the end of my money. I've some thoughts of putting myself in the water. The trouble is that I can swim a bit."

Mr Horrocks considered the proposition without

emotion, much as if the young man had said he was going to have his hair cut.

"I shouldn't advise it," he said. "You never know your luck. Now, from what some of the others told me to-night, I rather gathered you was one time at Cambridge College."

"No. I was an Oxford man. I was sent down."

"All the same thing," said Mr Horrocks. "It means you've got eddication. That's a grand thing. Wish I had it myself. That gives you an advantage over the others, that does. School-mastering, now—that's open to you."

"In these clothes? And with no character?"

"That's against you," Mr Horrocks admitted. "Done time?"

He put the question as casually as if he had been asking the young man if he knew Brighton.

"No, I've never been in prison. I was a gambler and still am. I drank very hard, but I've given that up. It has to be all or nothing with me. I've been chucked by my family and most of my friends, and I've chucked the rest myself, out of pride. I believe I have the makings of an artist in me—a painter, you know."

"Some of the screevers do well enough. You want a dry day and a good pitch."

"I don't mean that. I mean real painting. But I can't get at it, and I don't suppose there'd be any money in it if I could. I can't beg, or steal, or use any tools that make a nasty noise. Some men can, but I can't; I can't do what I don't like."

"Ah!" said Mr Horrocks. "If you starts picking and choosing, no wonder you finds it difficult. You can't afford to do that. That's what you've got to say to yourself. Seeing now as you can't get at the painting and decorating, what is it you do want?"

"I should like your berth very well," said the young man.

"Hard work, me young friend. A deal harder than you think."

"There are some kinds of work," said the young man, reflectively, "that I don't object to at all. I like to be out at night. I like to talk to the people who've gone under. I like to see the dawn coming. You've got an interesting life, Mr Horrocks. Is there any money in it?"

"There isn't a fortune, but there's a livelihood for a worker."

"If you'd take me on to help you, I'd work."

Mr Horrocks extinguished an evil-smelling flare.

"There's no work for you here," he said. "But I might find it for you elsewhere."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning that I could do with another stall. I should know where to pitch it, and how to work it. If I had it, I'd give you a chance. You can't get a stall and a fit-out like this for nothing. If you could come to me and put down three golden sovereigns, I'd start you right away, in a sort of partnership with myself."

"Three golden sovereigns," said the young man, and laughed.



"Well," said Horrocks, "that ought to be possible for a young man that's been to Oxford College and had all the advantages."

"Can't be done. I've no more clothes to pawn—nothing but what I stand up in."

"If that ring on your finger ain't flash, you've got a chance still."

The ring was a plain gold signet. The young man looked at it.

"It's all right," he said. "What could I get for it?"

"A sovereign. I'd lend you that on it myself. Then you'd go to the Salvationers, or to the Church Army, and they'd show you how to start at peddling. You'll have made the money in a month. It's worth thinking about. Better than the river, anyway."

The young man drew the ring from his finger.

"I hadn't meant to part with this," he said. "But, however, it's the last chance. Take it, Mr Horrocks. If you find it's all right, give me a sovereign for it to-morrow night."

Mr Horrocks examined the ring with great care. Then he took a sovereign from his waistcoat pocket and laid it down on the counter.

"You can get quite a nice lot of stuff for that," he said. "As much as you can carry. Dress materials and a line of cheap watches is what I should recommend. Get hold of the servants at the good houses. They've all got some money to spend, and they're mostly mugs."

"No," said the young man. "I'm not going to do that."

"What, then?" asked Mr Horrocks.

"Perseus for the Derby," said the young man. "Didn't I tell you I was a gambler?"

"They tell me it's all right," said Mr Horrocks. "There's nothing else in it except the favourite. I'd thought of backing it myself. Still, you see, it's no certainty, and the other thing is."

The young man laughed, finished his coffee, and walked away.

## II

EDWARD SEATON tramped from London to Epsom. This is the cheapest way to go to the Derby, and on a fine day it is not the least pleasant. He had deposited his sovereign with a substantial bookmaker whom he had known in his younger days. He had threepence in his possession. One penny of this was to pay for his breakfast. The remaining twopence was to help him on his way back to town. Of course, he might be able to get a lift for nothing, but it was better to have something in reserve.

Queer and erratic, he saw now a possibility of the kind of life that he would like. He would do his utmost to make Horrocks's new coffee-stall successful. He himself would live as cheaply as possible. Very soon he would be able to buy the materials, and, when his night's work was over,

would get two or three hours of painting before he went to bed. It was a life which would never bring him into contact with any of the people whom he had known in his old days—the people before whom he felt humiliated. He would be dealing with the dead-beat, and he understood them. He had had hours of the greatest excitement, thinking over this last chance, planning the great results that might ultimately follow from his partnership with Mr Horrocks. His life so far had been a mistake. He had tried to live the conventional life, and it had torn up his nerves and driven him to drink. He had neglected his one natural gift. A few sneers from his family had been enough to make him ashamed, and to convince him that he could never become an artist. That was all past now. In future he would model his life to suit himself, and one day, possibly, he might find himself back in his old position. What he had to do was to be independent, to judge for himself, to map out his own line. In his boyhood he had tried to be docile, and docility had been a complete failure.

He was no longer excited. The moment for that had gone past. He got away from the roaring crowd on the hill, and sat at a little distance by himself. He had meant to watch the race, but after the first false start he found that he could not stand it. It was better for him to sit quietly with his head in his hands. He could hear now the roar of the crowd. "Perseus! Perseus wins! Perseus!"

He rose to his feet now and walked slowly back to the crowd. He limped badly, for his feet were blistered with the long walk.

"What's won?" he asked of the first man he met.

"The favourite," said the man, exultantly. "Won by a head. Good finish."

Seaton burst out laughing. "Very good finish," he said, and turned away.

There would be no hurry to get back to London now. He spent his twopence on food, for he was terribly hungry, and then sought out some spot on the downs where he could lie quiet and sleep.

As he limped along his eyes caught a bright object lying in the grass. For one breathless moment he thought that luck had come back to him. Then he picked the thing up. It was not a sovereign, after all. It was a new farthing, on one side of which a cross had been scratched.

As he stood looking at it two people approached him. They belonged to the class that he did not want to meet any more—a man and a woman. The man was elderly and correctly dressed, a veritable tailor's triumph. The woman was very young, pretty, and impulsive in manner.

"You've found it?" she said eagerly.

Seaton raised his cap. "I have found a new farthing," he said. "If that is what you mean, I shall be very happy to return it to you."

She stared at him. His words and appearance did not seem to consort together. She took the



coin from him, thanked him, and turned to her companion.

"George," she said, "give this man a sovereign, please."

"Certainly, a shilling by all means. And a very good bargain for you, my fine fellow. If you can keep on exchanging farthings for shillings you'll soon be rich."

"Don't be a fool, George. I said a sovereign. Are you getting deaf already?"

"Oh, have it your own way," said the man, as he took the coin from his sovereign-case.

"But," said Edward Seaton to the lady, "why do you give me a sovereign for a farthing?"

"Why? Did you never hear of mascots? That farthing's the finest mascot I ever had in my life. I wouldn't have lost it for anything."

"Here, I say," said the man. "We can't stop talking to this chap all day."

"Of course you can't," said Seaton.

He took the coin, thanked them, and limped away. Here, then, was a reprieve. The last chance was not yet quite over. It was true that his scheme had failed, but that seemed to him now of much less importance. He would not be compelled to walk back to London. And when he got there he would be able to afford himself the luxury of a bath and a good bed. Also, he would eat and drink. And to-morrow, of course, he would die.

He passed through a crowd of shouting book-makers, and unintentionally his eye fell on the list of horses for the next race, with the odds chalked



up against them. One of the horses had a name which arrested him. He picked his bookmaker very carefully.

"What price Farthing?" he asked.

"Thirties."

"Right," said Seaton, handing up the coin. "I want a sovereign on."

The bookmaker was a good-humoured, honest-looking old fellow. He bent down towards Seaton.

"Look here," he said. "You don't want no thick 'un on it. Have a shilling on it. It can't win. No earthly. I don't want to take a poor man's money. Put a shilling on, and save the rest to buy the missis a tarara."

"I dare say you're right," said Seaton; "and you're a good chap, anyhow. But I want to put that sovereign on. I suppose you can pay if I win?"

The bookmaker laughed. "Pay? Yes, and be thankful to have the chance. You're the only man on the earth that's backed it."

A few minutes later Seaton, with thirty-one pounds in his pocket, was making his way to the railway station, when once more he encountered that extremely well-dressed old gentleman.

"I beg your pardon," said Seaton.

"Chuck it!" said the man. "You get no more out of me to-day."

"I wanted to return this sovereign. Thank you very much for the loan of it."

## III

MR HORROCKS could hardly believe his own eyes. He groped for a possible explanation.

"Then you didn't back Perseus after all?" he said.

"I did," said Seaton, "and I lost."

"You've got a new fit-out of clothes. You've just given me a quid to get your ring back. It beats me. Oh, I see. Your people have been coming down with the stuff, eh?"

"No. After the Derby had been run I borrowed a sovereign, and backed the winner for the next race. Thirty to one."

"You, in those rags, managed to borrow a sovereign up on Epsom Downs? Man, you're a genius."

"Yes, I know," said Seaton. "But let's talk business."

"What? You're still game to come in with me?"

"Of course I am. I've got to live, and I want to paint. I shall get my living out of the coffee-stall, and I shall get it in a way that won't upset and annoy me. I shall have plenty of time left for painting. I don't sleep much."

Seaton went back with Horrocks to his home after business, and was presented to Mrs Horrocks. He examined such accounts as Horrocks kept, and was surprised to find that so much profit could be made by catering, in part, at any rate, for

the last pennies of the dead-beat. Of course, Horrocks had working-men customers as well, substantial men who really breakfasted. For the next few nights Seaton assisted Horrocks with his stall, and learned more thoroughly the details of the trade. After that he managed another stall by himself.

Ten years later, when Edward Seaton was elected Associate of the Royal Academy, nobody was surprised. Many thought that he should have been elected earlier.

Good fortune had followed him persistently. The first two pictures that he sent to the Academy were hung on the line. They were London subjects—"Dawn on the Embankment" and "Saturday Night in the Edgware Road." They were mentioned with approval by a bishop preaching in Westminster Abbey. In all questions of art the bishop was an innocent child. But that did not matter. Through the whole of Monday there was always a little group of people in front of Seaton's pictures. A critic, who had returned to the show after many days, in order to settle a point in dispute between himself and another critic, noticed the group, and for the first time noticed Seaton's pictures. He spent about half an hour on them, and then decided to discover Seaton.

He discovered him in an article in a daily paper, also in various paragraphs, also in conversation with critics and other artists. The innocent bishop, finding to his utter amazement that he had

for once appreciated a work of art, purchased "Dawn on the Embankment" for the sum of one hundred pounds. He subsequently sold it for five hundred, and we may be sure that he devoted the profits to some good purpose.

Having taken his line, Seaton kept it. He never painted a portrait. He never painted anything except London. The critic who had been his first evangelist was in the habit of saying that Seaton had discovered London. In the following exhibition he again showed two pictures—"Sunset in Regent's Park" and "The Coffee-Stall." He sold both of these, and sold them well. It was at this juncture that he gave up work at the coffee-stall himself, and became known once more to his family and friends. His family, having done their very utmost to prevent Edward from becoming an artist, now rejoiced in a success which, they asserted and believed, they had always foretold.

On the occasion of his election a few bachelor friends of his asked him to dine at the club. They were for the most part artists, but the talk after dinner strayed over many subjects, and lingered finally on the subject of the theatre. "I often wonder," said old Burden, "what became of Margaret Gaye. She was about the finest Juliet we've ever had. She could play comedy too, and she was as pretty as one could wish. I wonder why we never hear of her now."

"She's been ill," said another man. "I know it because I was painting her portrait at the time. That was a queer thing. She showed me her



mascot, a farthing with a cross scratched on it. Her belief in it was intense. She said she would never part from it and that while she had it her luck would never leave her. Next day she was down with rheumatic fever. It was nearly a year ago, and I've got that unfinished portrait in my studio still. I've never seen her since."

"Why not?" asked Seaton.

"I ought to have done. Meant to have done. But just at that time I was most appallingly busy, and afterwards it slipped out of my mind. I suppose she's still alive, as we've seen no obituary notices. I'd go and look her up next week, if I knew where she lived. She had a house at Earl's Court, but somebody or other told me she had given that up and gone away."

"Let's see," said Seaton, reflectively. "Whom did she marry?"

"Never married anybody. Might have done. As things have turned out, I dare say it would have been better for her if she had. I don't suppose she had saved much money. She was a reckless little woman, and a born gambler."

"Gambling's a mistake," said Seaton, as he filled his glass and passed on the decanter. He himself played bridge for half-a-crown a hundred now, and never for any higher point, and never made a bet. He had given up teetotalism and drank wine at dinner and at no other time. He had got himself in hand. It had taken a good deal of doing, but it was done.

On the following morning Seaton went to a



private inquiry office. "I want," he said, "the present address of Miss Gaye."

"Margaret Gaye? The actress?" asked the private detective.

"Yes. About a year ago she had a house at Earl's Court. That's all I can tell you. Can you do that for me?"

The detective smiled. "I wish I was never asked to do anything more difficult, sir."

"You understand that it must be done without Miss Gaye's knowledge, without causing her any annoyance."

"Quite so. As a matter of course. You will have the address to-morrow, sir."

#### IV

SEATON drove down to Wimbledon in his own car. Then he sent the driver back with the car and started on foot in search of the house. He found it with no great trouble—a very small house in a very back street—and a very young servant answered the bell.

"Is Miss Gaye in?"

"Well," said the maid, doubtfully, "she is in, but—"

"Give her this note—my card's in it—and ask if she will see me."

In a minute the maid returned. "Miss Gaye will see you, sir."

Seaton was shown into a drawing-room of the

smallest size, principally furnished with a grand piano. As he entered Margaret Gaye rose from her chair by the fire, still holding his note in one hand. She was thinner than when he last saw her, and she was older—as a matter of fact, thirty-two. The impression she made on Seaton was that her beauty had become etherealized and rather pathetic.

"I don't understand this at all," she said, as she shook hands with him. "You say I once saved your life. I never did anything so heroic. I'm afraid I've saved very little, and certainly not the life of a famous artist. Won't you sit down and tell me about it, Mr Seaton?"

He sat down and told her his story, from beginning to end.

"Then," she said, "it was true what I read in one of the newspapers—that you once kept a coffee-stall?"

"Perfectly true. Quite interesting work for a time."

"And is it really true that you've been looking for me ever since?"

"Quite true. I did not know your name, you see. I had nothing to go by. It was only two nights ago that I was dining with some artists, and they spoke with admiration of your acting."

"I'm afraid that's all over," said Margaret.

"I hope so," said Seaton, and did not appear to notice that Miss Gaye looked slightly perplexed at this. "And one of the artists," he continued,

"happened to mention your farthing mascot. Then, of course, I knew."

"I had a very long illness and had to leave London. I went—well, down in the world. None of my old friends ever comes near me. How did you get my address?"

"In the dirtiest possible way—through a private inquiry office. If any dirtier way had been necessary I would have taken that. It has taken me ten years to find you. Once I was on the track I couldn't, of course, have allowed anything to stop me."

"Why not?"

"But it's so obvious. Now tell me all about yourself. Who was the man that you called George?"

"George Belmont. He was a banker. He was a very good friend of mine, until he got angry with me."

"All the same, you were quite right to refuse a man who was old enough to be your grandfather. Was he much surprised that I returned him the sovereign?"

She laughed. "He was astounded. It made the story dearest to his heart. He told it everywhere. He dined out on it. He made people sick of it."

"But won't you get on, please? I want more about yourself."

"But really, is there any reason why I should tell you?"

"There is the best reason in the world. And

you shall hear it later. Let me see. You fell ill. Go on, please."

And so she told her story, which was ordinary enough. She had at one time been very successful, and had earned high salaries. She had been impulsive, generous and improvident. Rheumatic fever has its sequelæ, and she had been ill and unable to work for a long time. She considered that she had now entirely recovered — Seaton disagreed with this—but she found it difficult to get back into her profession again on the old basis. She had an offer from one manager, but it was not very tempting. It was not an offer that he would have ventured to make two years before. She was in doubt about it. She still had the farthing mascot, and though it had not treated her very well lately, perhaps after all it would give her a last chance. It was no longer a new farthing ; it had grown very dingy.

"Perhaps," said Seaton, gravely, "if you paid it a little attention it would reward you. You should clean it. Wash it in a twenty-five per cent. solution of sulphuric acid, and polish with pumice."

Again she laughed. "How on earth do you know these things?"

"Quite simple ; I work on copper plates sometimes. Are you going to give me any tea?"

"Of course I am."

"Then I think I'll step out to the telephone office first."

"Something you've forgotten?"

"I sent my car back. I want it to return here

at seven, to take us both to dine in town. Afterwards we can go to the theatre, or we can talk. Just as you like."

"But, you amazing person, you haven't even asked me if I'll go yet. I don't think I ought to, and I don't believe I've got a dress."

"Oh, yes, you have. And you simply must come. Do you think, when I've found you after ten years, that I'm going to let you go again? Never! I won't hear of it. Ah, here's the tea!"

After tea they cleaned the farthing mascot, and brought it to a great state of perfection, without using either sulphuric acid or pumice. As they did so they talked eagerly, in close proximity. When the motor-car arrived Margaret Gaye was quite ready.

As he was driving her back to her house that night, she mentioned once more the engagement which had been offered her. "It's not what I like, but I think I should accept it, don't you?"

"No, certainly not."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not wish my wife to be on the stage."

She was astounded. He explained further, and with considerable eloquence. As he kissed her when they said good-night, it is probable that she was convinced.



## HER PEOPLE

### I

"NOT got your car here to-night, Miss Urwen?" asked Mr Fielding.

"It was here," said Lydia. "I sent my maid back in it with the floral tributes."

"That's you all over," said Mr Fielding, with enthusiasm. "Any other woman would have kept her car for herself, and sent her maid back in a taxi."

"My driver's been up late three nights running now. That was why I didn't let him wait. I expect my bouquets were getting rather thirsty too."

"You love flowers?" said Mr Fielding. He still lingered at the door of the taxi-cab. A kind old man, but he bored the great violinist extremely.

"Yes, but I don't like to be suffocated by them. So I let poor Stamford be suffocated by them instead. Good-night, Mr Fielding. Thanks so much."

"Mayn't I see you home?"

"Oh, no! Certainly not," said Lydia, laughing. "But thank you again."

"Bore!" she exclaimed with conviction as the cab passed down Regent Street. Presently she picked up the communication tube and spoke to the driver. He had been given her home address

away in South Kensington. She now directed him to stop at the next corner on the near side. A big private car was waiting here. She dismissed her cab and overpaid the driver. She always overpaid everybody. The door of the private car stood open now, and the young man who had emerged from it raised his hat to her.

"I've not kept you waiting?" she said, smiling. "Old Fielding would cling on to me and talk."

"Poor old Fielding!" said the young man. "Get in, won't you? No, you've not kept me waiting."

The car moved slowly on through the heavy traffic. For a few seconds they sat in silence. Then he took her hands and kissed them.

"You're a darling," he said, "and you played divinely to-night."

"It's a very good thing that you're so fond of music," she said. "But it's a still better thing that you don't know too much about it. In that last movement—well, I was rather glad the *maestro* wasn't there. He wouldn't have told me that I played divinely. It is quite probable that he would have sworn at me."

"The pig!" said the man.

"Oh, don't say that. I adore him, you know."

"Do you adore me more?"

"I shan't tell you anything about it."

"Why couldn't I come straight to the Queen's Hall for you to-night? Was it simply the feminine desire for mystery and romance?"

"Oh, dear, no! One must avoid scandal."

That's all. Most people there know your car and your liveries. Mr Fielding knows that you are a married man and I am an unmarried woman. He would come to conclusions."

"I suppose he has to know the truth sooner or later."

"His conclusions would not be the truth. When the time comes—when I give myself to you—then he may know everything. I shall never see him again then. I shall never see England again."

"You give up too much for me. Your career, your reputation, everything."

"I want to give up everything for you."

"Two weeks longer to wait. How long two weeks can be!"

"But after that our lives are in front of us."

As the car stopped before her house he kissed her on the mouth. She got out and ran up the steps. She waited there till the car was out of sight. Then she opened the door with the little gold key that hung from her wrist.

## II

IT has happened that a horse taken out of the shafts of a cab has subsequently won a classic race. Genius has no pedigree. Mr Urwen was a fairly prosperous grocer and provision merchant at Helmstone. His wife was kindly and apologetic. Neither of them had been greatly endowed by nature. Not one of the other children soared far

above the commonplace. Lydia was the star of the family. She reverted to some long-forgotten ancestor. Almost her earliest recollection was one of grief and tears because the piano was out of tune.

Musical genius has very little chance nowadays of remaining in obscurity. Lydia's first teacher spoke to the leader of the orchestra at Helmstone. The leader of the orchestra sniffed and was superior, but said he would hear the kid. After he had heard the kid he passed the news a little further up the great staircase, and an elderly gentleman in a fur coat—Mr Fielding, to be precise—came down from London. Mr Fielding talked to Mr Urwen, and it was all settled.

Lydia received most of her musical education abroad. Now that she was in the front rank of violinists she had perforce to travel much. A part of the year she was at her own house at South Kensington. Very seldom was she at home. Her visits were great occasions. She came laden with presents and with glory, and the family made no attempt to conceal their inordinate pride in her. When Lydia was expected, the piano-tuner was summoned, and the man with the mechanical piano, who played waltzes in the drive of The Elms—Mr Urwen's private residence—was instructed to discontinue himself until further notice. Mrs Urwen consulted a little note-book, in which she had written down every preference that Lydia had ever expressed.

The two weeks, which to one man were to seem



so long, were drawing to an end. Lydia had made up her mind to spend her last three days in her old home. She did not mean to tell any of her people what her intentions were. She justified herself to herself. She was about to run away with a married man; but that statement did not tell all the truth. He was married to a woman who was chronically ill and chronically ill-tempered—a woman who had told him more than once that she wished he were dead. For five years he had suffered for his mistake, and Lydia felt that he had suffered long enough. As for herself, she had been adored by many people. Her appearance was of a romantic type, and many men had fallen under her spell. She had grown weary of this persistent adoration, just as she had grown weary of the scent of too many roses and of the roar of applause. She had never loved but one man, and to that one man—whatever the judgment of the world might be—she intended to give her life. Indeed, she felt as if she were now going to begin life. All that had gone before had been but a preparation for this. She closed the door on her old self, said good-bye to her own people and went out, as it seemed to her, towards infinite possibilities.

She had brought much luggage for a three days' visit, but that did not surprise her family. Lydia always brought much luggage. Clara said that she wore a new dress every ten minutes, and was almost afraid to admire any of them. If she admired anything of Lydia's, Lydia gave it her at once.



Her father and mother met Lydia at the station.

"It takes a good deal," he said, "to get me away from my business at three o'clock in the afternoon, but still there are occasions."

"I wish there were more of them," said Mrs Urwen. "Your father does too much, Lydia."

Certainly, Lydia thought, he seemed older and more worn, although he was perfectly cheerful.

"The fact of the case is," he said to Lydia, "we've had to face some serious competition of late. One of the big cut-price gangs has started a branch not ten doors away from my own shop. For some time I was nervous about it. I met each move they made. I sold stuff for less than it cost me, sooner than be left behind."

"It's all right now?" asked Lydia.

"Oh, yes. It's all right now. They hadn't got the quality—that's where I had my pull. There's plenty of room for both of us in Helmstone, they taking the low class, and me taking the rest. We came to an arrangement. Yes, we're quite on good terms now. If I meet their manager in the street we always have a chat together. They aren't bad people at all for a low-class trade."

"I wish you were out of business altogether," said Lydia. "You've done enough. You ought to take a rest."

"Ah!" said Mr Urwen. "That's what your mother said. But we're not so rich as all that. It may come, one of these days."

Two of Lydia's sisters, Clara and Ruth, and Lydia's youngest brother, Bill, were at home. Her

two other brothers were away at a public school, and her other sister, Catherine, was giving cooking demonstrations at a domestic training college. Mrs Urwen gave a favourable report of all the absentees.

"Yes," said Lydia's father, "all my children are good, and one of them is famous. I don't want to boast, but upon my word I might."

The three days passed very quietly. The provinciality and narrowness of her people impressed Lydia much less than their goodness. Their unbounded faith in her touched her. Clara and Ruth were absolutely without any jealousy. They did not merely accept the fact that Lydia was brilliant, and they themselves not. They rejoiced and gloried in her superiority.

"But," said Lydia to Ruth one day, "you mustn't exaggerate about me, or you'll make people laugh at me. I didn't invent the fiddle, you know."

"That's almost what it comes to," said Ruth. "You show people what can be done with it."

"There have been a few others," said Lydia, laughing. "Kubelik isn't bad for a beginner."

Her small brother rather amused Lydia. He was an extremely grave and reserved boy. He considered any demonstration of affection to be unmanly. He told Lydia solemnly that he was pleased to see her. Later he admitted that he had changed the name of one of his rabbits, and had changed it in Lydia's favour. Mrs Urwen had to remonstrate mildly with Lydia about Bill. He really ought not to have so much money to spend. He was too young.

If Mrs Urwen felt any uneasiness at all on Lydia's account, it was because of her extravagance in the matter of presents. She rained presents upon the entire family. She sent hampers of presents to the boys at the public school. She sent a travelling-bag of great luxury to the demonstrator of cookery. She showed the utmost ingenuity at discovering things which her father and mother might possibly want, and great celerity in procuring them.

"And when shall we see you again?" they asked when it was time for her to go.

"Soon," said Lydia. "Very soon."

### III

THE young man drove up to the little junction, left his magnificent car in the station-yard, and went to meet the local train from Helmstone. It was late and leisurely, as usual. Lydia did not travel with her maid when she went down to Helmstone, and for a few minutes the man was busy with luggage.

"I've got the car outside," he said.

"Why?" said Lydia. "You had my letter this morning, didn't you?"

"Yes. But I can't leave it like that. Don't you see that I can't possibly do without you now? You must come with me. You belong to me."

He turned to a porter to give a direction about the luggage, but Lydia forestalled him.

"All those things in the London express. How long have I to wait?"

"Twenty minutes, m'lady. Should have been more, but the local's a little after her usual time."

"Very good," said Lydia. "Look after all these things for me. I have a carriage reserved for me on the train. The name's the same as on the luggage. You'll find it when the train comes in."

"I'll see to all that, m'lady. There shan't be any mistake."

He was not a man of great intelligence, but he had a fine *flair* for potential generosity. Ladies who reserved first-class carriages for themselves could afford to be generous, and the porter believed the application of a courtesy title to be soothing and emollient. He had already addressed the young man as Captain.

Lydia now turned to the young man.

"I can give you twenty minutes," she said.

"I don't want twenty minutes. I want the whole of your life."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Then, if you don't care to talk until the train comes in, I won't keep you. You said your car was waiting outside, I think."

"Will you come in here?" he said sulkily, opening the door of a waiting-room. And before the fire in the dingy waiting-room they sat on uncomfortable chairs and talked.

"I suppose," said the young man, "I've done something you don't like. I don't know what it is, and you don't tell me in your letter. Tell me now. I apologize in advance. Surely it must be something that I can put right again."



"No, it's not that," said Lydia.

"Then you have ceased to care for me."

"I shall never cease to care for you," said Lydia simply and with conviction.

"Then you must come with me now. Think no more about it, but come. You had quite made up your mind, you know."

"Yes, I had. I have changed it again, and for the last time."

"Why? Tell me at least why."

"I tried to tell you in my letter. But I suppose I'm not so good at writing as I am at playing the fiddle. It's—it's almost a matter of business."

"Business? What do you mean? What has business got to do with it?"

"One may pay too much for anything. I should have to pay for my happiness with the misery of other people. It is like paying for it with stolen money, and with money stolen from those who are very dear to me."

"Your people would understand in time. And when they understood they would forgive."

"You don't know my people at all. It is quite certain they would forgive. It is equally certain that they would never understand. I do not wish them to have to forgive."

"What is it you mean to do, then?"

"I am going back to London to-night. I have had an extremely good offer for an American tour. It was forwarded to me this morning. To-morrow I shall see my agent about it. I am going to accept that offer. I shall be away for six



months, and I shall make a great deal of money."

"What do you want to make a great deal of money for? You know that I hate the idea of your making money on the concert platform. And, as it happens, there is not the least necessity for it. If you come with me—"

She tapped the floor with her foot impatiently.

"Must I keep on repeating it? I am not going away with you. In future you have my friendship, if you will accept it. But until you are a free man you can have nothing else. I am sorry if I hurt you, but remember that I hurt myself too. It is better than hurting so many other people. I am not going to make this money entirely for myself."

Her last words were drowned by the roar of the express as it entered the station. She had to repeat them.

"Why, then?" the young man asked.

"My father is growing old. He seems to have grown much older in this last year, and—"

The door of the waiting-room opened.

"Don't want to 'urry you, my lady," said the porter. "But everything's in, and you've only two minutes. Will the gentleman be coming?"

"No," said Lydia.

The young man followed her to her carriage. They reached it only just in time. The porter noted a certain formality in their farewell handshake. It did not distress him. He had just received half-a-crown for two pennyworth of work, and was quite satisfied.

## ROSE ROSE

SEFTON stepped back from his picture. "Rest now, please," he said.

Miss Rose Rose, his model, threw the striped blanket around her, stepped down from the throne, and crossed the studio. She seated herself on the floor near the big stove. For a few moments Sefton stood motionless, looking critically at his work. Then he laid down his palette and brushes and began to roll a cigarette. He was a man of forty, thick-set, round-faced, with a reddish moustache turned fiercely upwards. He flung himself down in an easy-chair, and smoked in silence till silence seemed ungracious.

"Well," he said, "I've got the place hot enough for you to-day, Miss Rose."

"You 'ave indeed," said Miss Rose.

"I bet it's nearer eighty than seventy."

The cigarette-smoke made a blue haze in the hot, heavy air. He watched it undulating, curving, melting.

As he watched it Miss Rose continued her observations. The trouble with these studios was the draughts. With a strong east wind, same as yesterday, you might have the stove red-hot, and yet never get the place, so to speak, warm. It is possible to talk commonly without talking like a

coster, and Miss Rose achieved it. She did not always neglect the aspirate. She never quite substituted the third vowel for the first. She rather enjoyed long words.

She was beautiful from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot; and few models have good feet. Every pose she took was graceful. She was the daughter of a model, and had been herself a model from childhood. In consequence, she knew her work well and did it well. On one occasion, when sitting for the great Merion, she had kept the same pose, without a rest, for three consecutive hours. She was proud of that. Naturally she stood in the first rank among models, was most in demand, and made the most money. Her fault was that she was slightly capricious; you could not absolutely depend upon her. On a wintry morning, when every hour of daylight was precious, she might keep her appointment, she might be an hour or two late, or she might stay away altogether. Merion himself had suffered from her, had sworn never to employ her again, and had gone back to her.

Sefton, as he watched the blue smoke, found that her common accent jarred on him. It even seemed to make it more difficult for him to get the right presentation of the "Aphrodite" that she was helping him to paint. One seemed to demand a poetical and cultured soul in so beautiful a body. Rose Rose was not poetical nor cultured; she was not even business-like and educated.

Half an hour of silent and strenuous work followed. Then Sefton growled that he could not see any longer.

"We'll stop for to-day," he said. Miss Rose Rose retired behind the screen. Sefton opened a window and both ventilators, and rolled another cigarette. The studio became rapidly cooler.

"To-morrow, at nine?" he called out.

"I've got some way to come," came the voice of Miss Rose from behind the screen. "I could be here by a quarter past."

"Right," said Sefton, as he slipped on his coat.

When Rose Rose emerged from the screen she was dressed in a blue serge costume, with a picture-hat. As it was her business in life to be beautiful, she never wore corsets, high heels, nor pointed toes. Such abnegation is rare among models.

"I say, Mr Sefton," said Rose, "you were to settle at the end of the sittings, but—"

"Oh, you don't want any money, Miss Rose. You're known to be rich."

"Well, what I've got is in the Post Office, and I don't want to touch it. And I've got some shopping I must do before I go home."

Sefton pulled out his sovereign-case hesitatingly.

"This is all very well, you know," he said.

"I know what you are thinking, Mr Sefton. You think I don't mean to come to -morrow. That's all Mr Merion, now, isn't it? He's always saying things about me. I'm not going to stick it. I'm going to 'ave it out with 'im."



"He recommended you to me. And I'll tell you what he said, if you won't repeat it. He said that I should be lucky if I got you, and that I'd better chain you to the studio."

"And all because I was once late—with a good reason for it, too. Besides, what's once? I suppose he didn't 'appen to tell you how often he's kept me waiting."

"Well, here you are, Miss Rose. But you'll really be here in time to-morrow, won't you? Otherwise the thing will have got too tacky to work into."

"You needn't worry about that," said Miss Rose, eagerly. "I'll be here, whatever happens, by a quarter past nine. I'll be here if I die first! There, is that good enough for you? Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr Sefton."

"Good afternoon, Miss Rose. Let me manage that door for you—the key goes a bit stiffly."

Sefton came back to his picture. In spite of Miss Rose's vehement assurances he felt by no means sure of her, but it was difficult for him to refuse any woman anything, and impossible for him to refuse to pay her what he really owed. He scrawled in charcoal some directions to the charwoman who would come in the morning. She was, from his point of view, a prize charwoman—one who could, and did, wash brushes properly, one who understood the stove, and would, when required, refrain from sweeping. He picked up his hat and went out. He walked the short distance from his studio to his bachelor flat, looked



over an evening paper as he drank his tea, and then changed his clothes and took a cab to the club for dinner. He played one game of billiards after dinner, and then went home. His picture was very much in his mind. He wanted to be up fairly early in the morning, and he went to bed early.

He was at his studio by half-past eight. The stove was lighted, and he piled more coke on it. His "Aphrodite" seemed to have a somewhat mocking expression. It was a little, technical thing, to be corrected easily. He set his palette and selected his brushes. An attempt to roll a cigarette revealed the fact that his pouch was empty. It still wanted a few minutes to nine. He would have time to go up to the tobacconist at the corner. In case Rose Rose arrived while he was away, he left the studio door open. The tobacconist was also a newsagent, and he bought a morning paper. Rose would probably be twenty minutes late at the least, and this would be something to occupy him.

But on his return he found his model already stepping on to the throne.

"Good-morning, Miss Rose. You're a lady of your word." He hardly heeded the murmur which came to him as a reply. He threw his cigarette into the stove, picked up his palette, and got on excellently. The work was absorbing. For some time he thought of nothing else. There was no relaxing on the part of the model—no sign of fatigue. He had been working for over an hour,

when his conscience smote him. "We'll have a rest now, Miss Rose," he said cheerily. At the same moment he felt human fingers drawn lightly across the back of his neck, just above the collar. He turned round with a sudden start. There was nobody there. He turned back again to the throne. Rose Rose had vanished.

With the utmost care and deliberation he put down his palette and brushes. He said in a loud voice, "Where are you, Miss Rose?" For a moment or two silence hung in the hot air of the studio.

He repeated his question and got no answer. Then he stepped behind the screen, and suddenly the most terrible thing in his life happened to him. He knew that his model had never been there at all.

There was only one door out to the back street in which his studio was placed, and that door was now locked. He unlocked it, put on his hat, and went out. For a minute or two he paced the street, but he had got to go back to the studio.

He went back, sat down in the easy-chair, lit a cigarette, and tried for a plausible explanation. Undoubtedly he had been working very hard lately. When he had come back from the tobacconist's to the studio he had been in the state of expectant attention, and he was enough of a psychologist to know that in that state you are especially likely to see what you expect to see. He was not conscious of anything abnormal in himself. He did not feel ill, or even nervous.

Nothing of the kind had ever happened to him before. The more he considered the matter, the more definite became his state. He was thoroughly frightened. With a great effort he pulled himself together and picked up the newspaper. It was certain that he could do no more work for that day, anyhow. An ordinary, commonplace newspaper would restore him. Yes, that was it. He had been too much wrapped up in the picture. He had simply supposed the model to be there.

He was quite unconvinced, of course, and merely trying to convince himself. As an artist, he knew that for the last hour or more he had been getting the most delicate modelling right from the living form before him. But he did his best, and read the newspaper assiduously. He read of tariff, protection, and of a new music-hall star. Then his eye fell on a paragraph headed "Motor Fatalities."

He read that Miss Rose, an artist's model, had been knocked down by a car in the Fulham Road about seven o'clock on the previous evening; that the owner of the car had stopped and taken her to the hospital, and that she had expired within a few minutes of admission.

He rose from his place and opened a large pocket-knife. There was a strong impulse upon him, and he felt it to be a mad impulse, to slash the canvas to rags. He stopped before the picture. The face smiled at him with a sweetness that was scarcely earthly.

He went back to his chair again. "I'm not used to this kind of thing," he said aloud. A board creaked at the far end of the studio. He jumped up with a start of horror. A few minutes later he had left the studio, and locked the door behind him. His common sense was still with him. He ought to go to a specialist. But the picture—

. . . . .  
"What's the matter with Sefton?" said Devigne one night at the club after dinner.

"Don't know that anything's the matter with him," said Merion. "He hasn't been here lately."

"I saw him the last time he was here, and he seemed pretty queer. Wanted to let me his studio."

"It's not a bad studio," said Merion, dispassionately.

"He's got rid of it now, anyhow. He's got a studio out at Richmond, and the deuce of a lot of time he must waste getting there and back. Besides, what does he do about models?"

"That's a point I've been wondering about myself," said Merion. "He'd got Rose Rose for his 'Aphrodite,' and it looked as if it might be a pretty good thing when I saw it. But, as you know, she died. She was troublesome in some ways, but, taking her all round, I don't know where to find anybody as good to-day. What's Sefton doing about it?"

"He hasn't got a model at all at present. I know that for a fact, because I asked him."



"Well," said Merion, "he may have got the thing on further than I thought he would in the time. Some chaps can work from memory all right, though I can't do it myself. He's not chucked the picture, I suppose?"

"No; he's not done that. In fact, the picture's his excuse now, if you want him to go anywhere and do anything. But that's not it: the chap's altogether changed. He used to be a genial sort of bounder—bit tyrannical in his manner, perhaps—thought he knew everything. Still, you could talk to him. He was sociable. As a matter of fact, he did know a good deal. Now it's quite different. If you ever do see him—and that's not often—he's got nothing to say to you. He's just going back to his work. That sort of thing."

"You're too imaginative," said Merion. "I never knew a man who varied less than Sefton. Give me his address, will you? I mean his studio. I'll go and look him up one morning. I should like to see how that 'Aphrodite's' getting on. I tell you it was promising; no nonsense about it."

One sunny morning Merion knocked at the door of the studio at Richmond. He heard the sound of footsteps crossing the studio, then Sefton's voice rang out.

"Who's there?"

"Merion. I've travelled miles to see the thing you call a picture."

"I've got a model."

"And what does that matter?" asked Merion.



"Well, I'd be awfully glad if you'd come back in an hour. We'd have lunch together somewhere."

"Right," said Merion, sardonically. "I'll come back in about seven million hours. Wait for me."

He went back to London and his own studio in a state of fury. Sefton had never been a man to pose. He had never put on side about his work. He was always willing to show it to old and intimate friends whose judgment he could trust; and now, when the oldest of his friends had travelled down to Richmond to see him, he was told to come back in an hour, and that they might then lunch together!

"This lets me out," said Merion, savagely.

But he always speaks well of Sefton nowadays. He maintains that Sefton's "Aphrodite" would have been a success anyhow. The suicide made a good deal of talk at the time, and a special attendant was necessary to regulate the crowds round it, when, as directed by his will, the picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy. He was found in his studio many hours after his death; and he had scrawled on a blank canvas, much as he left his directions to his charwoman: "I have finished it, but I can't stand any more."

## SAINT MARTIN'S SUMMER

### I

JUDITH SECCOMBE'S papa had white hair but a young heart, and a great capacity for enjoyment when it could be reconciled with his conscience.

When he took the house in South Kensington he told himself he did it entirely on Judith's account. She was seventeen. It was necessary that she should go about and see the world. She must make the acquaintance of his many friends. Judith whirring over the asphalt, in a taxi-cab, thought of a wood she knew where the bluebells made one sheet of colour. But London never bored her father.

To-night he had been quite apologetic. He had only been able to procure one stall for the first night of the Pinero play. His daughter could not go to the theatre alone, but he could. On the other hand, he had a guest in his house, an old friend, Gilbert Raynor by name. But Raynor showed him that he did not in the least wish to go to the theatre and that he did not in the least mind being left alone. "Judith and I will make some music, perhaps."

So they dined rather earlier than usual, and even so, Judith's papa had to hurry off before the coffee had been brought.

"Isn't he wonderful?" said Judith. "He goes to everything, he does everything, he enjoys everything. And I myself am weary to death of it all. When one does the same things over and over again, that is not amusement, that's business."

"Young people never understand the enthusiasms of the aged. We old people—"

"You are not old," Judith interrupted.

"Forty-eight," said Raynor, "which is on the whole a little worse than sixty-eight."

"Numbers don't mean anything," said Judith. "Come upstairs and I'll play to you."

Presently Raynor sat before the fire in the big drawing-room and listened to Beethoven's E Minor Sonata. The room was lit only by the candles at the piano and by the glow of the fire.

## II

MRS RAYNOR had not accompanied her husband on this visit. London was too noisy for her and the country was too quiet. A provincial town on the sea-coast met her requirements. As a rule it met her husband's requirements as well. He did not care very much where he lived. They had been married twenty-four years, and were the parents of two grown-up sons who had a passion for being correct that almost amounted to priggishness. In the inevitable course of nature and circumstance romance had died both for Gilbert and his wife. There was still affection. The

chief evidence of it on her side was her suspiciousness. Love leaves a deposit of jealousy just as a river throws down mud.

Listening now to the music, Gilbert thought about his family. About this time of the evening Harold, the younger son, who was still at Oxford, would be talking dogmatically of his own fastidious tastes in wines. Frederick, the elder son, would possibly be examining with care and a magnifying-glass the objects dearest to his heart. He was a philatelist and an expert. Mrs Raynor would either be grumbling at a servant or reading a novel. These two splendid occupations nearly filled her life.

It might all very easily have been so much worse. Harold knew too much about vintages, but he was not intemperate. Frederick would do very well in the bank in which his father was a senior partner. Mrs Raynor had become slightly shrewish, but had no other bad habits.

And it might all very easily have been so much better. The colour of life was fading for him into a grey monotone. There were no more great possibilities. A man of forty-eight, so Gilbert reflected, ought to be very fond of his dinner. There is nothing else left of which he can be very fond.

His eyes fell on Judith. She was playing now the ecstatic melody of the second movement, and her eyes shimmered in the candle-light under dark lashes. He could remember her as a child of eight. With a sudden impulse he got up and

walked to the door. He ran his hand over the switches of the electric light. White light suddenly applied changes very often the train of one's thought, and his own thoughts were getting too much in tune with the evening, with the firelight, with the music, with the faint perfume of the heavy drooping tulips on the mantelpiece. An evening paper lying on the table was a further corrective. He opened it at the city intelligence and read with care the figures which showed him what rubber and oil were doing. The music stopped.

Judith came and stood beside him, leaning one arm on the mantelpiece. In this position the loose white sleeves fell back. She looked down at him, and under her gaze he moved uneasily in his chair. He folded the newspaper and flung it down.

"Why did you do that just now?" she asked. "All these lights, I mean."

"I wanted," he said, "to see the price of Shell Transport."

She walked to the door and paused with one hand poised over the switches. "Do you mind?" she said. "I don't like very much light to-night."

Again the room was lit only by the glow of the fire and by the candles at the piano. She knelt down on the hearth-rug, spreading almost transparent hands to the fire.

"What was the price of Shell Transport?" she asked.



The question was unexpected, and he gave the true answer.

"I don't know," he said.

She sighed deeply.

### III

"TAKE me away with you," she said suddenly. The tone of the voice was serious, almost as if she had meant what she said.

"Where shall we go?" he asked in the same tone.

"I don't think I mind very much. I should like it to be so far away that it took us days to get there. It must be a lonely place, too."

He looked at her and said nothing, wondering what was happening and what might possibly be going to happen.

Her voice shook a little as she spoke. "Do you love me so very, very much?" she said.

It was not till that moment that he knew how very, very much he did love her.

"Why do you think so?" he asked. "Tell me about it."

"I know about you," she said. "Don't you know about me, too?"

"What is it you have to tell me?"

She rose to her feet, and walked a few steps away from him. Her back was turned to him as she spoke.

"I love you very, very much," she said. "I

love you more than all the world. I know it's wicked and I don't mind it. I know I had never meant to say it, and I have said it."

He was a guest in the house of the girl's father, his own old friend. About a hundred miles further north an elderly, thin-lipped lady (probably complaining at the moment that the silver candlestick that would light her to her rest had been imperfectly cleaned) had a sure claim upon him, and had once loved him. A smooth-haired young man (counting the perforations of a forged colonial stamp) had also a right to expect that his elderly father should not bring scandal upon the family.

But there was also the girl Judith to think about, standing trembling in the dim light and waiting for him. Here in this quiet room, at this very moment, was, he knew, the last chance of poetry and of paradise. In a flash he saw his whole course clear in his mind. He went to her, put his arms around her and kissed her on the mouth. He said nothing. For a moment or two she rested her head on his shoulder. And then she went back to the fire again and knelt down and spread out her hands as before.

They heard now the sharp burr of the electric bell downstairs. Judith smiled faintly and wanly.

"He has forgotten his latchkey again," she said. "He always forgets it."

"Listen," said Gilbert. "This is our good-bye. We can have no more than we have had. It will be a secret between us, and I shall never forget

it. I am called away on business early to-morrow morning. Do you see?"

She nodded, caught his hand and kissed it, and went to the piano. She began to play once more the melody of the second movement.

The door opened and Judith's papa entered, rubbing his rather fat white hands together and looking pleased with the world.

"Well, you two people," he said. "You have missed a most glorious evening."

#### IV

JUDITH did not appear at breakfast next morning, and soon afterwards Gilbert Raynor received the necessary telegram and had his bag packed. His conscience did not trouble him. He felt more at peace with the world than he had done for a long time past.

When, some five years later, Judith married, quite as well as could have been expected, he sent her a little silver statuette by an artist of great repute, but did not attend the ceremony.

Two years afterwards they met in Paris, and with a look of clear innocence in her beautiful eyes she introduced him to her husband.

"Mr Raynor, a very old friend of my father's. He used to know me when I was quite a little kid."

## THE DOLL

### I

"A WAX doll, please," said the woman, and the shopman, conjecturing from her appearance the amount she would spend, showed her something at two shillings.

Certainly, Miss Mordaunt was not wealthy, and did not look wealthy. Her dress was severely plain. She might have looked much prettier than she did, for she had fine eyes and beautiful dark hair. She would not cut her hair, but she packed it into the smallest possible compass, converting the glory of the woman into a neat, hard parcel. Her age was thirty-two, and she earned thirty shillings a week.

But the two-shilling doll did not please her.

"Not made to take off, I see," she said rather disdainfully.

"No, miss," the shopman admitted; "but we have a better article here with the removable clothing. Four-and-two this one. A nice thing." Miss Mordaunt took it up tenderly. She made it shut and open its eyes; but it did not satisfy her.

"I think," she said, "the — er — the little girl would prefer a larger one." Her hesitation in this speech was due to the fact that she was unused to deceit. The doll was not intended for any little girl; there was no little girl in the question.

Finally, Miss Mordaunt (who made thirty shillings a week) bought an eight-shilling doll.

"Practically a work of art," said the shopman, as he folded soft paper about it and packed it in its box. "A very nice thing indeed. Sure to give pleasure." Really, he seemed almost reluctant to part with it. He tried to turn the conversation to the toy gyroscope and the animated skeleton, "an ingenious little thing." But Miss Mordaunt said gravely that she did not require anything further.

She departed with the doll in its box. The box had a neat little loop of string for her to hold it by, but she did not use the loop. She nursed the box in the fold of her arm.

There was much noise at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. Motor omnibuses banged and rattled, impatient to get on with their load of home-returning clerks. A cabman flicked a barking dog with the end of his whip, and the dog howled. Boys shouted "Football edition." There was so much noise that what Miss Mordaunt said to the box on her arm was quite inaudible.

She said: "Soon be home now, darling."

Yet Miss Mordaunt was not insane. Insane people cannot earn thirty shillings a week in the office of a Holborn cycle manufacturer, as Miss Mordaunt did. She had gone there at eighteen shillings a week, and in four years she had made this considerable advance. Even now the manager considered that she was well worth her money. Mr Fort, who kept the books, said that Miss Mordaunt was "a bit snappy," but he admired her.



The old woman who cleaned out the office considered that she was "a nice-spoken lady." James, who took longer over an errand than any other boy in London, said that Miss Mordaunt was not his style, so far as looks were concerned, but that she was all right so long as you didn't start monkeying. Different people have different ideas about the same person, but there would have been a unanimous opinion that Miss Mordaunt was quite sane, and Harley Street would have endorsed that opinion.

Yet Miss Mordaunt, aged thirty-two, had just bought an eight-shilling doll for herself and for nobody else.

Why? She was a woman. Fate had made her a worker, the office was making her a machine, and Edith Stafford was trying to make her a fighter. She was all alone, and no man loved her; but she was a woman, and the very same thing made her buy that doll that has made other women perform the greatest acts of courage and self-sacrifice. If you like you may call it the maternal instinct.

Even the purchase of a doll involved some self-sacrifice for this woman with thirty shillings a week. She lived in a tiny flat in a back street, and did everything for herself. The flat consisted of two small rooms and a box of a kitchen, and everything in it was intensely neat and orderly. The little flat had marked an advance; at eighteen shillings a week she had been discontented with a single room and much discomfort. But now—

why, this was her home, and she had almost all that she wanted, but not quite all.

She lifted the doll out of its box, kissed it, patted its hair, smoothed its clothes, and made it sit down on a chair. She said: "You must wait just a few minutes, Cynthia. Be good."

She put the box with the other card-boxes that she had kept because they might be useful on the top of her wardrobe; she lit the gas-ring in the kitchen, and put on the kettle. Then she prepared her supper. There was a tinned tongue in the cupboard, and that tongue had certainly formed part of her intentions; but if you have been buying eight-shilling dolls, you can do very well on cocoa, bread, and apricot jam—the last being used with great restraint. So the tin remained unopened. We all eat far too much, anyhow. All this while Cynthia had waited patiently, and had been good, as directed; but now she was brought up to the table, and Miss Mordaunt talked to her a little during the banquet.

"Much nicer than that stuffy shop, isn't it, Cynthia? And what do you think I am going to do after supper? I'm going to make you the very doviest white silk nightgown you ever saw. You'll be quite a princess, and you shall have a little cot by the side of your mother's bed, and be ever so happy."

Miss Mordaunt did not always speak quite so prettily as this. If she was typing a letter at the office and the machine jibbed, she habitually said one brief bad word. It always made Mr Fort

laugh, and that laugh always made Miss Mordaunt very angry. She was never angry with the old woman who cleaned the office.

As she worked at the white silk nightdress she gave Cynthia information in a low voice. Miss Mordaunt confessed that so far she had been lonely. She had girl-friends, of course—plenty of them—but she had always wanted a little girl of her own. She might have bought a dog, but who was to look after him while his mistress was away at work? Cynthia was better than six dogs.

Fortunately Cynthia had permanently an expression of pleased attention, obliterated only when you laid her on her back and by a simple mechanical contrivance her eyes closed. Miss Mordaunt was explaining to Cynthia what a remarkably good time she was going to have, when a light ripple of piano music broke in on the conversation, stopped, and then began again.

“Hear that?” said Miss Mordaunt. “I’ll tell you what it means, Cynthia. It means that they’ve let the flat next door at last, and that the girl moved in to-day. We shall have to come to some agreement with her about that piano. She seems to play very well, but there must be regular hours for it. I can’t hold a meeting of the W.W.L.S. in my rooms with that noise going on. And as I’ve got to earn the bread-and-butter all day I can’t afford to be kept awake by a piano half the night. I’ll tackle the good lady on the subject before I go to work to-morrow. And now, Cynthia, we’ll see how you look in your new nightdress.”

But for the moment this operation had to be deferred. There came a sharp rap at the outer door, and Cynthia and all that belonged to her were hurriedly deposited in the bedroom. Then Miss Mordaunt admitted Miss Edith Stafford.

Miss Stafford was tall, thin, jerky, and plain. Her eyes peered bitterly from behind a gold-rimmed pince-nez. She did not kiss Miss Mordaunt; she abhorred all unhygienic things, especially if they were at all natural. Cigarettes were an exception.

"Evenin', Grace," said Miss Stafford. "Looked in to see why you weren't at the W.W.L.S. last night."

"I'd had an awfully hard day. I didn't feel up to it."

"Nonsense," said Miss Stafford, taking a manly pose in the arm-chair, and producing a leather cigarette case.

The W.W.L.S. was the Working Women's Literary Society. It consisted of seven members, and held fortnightly meetings. Had it consisted of more than seven they could hardly have met in Miss Mordaunt's sitting-room when her turn came round; even as it was, two bedroom chairs had to be impressed for these great occasions.

"Nonsense," repeated Miss Stafford. "Women are only tired because they think they are—it's one of the ways in which the ordinary woman makes herself ridiculous and keeps back the movement. Still, you didn't miss much this time. Margaret Jackson lost her temper as usual.



About Keats. By the way, she said something to me about you afterwards."

"Indeed? What was it?"

"That man Fort. Do you mean to marry him?"

"Never. Of course not. Why?"

"Margaret Jackson heard through a friend of hers, who knows Fort's young brother, that Fort said you had been much pleasanter in your manner of late."

"Then Mr Fort will change his mind about that to-morrow."

"Good," said Edith Stafford, with a jerk of her cigarette-hand. "This is no time for women to marry. My word, if all the pretty girls thought as I do about that, women would be free within a year. I'm glad you're with me at any rate."

Grace Mordaunt blushed slightly. She thought that Mr Fort was common, uneducated, and unprepossessing. But she also thought that she was very lonely. A further irruption of music spared her any discussion of matrimony.

"What a horrible row!" said Miss Stafford.

"Yes," said Grace. "It's the girl next door. I'm going to speak about it to-morrow."

"I should. One can hardly hear one's self talk. Well, I only looked in for two minutes."

She jerked her cigarette-end into the fireplace, reminded Miss Mordaunt that it was her turn to entertain the W.W.L.S. at their next meeting, and said a brief good-night.

When she had gone, Miss Mordaunt undressed Cynthia and tried on the white silk nightgown.



Alterations were required in the neck, and were duly effected. Miss Mordaunt went to sleep that night with the doll in her arms.

## II

AFTER breakfast next morning Miss Mordaunt went to remonstrate with the girl next door about the piano. She meant to arrange it all in a friendly chat—to point out that there must be a certain amount of give-and-take in flats.

The plan was modified in its execution by the fact that there was no girl next door. The proprietor of the piano was a man—an enraged, fantastic, middle-aged, male musician, who had a fine flow of language, but behaved much like a distraught and irritable baby.

His name was Malcolm Harverson, and he was a musician and composer, as he told her before she had got through the first two sentences of what she had to say.

He glared at her with large, blue eyes.

He ran his good, white hands through his excessive crop of fair hair. He gesticulated.

“What am I to do? What on earth do you expect me to do? Do you know I’ve been turned out of more flats than any man in London? The other tenants always combine against me. At last I thought I was safe. There are no regulations whatever about piano-playing in these flats—not the shadow of a ghost of a regulation. I was jolly careful to find that out before I took this

dog-kennel, and on the second morning after my arrival I've hardly finished my breakfast—beastly eggs that I had to cook for myself because I can't find a servant—when a charmin' lady comes round to tell me to burn my Bechstein and go to the devil."

Miss Mordaunt resisted with some difficulty a tendency to smile at this elderly child. "I don't think that's quite what I said, is it? You can play as much as you like until six in the evening, and some evenings you can play from six to ten, unless I ask you not to, but not after ten, because—"

Mr Malcolm Harverson clasped his head with both hands. "Oh, wait a minute, please! How do you expect anybody to remember all that? I can't get up at six in the morning, and as for ten at night—why, there are lots of days when I don't really begin to live till ten at night. There ought to be a certain amount of give-and-take in flats"—Miss Mordaunt was slightly disconcerted by this phrase, which she had intended to use herself—"and nobody ever hears me complain. There's a woman in the flat over mine who has got a sewing-machine in C minor. Perfectly beastly. Yet I don't go running round, as you do, shouting to have her crucified."

Miss Mordaunt tried to explain that she neither ran nor shouted. She did not require him to burn his piano. She did not want him to be crucified. But as she had to rise early to get the work of her flat done before she went to the office at ten—

"That reminds me," said Mr Harverson. The way in which he interrupted ladies was quite

shameless. "I suppose you couldn't tell me of any old woman who'd come in and do the work of this flat for me. If she arrived somewhere about eight in the morning, and looked in again in the evening in the neighbourhood of nine, that would—"

"Perhaps I might be able to find somebody," said Miss Mordaunt. "But that's not what I wanted to talk about."

She explained once more what it was that she wanted. He remained quite unsatisfactory. He would do his best, but he didn't like to make any promises because (so he said) he knew his limitations, and he might forget. By the way, he hoped she would not forget to find that servant for him, because really things were getting rather serious.

Miss Mordaunt had to hurry away in order to be punctual at her business. She had two minutes with Mrs Fagg, the old woman who cleaned the office.

"Yes," said Mrs Fagg. "I could do this Mr 'Arverson, if he suited me, and the work would fit in nicely. He's all right, miss, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think so. But he's like most men—not fit to take care of himself."

"Then I'll just call on him this morning and judge for myself, saying as you sent me. Thank you, in any case, miss."

Miss Mordaunt enjoyed the day's work which followed more than Mr Fort did.

Mr Fort was not in the least in love with Miss Mordaunt, but he had determined that she

would be just the right wife for him. She was good-looking. She was thoroughly sensible and practical. A little short in the temper—but Mr Fort recognized that he had reached an age when a man must not be too particular, and that one may have to wait a long time for absolute perfection. Besides, once married, he thought that he could deal with that shortness of temper. Certainly of late she had been distinctly more civil to him.

Therefore Mr Fort this morning adopted a manner towards Miss Mordaunt which was oleaginous and slightly intimate. What Miss Mordaunt said could have been telegraphed for sixpence, but it was enough, metaphorically, to take the skin off Mr Fort. He observed to a friend at luncheon that women were queer cattle.

A stream of music greeted Miss Mordaunt that night as she came up the stairs. Mr Malcolm Harverson was singing to his own accompaniment. He had a very fair baritone voice, and it had been well trained. Above all, he was an artist. Miss Mordaunt was in the mood for music, and was glad that Mr Harverson had apparently forgotten her injunction. But the moment she closed her door the music stopped abruptly. So Miss Mordaunt talked to Cynthia instead. Cynthia was sitting, curiously enough, just where Miss Mordaunt had left her in the morning—on the cushions of the one easy chair—and she still wore the expression of pleased attention.

Miss Mordaunt said that Cynthia had behaved very nicely, and that she was pleased to see her



again. Then she spoke about the music. "It would have been more sensible, Cynthia, if he had just finished that song and then left off. Men are always so stupidly literal. Or perhaps he's turned sulky. I suppose you couldn't tell me if he's been playing much during the day."

She was correct. Cynthia could not.

Miss Mordaunt was opening that tinned tongue with her accustomed neatness, when she was called to the door. A man asked if she were Miss Mordaunt, and—assured on this point—delivered a florist's box into her hands. It contained white roses and the card of Mr Malcolm Harverson. On the card was written: "With many thanks for the much more useful present you sent me this morning—I refer to Mrs Fagg."

Since he put it like that she felt that she might accept them. She loved flowers, but her expenditure upon them was of necessity limited. She placed the white roses on her supper-table, and invited Cynthia to admire them. Then she did devastating work on that tinned tongue—one might almost have thought that tinned tongue did not cost money. But Miss Mordaunt was happy and hungry. Later in the evening she wrote a brief note of thanks to Mr Harverson, and she made a fur toque for Cynthia.

### III

DAYS passed away, and every day Mr Harverson's piano stopped dumb when Miss Mordaunt returned



from her work in the evening. It was silly of him to sulk in this way, and she made up her mind that she would tell him so. It was only on special evenings, which would be indicated to him, that she required silence from six till ten. On the other evenings it would be quite enough if the piano stopped at ten or thereabouts. The meeting of the W.W.L.S. in her rooms gave her an opportunity.

Miss Mordaunt possessed just six tea-cups, but the members of the W.W.L.S. had the Wordsworthian habit of being seven. She was preparing her room for the meeting when she remembered the necessity for one more cup. She had meant to acquire it during the day, and had forgotten it. It struck her now that she might borrow a tea-cup from Mr Harverson, and she could at the same time explain to him that she did not hate music so much as he thought.

He showed no sign of sulkiness when he admitted her to his flat. He made her come into his sitting-room while he went to find a cup which was worthy of being used by a literary society. The sitting-room was principally occupied by a short grand piano and many books. It smelled pleasantly of russia-leather and Turkish cigarettes.

As he came back with the tea-cup he asked plaintively if there would soon be an evening when he might play after six.

"You might have played any of these evenings. It was only on evenings when I especially asked for quiet that you were not to play."

He sat down suddenly and nearly broke the tea-cup

"That's me," he said. "If I can get anything the wrong way round I always do. I thought it was only on evenings when I received a special permission that I was allowed to play. Of course, I had to do what you wanted—after all your kindness in getting Mrs Fagg for me; but I've been feeling very virtuous and conceited about it. Why, it's simply a case of the 10.5 over again."

"What was that?" asked Miss Mordaunt, smiling.

"I had to go North to a rehearsal of some stuff of mine. I looked up a train, and fixed on the 10.5. That was all right. But then the thing that I have to use instead of a mind switched the figures round, and I decided that it was the 5.10 I had to catch. I got up very early, and had no time for any breakfast, and I caught the 5.10. At least, I should have caught it if it had been there. There wasn't any 5.10, of course. The porter who told me so laughed, and my own cabman laughed. I wished I was dead."

Miss Mordaunt said she was so sorry, but she seemed rather amused.

"I can't understand it. I cannot understand how anybody with the gift of music, like you, shouldn't be able to manage little practical things."

"Sometimes I doubt if music is a gift at all. I'm inclined to think it's a vice. Anyhow, it's just those little practical things which bowl me over. I believe I ought to advertise for an attendant—one of those men in black morning-coats and felt hats that take the soft-headed old gentlemen out for walks at the health resorts."

"Well," said Miss Mordaunt, "it's most awfully kind of you to have stopped playing on my account, and I'm almost ashamed now that I bothered you about it. Now I've got the literary society, and so I can't ask you to play to-night."

"Of course not."

"But I hope you'll play to-morrow night just as much as you like, and—why, there's somebody at my door. Good-night, and thanks so much."

It was Miss Edith Stafford with a note-book containing the minutes of the W.W.L.S. "I'm early," said Miss Stafford. "Thought you might want a hand to get the room ready."

"Thanks, awfully. Everything's all right now. I've just been borrowing a tea-cup."

"Ah!" said Miss Stafford. "The girl next door. I remember. Hope you've persuaded her to stop that tinkle-box of hers to-night."

"Yes, she won't play to-night," said Miss Mordaunt, blushing. It has already been observed that Miss Mordaunt had no natural tendency towards deceit.

The meeting was quite successful. Miss Tilbury read a thoughtful paper on some obscure passages in the work of Robert Browning; Miss Jackson animadverted severely upon it; Miss Edith Stafford pointed out that it was only men who wrote obscurely: the woman writer was always lucid, at any rate. Miss Tomlin said that this reminded her of a story, which she told. It was quite a good story, about a lady who bred prize Persian cats, and nobody knew (or cared) how

Miss Tomlin came to be reminded of it. Then there was tea, and Miss Mordaunt drank from a blue cup that did not match the rest of the set. Miss Stafford asked her what the girl next door was like, and Miss Mordaunt, blushing, said that she did not know, and changed the subject rapidly.

Miss Mordaunt told Cynthia in bed that night that it had been quite a pleasant evening. She also acquitted Mr Harverson of sulkiness, and observed that he seemed to be rather well off—had good furniture, and took cabs, and that sort of thing. To this Cynthia listened patiently, but, from the accident of her position, with her eyes closed.

On the following evening Miss Mordaunt had just finished supper, and was telling Cynthia about some further additions to her wardrobe, when the sound of Mr Harverson's piano interrupted her. Miss Mordaunt listened with delight. At the end of the piece she clapped her hands gently by way of applause.

Then there came a knock at the door, and with some confusion she admitted Mr Harverson.

He stared round the room with his large blue eyes, and they took in Cynthia, whom Miss Mordaunt had forgotten to remove.

But Mr Harverson, who was not more confused than usual, said nothing whatever about the doll, though Cynthia was wearing the new fur toque and looked charming. He said that he had overheard the sound of applause, and that if Miss Mordaunt really liked the music she would hear it better on the other side of the wall. Wouldn't she come round with him?



Miss Mordaunt accepted, a little surprised at herself for accepting. She took the one easy chair in the room that smelled of russia leather and cigarettes, and Mr Harverson demanded what he should play for her.

"If you've got a Beethoven handy, I'm fond of the 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

"Good old 'Moonlight,'" said Mr Harverson, irreverently. "All the schoolgirls have to go through it just like the measles. But, however—"

And without troubling to find the music Mr Harverson sat down and played the "Moonlight Sonata," and he did not play irreverently at all.

"I suppose it's old-fashioned," she said, when he had finished, "but it's terribly lovely."

"Yes," said Harverson, "Beethoven's fine. Of course, if he'd had the modern piano there'd have been a difference. Still—yes, very fine. I say, Miss Mordaunt, I forgot to have any coffee after dinner to-night, and restaurant coffee's rather rotten, anyhow. I wish you'd help me to make some."

"Won't it keep you awake?"

"No. If I don't have it I can't sleep. I'm all wrongly constituted, and don't fit into the textbooks."

So Miss Mordaunt helped him to make coffee, and afterwards helped him to drink it. She felt it necessary to say that she had not intended her applause to be overheard.

"No," cried Malcolm Harverson, "but these walls are very thin. I can even hear when you're talking to your little friend in the evening. I can't hear



what's said, of course, or I'd have warned you, but I catch the murmur of the voice."

"What little friend?" asked Miss Mordaunt, perturbed.

"The doll, of course. You do talk to her, don't you?"

"Y—yes," said Miss Mordaunt. "You see—"

"You needn't explain," said Harverson. "Bless you, I know. That sort of thing is easy to understand. If one didn't understand it one couldn't make music properly."

Harverson and Miss Mordaunt met again the next night, and the next, and the next. Malcolm Harverson and Grace Mordaunt being what they were, the story could have but one ending—a happy ending. She was pleased that it was not until after she had accepted him that she read in the papers an account of the Festival, with lavish and unusual praise for a work by Malcolm Harverson.

Miss Edith Stafford said that she had known all along how it would be, and had seen it coming. This prescience seemed to be some slight consolation to her.

#### IV

SOME years later, when the newspapers had quite got into the habit of speaking of Malcolm Harverson as "the eminent composer," Mrs Harverson decided to give her little daughter a doll. She confessed that it was not quite a new

doll: in fact, it was one that she had formerly played with herself.

Miss Cynthia Harverson, who had not begun to worry about arithmetic, said that she supposed in that case it would be about a hundred years old.

"Getting on that way," said her mother. "But it's got the loveliest clothes that I made for it myself, and it shuts its eyes when it lies down, and it's got the same name as yourself."

"Let's see," said Miss Harverson.

The doll and its somewhat elaborate wardrobe were produced, and Miss Harverson was delighted with them. But she put one finger in her mouth and sucked it—the sure concomitant in her case of a mental process. Then she observed that her mother must have been no end of a child if she could make doll's clothes like that.

"But I was much older than you are when I made those clothes, dear."

"How old were you?"

"I don't like to think about it—ever so much older than I am now."

They were still busy about the doll when Grace heard her husband calling her.

"I say, my dear," he said. "I've got to send ten shillings to a man in Brussels. How does one do it?"

Grace crossed the passage to her husband's room. "Give me the letter and the money, I'll do it for you. You haven't changed one little bit," she said, laughing.

Then she sat down, and added seriously, "I've given Cynthia the doll, and she's quite in love with it."

## TOO SOON AND TOO LATE

THE waiter placed before young Mr Haynes a plate on which were a few white bones, an eyeball, and a piece of black mackintosh.

"Turbot, sir," said the waiter, in an explanatory voice.

It was a hotel dinner in an English cathedral city, and faithful to its type. The green venetian blinds were drawn down, and the incandescent gas was shaded with pink paper. The walls were covered with a material that is supposed to simulate Jacobean oak panelling; it may be acquitted of any actual deceit.

The room was full, and at the small tables were many of those middle-aged or aged women that seem to haunt the provincial hotels of this country. They are a class by themselves. They wear brown skirts and a totally different blouse in the evening, and grandmamma has a grey woollen shawl. They speak in whispers and peck patiently any odds and ends that the waiter gives them. They have an air of defective vitality and chronic discontent. They nearly all suffer from catarrh and use eucalyptus on their handkerchiefs. Observe, too, their surreptitiousness. When the elderly lady, hand to mouth and eyes glazed with terror, has given the waiter an order, so hushed as to be almost inaudible, and then proceeds to build up

a screen at her right hand with the wine-list and cruet-stand, you may be pretty certain that there will presently be a little weak whisky - and - soda on the far side of the entanglement.

There were two waiters in the room. The elder of them was English, had been there for years, and under the favourable influence of a cathedral atmosphere had already grown much of the manner and appearance of an archdeacon. The younger, a sad-eyed Italian of eighteen, had only been at the hotel two months, but he looked every inch an acolyte.

It was the archdeacon who had placed that plate of alleged turbot before young Maurice Haynes.

"Turbot, is it?" said Mr Haynes. "Interesting relic. Now take it back to the cat again, and bring me something to eat."

Suddenly from the little table next to him came a wild burst of laughter. It broke out like a discharge of steam from a locomotive. It bubbled with pure joy. It stopped abruptly and then started again uncontrollably. It broke up all the holy calm of that *table d'hôte*. Withered virgins of fifty turned round to look at this laughing girl, some with a sniff of disapproval, others compelled to a wan, responsive smile. The archdeacon-waiter seemed pained. The acolyte was proceeding with his work with apparent calm, when suddenly the laughter-infection smote him full in the midriff. He dropped a helping of cabinet pudding, put a hand over his mouth, bolted into



the passage, slapped his leg, exploded, and was asked what the devil he thought he was doing. In the dining-room the girl still laughed at intervals.

"Gontrol yourself, I beg," said her flustered German governess. "It is hysteria. Hosh! hosh! Ruhig! Celia! It is so rude."

Celia shook her head.

"Can't help it, Fräulein," she gasped. "Anything about a cat makes me laugh."

And she relapsed again.

Maurice Haynes had not had the faintest intention of being amusing. It was out of the bitterness of his soul that he had spoken. He had already declined to believe that over-diluted meat-extract with some armorial bearings in stamped carrot constituted Julianne soup. This supposed turbot was more than he could endure. He was an artist, eupeptic and creative, and he had been travelling all day; on the morrow he was to begin the presentation portrait of a scholarly canon with a fine head; now, if ever, dinner was a positive necessity. He sent for the manageress.

The manageress was all black satin and superciliousness when she arrived, but only the black satin was left by the time Haynes had finished with her. He was under the impression that he was being merely firm; but it seems to me that when you tell the manageress of the principal hotel in a cathedral city that she is not fit to cater for a troop of performing fleas, you go beyond firmness.



At any rate, he was effectual. He received immediately more turbot than had ever been given to one man at one time since the foundation of the hotel. His helping from the joint was such that he was almost (but not quite) ashamed to demand a second. And the *omelette aux fines herbes*, which came as a peace-offering at the end of the repast, was exclusive matter for M. Haynes, Esq., only, and not in the contract.

His sunny temper returned. He consulted affably with the head waiter on the grave question of port. And now, for the first time, he turned his head to see who the cheeky kid was who had laughed at his righteous indignation.

He saw a tall girl of fifteen with an elderly governess. The governess was peeling walnuts, and the girl was eating them ; this seemed to argue devotion on the part of the governess. The girl had an Irish beauty of dark hair and blue eyes, and her face followed her every thought with marvellous expressiveness. The mouth was sweet and sensitive. Haynes thought she had lovely colour, but would be the devil to paint. One lightning glance showed her that he was looking at her ; she flushed slightly, knowing that she had been really too awful, but she also smiled, because she remembered the cat.

"Nice kid," thought Haynes.

When she had gone, the effect was much as if the incandescent gas had been lowered. There was no longer any young vitality in the room, nothing but a few groups of elderly grey women

over their walnuts—pecking, cracking, mumbling sniffing.

“Waiter,” said Haynes to the acolyte, “take my port into the smoking-room.”

The smoking-room was equally depressing. It seemed to be furnished principally with spittoons and advertisements of auction sales, and an aged smell of bad beer hovered over it. Haynes endured it for the length of two cigarettes, and then his eye caught, framed on the wall, that successful Christmas-number plate, “Won’t ’Oo Kiss Doggie?” Haynes groaned and fled.

The room he next tried was the drawing-room, and to prevent any possibility of mistake its name had been painted on the door. Here the furniture was more ambitious, and a long-tailed piano stood open. The room was empty, and only one gas jet had been lit. Haynes ran one hand over the keyboard, and was surprised to find that the instrument was in tune. He sat down, and began modulating idly from one key into another, as his thoughts wandered. Presently he began to play a waltz of Chopin’s, all passion and incense. He did not hear the door open and close. It was only as he played the last notes that he found he now had an audience.

There were two old ladies with their knitting. There was a German governess engaged on a beadwork cover for a spectacle case. And there was Celia, quite serious now, and with excited eyes, coming straight towards him.

“It was too lovely,” she cried. “I wish you

could have gone on for ever." She held out her hand to him. "Thank you, thank you!"

Now, more than ever, did consternation fall upon Fräulein. She lived in a perpetual state of terror as to what Celia would do next, and Celia always did it. She was full now of incoherent reproof to Celia and apologies to Haynes. "She is so imboldsive."

Haynes rose from the piano laughing. "*Ach, seien Sie ihr nicht böse,*" he said. "*Es freut mich ja, dass sie meine dumme Musik gerne hört.*"

If he had really told her in English not to mind, and that he was glad his silly music had pleased them, he would have made much less impression. In the eyes of Fräulein, the fact that he spoke her native tongue consecrated him; and Celia sat up till nearly eleven that night, and went to bed filled with music and adoration.

Next morning Haynes was precisely an hour late for his appointment with the scholarly canon with the fine head. His story in excuse about a missing tube of colour was plausible and fairly amusing, but had no foundation in fact. He had spent that hour in making two rapid drawings of Celia—effective things in sanguine on grey paper. And then Celia and her governess had departed in continuance of a holiday tour to places of historical and educational interest.

At the end of ten years, on a late afternoon in June, Maurice Haynes came back to that hotel again. London had become suddenly intolerable

to him. He was tired of his work, and he was still more tired of his play, if the wearying social functions that befall the fashionable portrait-painter are to be called play. He wanted to fly away and be at rest. If he had not the wings of a dove, he had, at any rate, a good motor-car, and he drove it himself. He had no particular destination in view when he started; he had driven a hundred miles before he decided that he might as well stop at the old cathedral city that night.

He found little change at the hotel. The same black satin manageress still extended turbots beyond their natural limit; but the archidiaconal waiter had increased in girth and in stateliness of movement, and had a new acolyte—the sad-eyed Italian had given place to a straw-coloured German.

Maurice Haynes dined well, having taken precautionary measures to that end. As soon as he had recalled himself to the memory of the manageress, she had recognized that this was not an occasion for trifling. But it seemed that other visitors were not being so well treated. From a little table behind him Haynes heard much grumbling in a querulous man's voice. "Food not fit for a cat," was one phrase he caught. A woman answered briefly, in a low and gentle voice, and Haynes, without hearing what she said, was conscious that she was being bored intolerably.

Haynes looked round.

The woman sat with her back to Haynes. She wore a black lace tea-gown, and leaned back in her



chair. The man opposite to her was about fifty years of age, and of unprepossessing appearance. He had that thing which is hardly ever seen, except on the stage—a red nose. He had also a mean mouth, and a most abominable and Shakespearean expanse of forehead.

It was only as these two people passed out of the room that Haynes caught a glimpse of the woman's face, and recognized that this was Celia. This was the laughing girl that he had met ten years before. The man was evidently her husband. She was very beautiful, as she had promised to be, but the expression on her face was very sad. It is a long way from fifteen to twenty-five, and many changes befall in that decade.

It was to him something more than an impressive coincidence. Suddenly this highly-successful artist saw his life as a failure. He was convinced that he should have married Celia, and he was convinced that they would have been happy. But the first time he had met her, ten years before, she had been too young for love. He had found her beauty adorable, and had liked her immensely as a child, but until this moment she had remained in his memory as a sketch in sanguine on grey paper—nothing else. He had shown no prescience. He had not guessed at the fruition of the unborn summers.

For an evening and a morning he had seen her, and then had allowed the clue of her life to slip out of his hands. And now chance mocked him once more with the sight of her—now that she



was married to that miserable little man with the red nose and plaintive voice, now that she was unhappy, now that it was too late.

Yet, though it was too late, he now went into the drawing-room and began to play the same music that he had played ten years before. He felt certain that if she heard it it would bring her to him. He was not mistaken.

She paused for a moment in the open doorway, and then came towards him, smiling and self-possessed.

"I did not know you were staying in the hotel," she said, and then added quickly: "You do remember me, don't you?"

"Yes, Celia," he said as he shook hands with her. "I remember you very well. I caught a glimpse of you as you were going out of the dining-room, I recognized you at once. I was wondering if you would remember this." His hands on the piano repeated a phrase of the music.

"Of course I remember it. But I am not Celia any more. I am Mrs Owen."

"Oh, no," said Haynes, laughing. "When one has called the child by her Christian name, one calls the woman by her Christian name. I shall certainly call you Celia."

"You can if you like."

"Now tell me all about it."

"All about what?"

"All about the last ten years of your life."

"What is there to tell? I have done nothing. I was married when I was eighteen. Since then I

have gone on existing. Now you, on the contrary, have had a splendid—”

“Have you got any children, Celia?” he asked suddenly.

She shook her head. “Perhaps it is as well,” she said drearily. “I don’t think my husband would like children. He is an archæologist, you know. That is why we are here. He is making rubbings of brasses in the cathedral. He has a great collection of them, all beautifully catalogued.”

“How perfectly horrible,” said Haynes with conviction.

For the first time she laughed.

“So you still laugh sometimes,” he said.

“Not very often now. But I remember what you mean. I believe I behaved abominably. I overheard something you said about a cat. It was your own private joke, and I did not know you, and had no right to laugh at it. I don’t know why, but jokes about cats specially appealed to me then. Now I don’t think cats are any more amusing than anything else, do you?”

“Yes—no—I don’t know. Are you happy, Celia?”

“I knew you were going to ask that.”

“Well, are you?”

“Oh, of course I am. Perfectly.”

And by way of proving it she added, with a sob in her voice, that she must go, that Harry would wonder where she was. He let her go.

At breakfast next morning Mr Maurice Haynes

very deliberately introduced himself to Mr Henry Owen. Celia was not yet down.

Mr Owen was pleased to be very gracious. He said that Celia had told him about Mr Haynes, and that it was a pleasure to meet so distinguished an artist. "You gave my wife a little sketch you made of her when she was a girl, I think?"

"I did."

"Well, I did a silly thing about that. It was soon after our marriage. A friend of mine came along and offered me a fiver for it, and I took it."

"I see. And your wife didn't like it?"

"Oh, she was angry enough; but that's not what I mean. If I had only known then that you were the coming man, I would never have sold that sketch for a fiver. What would it be worth now?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Haynes; "it would depend upon how much anyone wanted it."

In the course of conversation Haynes learned a good deal about Mr Owen, who was a gentleman without reticence. He explained, for instance, that the redness of his nose was due entirely to dyspepsia, and not to intemperance. He was rather pathetic about it, posing as one misunderstood by the world. He entered into the question of dyspepsia generally, with more detail than seemed to Haynes to be absolutely requisite. Haynes changed the subject.

"I wonder if you would care to come out on my car this morning?" he said—"you and Mrs Owen, of course. It's rather a jolly morning, and I've

got nothing to do. I would be glad to drive you anywhere."

"Not for me, thanks. I have my work to do at the cathedral. Take my wife for a drive, by all means."

"Thanks, I will. She will be down directly?"

"Yes; I'll send her to you. She has got the bad habit of keeping awake all night, and sleeping in the morning. A great mistake. I'm always telling her about it."

An hour later Haynes, with Celia by his side, drove out from the cathedral city.

"Where shall we go to?" he asked.

"To the world's end," she said fantastically, laughing. She was in strangely high spirits this morning.

A mile further on he stopped the car and got down to pick her the wild roses that she wanted. As he gave them to her, he said in a low voice: "What is the good of pretending any more? You know perfectly well that I love you."

"Yes."

"You love me, too?" She bowed her head. "Then you are not going back to him? You will come with me?"

"To the world's end," she whispered.

It was quite late that afternoon when she suddenly and irrevocably changed her mind. "I must go back," she said. "This is all very beautiful, but it is like my wild roses—it falls to pieces. There is no romance left. The sordid legal

business always ends it. Besides, it is stolen happiness. I must not have it. I have had a day of life, and I can go on living for a while on the memory of it. You come to me too late, Maurice."

It was in vain that he pleaded with her. She admitted that she did not know whether it was conscience or cowardice, but she was none the less resolved. An hour later they were back at the hotel again.

At Mr Owen's suggestion, Maurice dined at their table that night. Mr Owen had secured a valuable addition to his collection, and was feeling pleased with himself and with the world. He rallied his wife cheerfully on her want of appetite, and said that her run in the car did not seem to have done her much good.

"That's it," he continued. "She has no appetite, but has a perfect digestion. I have a magnificent appetite, but I always have to pay for it afterwards. Seems ironical, doesn't it?"

And suddenly Celia burst into uncontrollable, almost hysterical, and quite mirthless laughter. That laugh haunted Haynes at times for the rest of his life.



## LOCRIS OF THE TOWER

### I

I AM by profession an architect. For the last eight years I have practised in my native town at Stannoke in Gloucestershire, at first in partnership with my father, and after his retirement alone and on my own account. The greater part of my boyhood was spent in Stannoke, and I have early recollections of the family solicitor, William Locris.

Twenty years ago I used to see Locris in church every Sunday morning. He sat with his wife, a rather heavy and plethoric woman, in the pew just in front of our own, accompanied by their son, a boy of my own age. Locris cannot have been more than thirty-five then, and his hair had not yet begun to turn grey. He assisted in the collection of the offertory, and throughout the service maintained an air of decent interest. His son sometimes fell asleep in the sermon, and so did I. My father always did, and, I think, made a point of it, but Locris was always wakeful and quietly attentive. He had an office in the High Street and a villa outside the town—rather an abominable modern construction called “The Elms.” He must have been fairly well off, for he had all the best of the business in Stannoke, but he was not reputed to be a rich man. He

was regular in his attendance at business, and regular in taking walking exercise. He went away at the right time every year for his summer holiday at the seaside. If at that time, or indeed for many years afterwards, I had wished to express the quintessence of the commonplace, I should have described Locris.

I believe he was a fairly good, but not a brilliant, solicitor. He was honest and punctual and pains-taking. He always discouraged litigation, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for having prevented my father from embarking on a very expensive and probably fruitless lawsuit.

I was quite a young man when Mrs Locris died. I remember she was buried rather sumptuously, and that Locris and his son wore deep mourning for the prescribed time. I no longer saw him in church, for I had ceased to go to church, but I often saw him on his way there, carrying a prayer-book in his gloved hands. He wore black kid gloves, the most rancid form of gloves that has yet been devised. On week-days I used to see him on his way to the office with the same loathsome gloves, but with a copy of the *Times* newspaper in place of the prayer-book.

Later, I came upon him two or three times in the course of business. I am inclined to think the man happy who seldom requires the services of a solicitor, and that good fortune was mine. When he had any work to do for me, I always found him able and practical, and his charges were fair enough.

Five years ago, when I was nearly thirty, and Locris must have been quite fifty, he called on me one morning at my office. He gave me a commission that was quite worth having, but it was of an extraordinary character. Looking at him now closely, I saw something in his eyes which seemed rather to belie the dull and even tenor of his life. I accepted the commission without hesitation, because, although the work was of a kind that I had never done before, I knew where I could get good advice. I had only to run up to London and see my old father about it.

## II

MY father had lived for by far the greater part of his life in a provincial town, but he preferred London. As soon as circumstances made it reasonable for him to retire and to hand over the business to me, he took a flat in Jermyn Street and went to live there. He had many friends in London and was a member of two clubs. He was glad enough to be free of routine work, but he was still interested in his profession, and was always glad to help me where his greater experience was useful.

We lunched together at his club, and then, in a retired corner of the smoking-room, he asked me what the trouble was.

"Well," I said, "I don't know that I should call it trouble. It's rather a nice little commission.

But before we start on that I'd like you to tell me all you can about old Locris."

"Old Locris? Oh, damn it, James, he's not so very old. He's younger than I am. I've only known him professionally. We never had any social relations. He's all right, quite a solid man, I should say."

"Yes, I know that. You wouldn't call him romantic?"

"No, not now. There was a story when he was very much younger, before he married. He wanted to marry Sir Luke Mallow's daughter—Grace her name was. She was a pretty girl, with a lot of golden hair, the kind that you read about in story-books and never see in real life. They didn't think Locris was good enough, and I suppose from a social point of view they were right, though, for that matter, in spite of her beauty, it was not every man who would have married her. I wouldn't myself. The poor girl was short of one finger on her left hand. She smashed it up when she was a kid, and it had to be amputated."

"So she chucked Locris?"

"No. She did not. He and Sir Luke were fighting it out together, and if Sir Luke did not give way, I fancy Locris meant to run away with her. He is an obstinate chap. However, while they were disputing, Grace settled the question for them by dying quite suddenly—diphtheria, I believe. There was a lot of it about at the time. And within a month Locris was married—daughter of a poor parson and very appropriate. So it's



Locris who has given you this commission, is it? Well, the money will be all right. He's never spent half his income. It's quite time he had a better house."

"And suppose I told you that Locris had gone mad?"

"Any man may. It's possible. In his case I should think it is extremely unlikely. Has he gone mad then?"

"Well, he says he has not. While he was talking to me he made his scheme seem perfectly reasonable, but if he is not mad, he is at any rate extremely eccentric."

"Oh, come, come," said my father impatiently. "Let's have it. What is it the man wants?"

"Locris has bought land on the east coast not far from Aldeburgh. He wishes to do there what the old Duke of Portland did before him."

"I see. Rooms underground."

"Yes. One biggish room, forty by thirty, and a smaller anteroom communicating with it. From the anteroom is to be a flight of steps up to the surface, and the entrance is to be masked by a small tower with two or three living rooms in it. Do you call that the project of a sane man?"

"If you wanted to do it yourself I should certainly say you were insane. But I do not think so in the case of Locris. It is not unnatural in a man of a certain history who has come to his time of life. After all, there are days that one does not wish to see. Speaking frankly, the idea has



occurred to my own mind before now. I have never done it, and never shall do it. But it is by no means without its fascination."

"That is very much the way in which he put it. In a year's time he means to retire and to leave Stannoke. And during that year this house is to be got ready for him."

"Is the construction to be secret?"

"I asked him that. He said he should make no effort at secrecy, as such efforts always attracted too much attention. He says that people will find their own explanation—that he wants an inordinately big wine-cellar, or something of that kind. In any case, before the tower had been built three years, people would have forgotten that there is this big room below it. I gather that he has chosen rather a lonely spot where he won't be troubled by many callers."

"Did he tell you in so many words what his reason was—why he is doing this?"

"No. But he said it was a thing which he had had in his mind for very many years past, and that he was glad now to have the opportunity to carry the idea out. You see, he is quite alone in the world. His wife's dead, and his son's away."

"The son," said my father, meditatively. "What's the boy doing?"

"Professorship of Greek in an Australian university—I forget which. I don't know what they'll make of him out there. He was an appalling prig."

"Yes," said my father. "I remember him. He was very, very Oxford. Well now, it seems

to me you've got nothing to do but to go ahead. Excavation's a much easier job now than it was twenty years ago. I can't go into it now, because I've promised to play bridge. But we will dine at my flat and spend the evening over the plans afterwards."

"Oh, thanks very much, dad, that will suit me admirably. Meanwhile, I will go and have a look at the winter show at the Academy. Oh, by the way, on that question of secrecy—he did say that he didn't want the thing talked about in Stannoke, said it would be unpleasant to be bothered with questions, and that clients would regard him as a lunatic and leave him, and that this would have a bad effect on the value of his practice when he came to sell it. I don't think that anybody but myself knows that he means to leave Stannoke. Down in Suffolk, though, there is to be no secret about the excavation."

On my way to the Academy I was greatly surprised to see Locris himself. He was coming out of a shop where they sell ecclesiastical furniture and vestments. He did not see me, but got into a cab and drove off. I wondered what he could be doing in a shop of that description, and reflected that it was quite possible that he intended to make some presentation to his parish church before leaving Stannoke.

### III

DURING the next year I saw a good deal of Mr Locris. He liked to be consulted about the details of the work which I had in hand, and he

was not an unreasonable man; that is to say, he always gave me my own way in the end. His general principle seemed to be to spend as much money as possible on the underground rooms, and as little as possible on the tower, in which I presumed he would generally live. I did not ask him in so many words if there was any special purpose for which he needed these underground rooms. It might of course be an elderly man's weariness—the fact that, as my father put it, there were some days he did not wish to see, and another explanation also occurred to my mind.

I went up to "The Elms" one night to show Locris, at his own request, the estimates I had obtained for carrying out some elaborate metal-work. The servant, who showed me into the drawing-room, told me that Mr Locris was in the laboratory. When he came in a minute or two later, I spoke to him chaffingly about this, and asked him if it was another new idea.

"Oh, no," said Locris. "Every man must have a hobby. The law is a very interesting profession, but it would interest me very much less if I did nothing else. I have been a student of chemistry for many years past in my leisure time."

"Going to invent a new poison?" I suggested.

"No," he said. "Something new, perhaps, but not a poison. Shall we get to business?"

In some ways Locris was a disappointment to me. He would not fit in at all with my preconceived idea of what a man should be like who builds himself an underground dwelling. I had

to consult him about this time with reference to the renewal of the lease of my house. I wanted to get the renewal, and I did not want the rent to be put up. Locris managed it for me, showing tact and intelligence and all good business qualities in the negotiation. It was true that the law interested him. He would break off his examination of drawings of details for his new abode, in order to speak again of that lease. It contained one or two unusual clauses.

But at any rate I had this other possible explanation for his actions. He was keen on chemistry and was expecting to produce some new discovery. Inventors are jealous people. He might perhaps think himself safer if his laboratory were underground.

He showed himself to be a kindly man. This was particularly the case with regard to poor old Simpson, the verger at the church which Locris attended. Simpson was a man of well over sixty, and incapable of doing any hard work. Rheumatism had compelled him to give up the grave-digging many years before. He was an intermittent drunkard. He had long spells of total abstinence, interspersed with brief bursts of intoxication. As a rule he timed his breakdowns very carefully, so that they should not attract the attention of his employers. But on one occasion he had been found drunk in the churchyard, and he had now been guilty of a still more horrid delinquency. He had been found incapacitated by drink in the church itself, and had been promptly dismissed.



Locris was quite angry about it. He kept on repeating that Simpson was an old man and that there was no chance of his getting any other berth, and that it was a shameful thing to allow the one or two days when he had yielded to temptation to counterbalance his many years of faithful and effective service. It was plausible, but it did not prevail. Locris moved heaven and earth to get Simpson kept on, and Locris had a good deal of influence with the vicar. But the thing was too heinous, and the old man was turned out. It was expected, of course, that, as he had no one to support him, he would have to go to the workhouse. But Simpson did not go to the workhouse. He kept on his small cottage and worked in the scrap of garden which belonged to it. When questioned by the philanthropical or the curious, he maintained that he had private means. Most people guessed that Locris was allowing him a small pension.

In due course the work at Mangay near Aldeburgh was completed, and Locris sold his practice to a couple of young solicitors who were in partnership together. It was announced that he was about to leave Stannoke, and the vicar, in one of his sermons, made a very feeling and sympathetic reference to the impending departure. Locris found himself referred to as "one who has set such an excellent example, not only in the rectitude of his professional career and his private life, but also in his regular attendance at divine worship."



At the same time, the vicar did not know everything about Mr Locris. He met me in the street one day and stopped me. "So sorry," he said, "you are to lose your friend, Mr Locris. He tells me that he is going to live in the country."

"That is so, I believe."

"But he did not happen in his conversation with me to mention what part of the country."

"Oh," I said, "there's no secret about it, I believe. He's going to live in Suffolk."

I hurried on. Suffolk as a postal address is perhaps somewhat vague, but I do not like curious vicars. If Locris had meant to have told him everything, he would have done so himself.

#### IV

FOR three years I never saw Locris and had no news of him. For a provincial architect I was doing fairly well in my profession. I specialized in bungalows and small houses, and had as much work as I could do. My father thought that I should leave Stannoke and come to London, and I was not altogether averse to making the plunge; but still, the local connection meant a good deal to me, and I did not want to lose it. Life at Stannoke went on with its customary placidity. Market-day was the one day in the week when we all of us seemed to be alive. And Sunday was the one day in the week when we all of us seemed to be dead. On the other days we were in a condition of mild lethargy. In such a town very

small things make a sensation. Sir Luke Mallow, son of the Sir Luke to whom my father referred, had an old cart-horse stolen from one of his fields. We talked about it for weeks, and our best policeman seemed practically to live on his bicycle. But neither he nor anybody else ever found the horse or the man who had stolen it. Then old Simpson sold his few sticks of furniture to a dealer one day, paid the three weeks' rent he still owed, and started off into the unknown. We talked a good deal about the fate of Simpson too. There were many theories, but alcohol and sudden death had their part in all of them. A week later, a touring company was unwise enough to visit Stannoke, and the sensation caused wiped out all recollections of Simpson.

And then a man, whose brother lived at Stannoke, decided to build himself a bungalow at Aldeburgh. I knew the brother, and I received the commission. I went down to Aldeburgh to spend some days over the business, and it occurred to me that I was within an easy drive of the tower where Locris lived. I managed to hire a dog-cart of sorts, and drove out there one afternoon.

I left my dog-cart at the one little inn in Mangay, and struck across the fields on foot towards the tower. I had mentioned at the inn that I was going to see Mr Locris, and found that any interest which might have been taken in him, or his unusual dwelling, had entirely subsided.

"Nice old gentleman," said my landlord. "Wish I had his cellars. I could buy my winter

coal in the summer then, and save a bit. There's a fine view, they say, from that tower of his. I suppose that's what he built it for."

"Do you see much of him?" I asked.

"Not to say much," the landlord admitted. "Sometimes when he's out for a walk he'll drop in here for a glass of bitter, but he's not been of late. He doesn't enjoy the best of health, they tell me, and—well, we're none of us so young as we were."

The tower had changed very little since I last saw it. As a piece of work I was not very proud of it. I could have made a good thing of it, but Locris had been very skimpy and ignoble about that tower. He would not let me have the materials I wanted. It seemed absurd enough too, when he was burying good black-and-white marble underground.

Greatly to my surprise the door of the tower was opened to me by old Simpson. He had resumed the suit of black broadcloth, with the boot-lace neck-tie, which had been his official costume as verger. He must have recognized me, but he gave no sign of it. He waited there like a stone image for me to speak. I asked if Mr Locris was in.

"He is, sir," said Simpson, severely. "Kindly wait where you are. I'll inquire if he can see you."

He returned in a moment with the announcement that Mr Locris would be pleased to see me, and showed me into one of the small living-rooms,

where Locris sat writing at a cheap American desk. I noticed at once that he had aged very much in these last few years. He was more bent. He seemed to have shrunk.

He rose as I entered, and shook hands with me.

"It is strange that you have come," he said. "I had just written to you."

He showed me a sealed letter addressed to myself, which was lying on the desk, but he did not give it to me.

"The fact of the case is," he said, "that my son being out of England, I have made you the executor of my will. It will give you very little trouble. I hope you will not refuse to act."

I answered, of course, that I was quite willing to undertake the work, and made the usual banal observation that I hoped the time was still far distant for it.

"I should not say that," said Locris. "I am not well. I am far from well. Dr Hanneford from Aldeburgh is coming up to see me to-morrow morning. However, I do not want to bore you about my health. I should perhaps tell you that by my will I am leaving you my land here."

"You will pardon me," I said, "but I don't think you should do that. I hope you will reconsider it. You have a son, you know, and I believe you have not quarrelled with him."

"I am on perfectly good terms with my son. I have been in communication with him on this very matter. He is quite content that it should be so. You must remember that these three acres



represent a very small portion of my property, and that he will have the rest." He paused and looked at me very intently, as if he were trying to read my thoughts. "Are you wondering," he said, "what you will do with a house like this?"

He had guessed my thoughts exactly, but I told him that the idea had not occurred to me.

"I ask," he said, "because you will not have the house. You will have the land, but not the house."

"I don't understand," I said.

"An explanation will be forthcoming. I may give it to you to-day perhaps—to-morrow perhaps—any day. If you have not received the explanation at the time of my death, it will be waiting for you in my writing. You will have the land, and you will not have the house."

At this moment Simpson brought in some very strong and bitter tea, and some untidy bread and butter. These are not things that I love precisely, but I partook of them meekly. I asked the old man if he found Simpson a useful servant.

"Simpson has been invaluable to me. From the domestic point of view he is perhaps the worst servant that ever existed, but that is a matter of comparatively little importance. I am not a very particular man. Almost anything does. Nowadays I live principally on tea, and I fancy it is not very good tea, is it?"

"Since you ask me, it is a very low grade of Indian tea, and I should imagine that the continued consumption of it might have something to



do with the ill-health of which you complain. Really, Mr Locris, I think you ought to get yourself looked after better."

"I have thought so myself," said Locris, sadly. "Something perhaps must be done. But in any case I must keep Simpson, because he is a faithful man and holds his tongue. You see? He goes down below with me, and he comes up with me, and he does what he is told, and no one hears anything about it. I am never bothered."

I could not quite make out to what he was referring. I suppose I looked puzzled.

"Yes," said Locris, suddenly. "Why not? Better perhaps on the whole. You shall have your explanation now. You shall come down with me."

I consented at once. I was human enough to be rather curious as to the use to which he had put these underground rooms.

He rang the bell, and told Simpson to bring the lanterns. They were just ordinary candle lanterns of japanned tin. The spiral staircase which went up to the top of the tower also descended below the surface to the underground rooms. They were not very far down, the roof of them being twenty feet below the surface. We went through the iron gate and down the stairs together. Old Simpson went first with a lantern, and I followed him. Behind me came Locris with the other lantern.

The aspect of the anteroom seemed to show me that my conjecture had been right. It was fitted as a laboratory and looked as if it had been in recent use. Locris waved his hand towards the

shelves and bottles. "What do you know about that kind of thing?" he asked.

"Nothing," I said. "It is not in my line. Is there anything very wonderful there?"

"Yes," said Locris, pointing to a bottle which seemed to contain some brown resinous powder. "That stuff in there is very wonderful."

I raised my hand to take it down and have a look at it, and found my arm struck down at once by old Simpson. Locris could see that I was angry, and hastened to apologize.

"Sorry," he said. "But Simpson was quite right. He had to do it in the interests of your safety."

"I don't see how my safety was concerned. It doesn't kill a man to touch a bottle. Did he think I was going to eat the stuff?"

"No, no," said Locris. "The thing is very simple. You asked me once if I was inventing a new poison. I told you that I was not. It would not interest me in the least. And besides, we have plenty of the old-fashioned poisons which do their work in a perfectly satisfactory manner. What I really have invented is a new explosive. There is a specimen of it in that bottle. Had you dropped the bottle, it would have been the end of all of us."

"Cheerful work," I said. "And the big room beyond? Is that a continuation of the laboratory?"

"Hush!" said Locris, impressively. "It is not. The room beyond is a tomb—a chapel of the dead.

Come, Simpson, give me the keys. We shall show this gentleman everything."

I picked up one of the lanterns.

"We shall not need that," said Locris. "The chapel is always lighted."

Simpson was already pulling back the heavy sliding-doors between the two rooms, and I could see the bright light beyond. Simpson and Locris entered first. Locris went down on his knees on a faldstool near the door, and Simpson, a grotesque figure, knelt on a hassock behind him. I myself stood for a moment in the doorway, astonished by the scene which I witnessed.

In the middle of this underground chapel there was erected a high catafalque, draped with gold and white. On the catafalque there lay in her white shroud the body of a young girl. Her hair, astonishingly golden and profuse, was loose about her shoulders. Her hands were clasped on her breast. As I looked at them, I saw what I had expected to see. The first finger of the left hand was missing. The face in profile, as I saw it, was very beautiful, and had not the yellowish waxy look of the face of a corpse. There was a tinge of colour in the cheeks. One could almost have believed that the girl was alive. On either side of the catafalque were three brass candlesticks, eight or nine feet in height. Each of these candlesticks had seven branches. There were thick yellow candles in them, now burning low. The candle flames lit up the red jewels in a high cross that stood behind the head of the girl. A faint scent

of incense still lingered in the air. The walls of the room were draped with white and gold, and but for those things which I have mentioned, the room was empty. Locris and the old verger remained kneeling in silence for perhaps five minutes, but it seemed to me a very much longer time. Then Locris arose, and both of them stepped backwards from the room, closing the heavy door behind them.

The silence was perfectly terrible. I wanted to speak, in order to break the spell of it, but found nothing to say. At last came the voice of Locris, almost in a whisper.

"Now do you understand?"

"Partly, I think. Let us come upstairs again."

As before each of the two men took a lantern, and I walked between them. Upstairs in the living-room, Simpson began to clear away the strong tea and the untidy bread and butter. I waited until he had gone, and then I turned to Locris. "How is this to end?" I said.

"Quite simple," said old Locris, rubbing his thin hands together. "I shall know when my time has come, and it cannot now be long delayed. I shall go down to the chapel, and old Simpson with me. It is his own wish that he should not survive me. I shall have nothing to do then, but to start in the anteroom a little piece of clockwork apparatus. It is connected with that explosive which you have seen. In a few minutes, as we are kneeling there, the crash will come. All your good work will be spoiled, my friend. This tower will fall,



and the rooms below it will be buried deep. You will have your simple explanation to give. You knew that I was interested in the chemistry of explosives, and that I worked at the subject in those rooms down there. You will say nothing more than this."

"Very well," I said. I was absolutely convinced of the man's insanity, and was wondering what was the best thing to be done.

"You see nothing unnatural in this, I hope," said Locris. "That, you know, is the only woman whom I have loved or can love. Life would have taken me from her, but I could have prevailed over the living. Death was too strong for me. When she died I had no other aim in life but to do what I have done here. For that purpose alone were all my years of work, and all the money that I made. For me there has never existed any other woman."

I ventured to remind him. "But you were married, Mr Locris."

"Never," he said vehemently, "never! The man who passes as my son is not my son. I married his mother to save her from ruin, but there was in the marriage no more than the ceremony, and she understood that there never would be any more."

There were other questions which I might have asked him, but I thought it better to get away and take the necessary steps as soon as possible. I did not know, for instance, how he had managed to remove the body from the vault in the churchyard at Stannoke, but the strange alliance between him



and the old verger might be at the bottom of this. The details of that removal I never did discover. But I learned that the body had been embalmed, and a doctor told me that the method of embalmment adopted would account for that slight tinge of natural colour in the dead girl's face.

I waited impatiently at the inn for my horse to be put in. My nerves were upset, and I left the man who was with me to do the driving.

"Back to the hotel, sir?" he said.

"No. You know where Dr Hanneford lives? Drive there, and drive as fast as you can."

About two hours later Dr Hanneford and three other men, of whom I was one, were driving in the direction of the tower. We had got within a little more than a mile of it when we heard the roar of the catastrophe. The horse in the cart shied violently and fell.

"We are too late," said Dr Hanneford, as he got down to see to the horse.

## MINIATURES

### I

#### THE REMEDY

THE morning was fresh and cool with a promise of great heat to come later. The street of the drowsy village was almost deserted. Nothing in it was very active except the butcher's cart, always more active than other carts. The children were at school. Old people stood at their doors waiting for a chance to tell a passer-by that the weather promised to be a scorcher.

A neat little old lady came out of a neat little house at the top of the street and across a neat little garden in front of it. It was all in keeping. Given the house, you could have constructed the woman; given the woman, you could have constructed the garden. She paused at the gate to explain to her cat that he must not come with her. The cat was horribly bored and never had any intention of going with her. Then she went on her way with a slight smile on her timid, patient face and her leather hand-bag grasped firmly.

The smile met with responsive smiles as she went along. Any of the people at the doorways would have told you who she was and that she did any amount of good. She spent more of her small income on others than on herself; she was free

nurse to anyone who happened to be ill, and an accommodating banker to anyone who happened to be poor; she had never been able to pass a child crying in the street without stopping to find out what was the matter and to put it right if possible.

The curate, a pleasant-looking, bronzed man, stopped for a brief chat with her. She was sure that there was not going to be any rain. She kept a bunch of seaweed and went by that. The talk turned to church work.

"I suppose," said the curate, "you are out on your errands of mercy as usual?"

The old lady's face changed. For a moment there was a look of horror and of a desperate resentment. "I can do nothing," she said, "in that way. I have been at it so long, and it still goes on—suffering everywhere. To try to abate it is like trying to clear a desert by picking up the grains of sand. There is only one thing—"

She broke off abruptly, opening her hand-bag and producing a box of sweetmeats.

"You will have one of these?" she said earnestly.

"Thanks very much," said the curate, "I never eat sweet things, and I mustn't rob your favourite children."

As she passed on he paused and looked after her. Really she had been rather queer.

At the end of the street she met a little girl crying, and heard her story. The little girl had very bad toothache, so bad that the teacher had allowed her to go home from school.

"Yes, my dear," said the little old lady, "you will have that tooth out, and then another one will ache, and then another. It is the way the world was made. It goes on like that. But do take one of these." Again she produced her box. The child took one and thanked her.

Once clear of the village a tramp of great judgment saw that this was a suitable opportunity. He began a plain, manly statement that he had walked from Manchester and had not tasted food for three days, and that God knew he was willing to work if only he could find a job. The old lady gave him a shilling.

"Yours is a sad case, my man," she said, "and I have no delusions about it. The shilling will do you no real good; by to-morrow or next day you will be just as poor and just as hungry unless— But won't you take one of these?"

The tramp hesitated. Still, she had given him a shilling and it would do no harm to humour her. He took a couple of sweetmeats from the box, thrust them into his large, dirty mouth, and touched his cap.

The old lady went on her way. Further on she found a woman, the mother of far too many children, who complained bitterly. The old lady heard her story to the end.

"Yes," she said, "it is as you say. There is a great deal of suffering in the world. I am quite powerless to alleviate it. But I think you should take one of these," and again the box was produced from the hand-bag.

On her way home the old lady passed the tramp again. He was lying under the hedge and he was dead. She stood a moment looking at him without horror and with a mild interest, and then went back to the neat little house in the neat little garden. There she sat and waited for the police.

They sent her to Broadmoor, of course.

## II

### IN THE HOSPITAL GARDEN

THE little grey monkey sat up on the bough of the lebbek, handling meditatively the slender chain that limited his freedom. His wise blinking eyes looked out towards the desert, and saw the sand clouds dim in the distance. Soon, soon undoubtedly, the khamseen would be here, and the last of the tourists would go. The khamseen, a hot dust-laden wind, blows, so the Copts say, from their Easter until their Pentecost; it keeps its appointment with fair accuracy as a rule. But, after all, tourists did not concern the monkey very much. One or two of them came now and again on a visit to Hakeem Basha, and he had heard them in heated argument with superfluous guides in the road beyond the compound. But he was the hospital monkey; not one of those that earn their bread and their master's in front of hotel verandahs at a loss of personal dignity, but the monkey of a small but scientific—and also religious—establishment. True, the little hospital had not



the extent or the equipment of the great hospital of Kasr-el-Aini, but it was doing good work ; it considered the soul as well as the body of the patient ; the residential monkey at such a place has a position. And he deserved it ; he never bit and he never scratched ; he accepted the proffered nut with solemn civility. If he was somewhat of a philosopher, that may have been due to the fact that two or three conflicting religions, all in excellent working order, were going on under his very nose. And to the philosophy may be ascribed his habits of reserve. He did not come when he was called, unless it was to the soft, cooing voice of the little blind girl. If any other would pet him or play with him, he retired gently up the tree, turned his back and thought deeply. He was well aware, too, that if you keep in the shade and move rapidly, the snap-shot photograph of you will hardly repay development. He certainly had the air of knowing much. He would look over a group of natives as though he diagnosed which of the common plagues of Egypt brought them there. This one was eyes and that one also was eyes. This was tubercular, and that would be treated with a dose of thymol that would startle a European practitioner. Perhaps he was not always accurate. The first day the pretty blind girl had called him from her seat on the turf under the lebbek tree he had come to her at once, and had seen that it was her eyes which troubled her ; but that was not all, nor was it the worst of the trouble.

The grey monkey turned to the garden beneath him. There stretched the hedge of hibiscus, a glory of scarlet flames. Beyond, there glimmered faintly in the sun the creamy white of the oleander. On the seat below the lebbek tree snored a fat native woman, old and past at thirty-five. But nowhere could be seen the pretty blind girl. And this was now the second day that she had not been in the garden, the second day that she had never called to him.

He may be acquitted of low motives. It is true that she fed him, but their friendship dated from the day when she came in, and she had nothing to give then. She subjugated the hospital in a few hours. It may have been because she was so pretty, or because her cooing laugh was so musical, or because all her ways were charming, or because it was so sad that she had lost her sight and was like to lose her life as well. She became a general pet, and the monkey was her special pet, and she did not come to him empty-handed.

The monkey blinked gravely. He could not think what had happened to her. The reader has guessed, of course. Inside the hospital all was over. It was the last chance and it had failed. The doctor went on to other cases where his skill might be of better service. The hard-featured Englishwoman, who did the work of three and hated sentimentality, was compelled to be angry with herself. If she was going to—well, to be stupid—every time a little native girl died, of what use was she likely to be?

As the evening came rapidly on, the monkey made up his mind on two points. Obviously his friend was quite well again. The doctor had given her back her sight, and she had gone home. The second conclusion was that the swivel of his chain could be negotiated. It was dusk when he negotiated it, and slipped through the tamarisk hedge and over the wall to look for the blind girl. Among the mud huts quick eyes saw him. He heard the scream of excited voices, and felt the shower of stones. He fell from the roof to the ground, and—well, that ends his history. Nor may we suppose that he and his playfellow will meet again. The two or three religions that he daily contemplated are agreed upon that point.

## III

## REASSURANCE

"Now then," said the man sternly when she had glanced through the letter.

"I always knew this would happen one day," she said quietly. "Yes, he wrote it. He wrote others and I destroyed them. It was careless of me to let this fall into your hands. Well, what will you do?"

"I don't know," said the man. "I think I shall kill you."

"That would be one way," she said drearily, tearing the letter in her hands into little pieces as she spoke. "Perhaps it would be the best way for me—not for you, nor—"

The man interrupted her. "I shan't kill you till I've wrung the truth out of you."

"You would never believe the truth now if you heard it."

"Tell it me."

"The truth is that I love you." She dropped the little bits of torn letter—a few at a time—into the basket by her writing-table.

"Indeed?" the man sneered. "And that letter?"

"Is it so hard to explain? Vanity at the age of forty-one requires a little reassurance. The letter was a form of reassurance. I am forty-one, you know, even if I don't quite look it."

"And you dare to tell me that you love me?" He seemed less resolute; there had been sincerity in her voice and look as she spoke.

"I do! I do! I do! I think there are just two people in the world for whom I would give my life. Mona is one, and you are the other. You and I have been married for twenty years, and romance does not live as long as that. We may as well admit that and not grumble at it; it's silly to grumble at the inevitable. But if ardent romance has gone, love has not. The rock is colder than the flame, but the rock endures. You are the father of my Mona. I nursed you when you were so ill. I've had pride in your success and been ever so sorry when you were disappointed. You do many things for me every day. We suit one another, and we don't quarrel. And I know you so well, too—I often know just what you will



say before you speak. I know you all by heart and in my heart. How could I help loving you? And you loved me too."

"Until this, strangely enough, I believed that you loved me, although—"

"Yes, yes."

"Listen, please. I must go through with this. You say that what you have told me is true. Now I must know the rest of the truth. Tell me about this man. Tell me everything that—"

He stopped abruptly as a servant entered the room with a telegram. His face changed as he read it. He said quietly that he would send the answer himself later. As the servant closed the door again the woman sprang from her place.

"It's bad news," she said. "I know it—I read it in your face. It's Mona, isn't it?"

"Yes. A serious accident. They want you to come at once." He glanced at the clock. "You will just have time to catch the 3.30. Be quick, I'll see about the carriage for you."

She was soon ready. He found her standing before her dressing-table, crying.

"My Mona!" she said, "she was to have come home for her birthday to-morrow. I'd been buying things for her. I'd—"

"Don't!" he said gently. "Come now, please."

She looked at him. "Why?" she said, "are you coming too?"

"Yes, I'm coming with you."

She could not speak, but her lips made the



word, "Thanks." One hand stole out and just touched his sleeve, lightly and shyly.

A month later they were still away from home. During that month Mona had come very near to death and had turned backward to life again. She was near now to complete recovery. One day she told her mother that the really glorious thing was that the accident had not in any way injured her personal appearance.

"You're quite beautiful," said her mother, "but you mustn't be vain. There's nothing more natural or more dangerous."

"But why dangerous?"

"Because when you grow to be an old woman like me—"

"But you're not the least little bit old."

"Listen. If you're vain, when you grow to be an old woman, just exactly like me, you may want reassurance. You understand that?"

"Not the least bit."

"I didn't think you would."

Mona laughed.

That evening in the garden the woman found her husband and sat down by his side. "Mona's getting on splendidly," she said. "She will come down to-morrow."

The man looked at her with kindly eyes. They had been through the fire together and he saw her heart as proved gold. He drew her to him and kissed her, and she sighed the happy sigh of a forgiven woman. Of that letter and its writer no

word was ever spoken again by either of them. He asked for no confession and she made none. The years passed on with placid happiness for them.

## IV

## THE LUCKY WOMAN

WHEN they were respectively of the ages of eighteen and nineteen it becomes necessary for the two Miss Venners to do something for themselves. They were orphans, and they divided between them a fortune of £50 a year. The elder and plainer of the two, Ellen Venner, took her own strong line at once. She married a Dissenting minister and made for herself a little home at Brixton. The more vulgar of her acquaintances said that it was no great catch.

Beatrice, the younger sister, was fortunate enough to obtain the post of governess to Mrs Pawling's three dear little boys; moreover, she retained her post, and won for herself some portion of the respect and goodwill of Mr and Mrs Pawling. The three dear little boys kicked her with almost unnecessary profusion and learnt very little from her. But then boys will be boys and, if we are to be frank, it must be admitted that Beatrice Venner had very little to teach. She had good food, she had £30 a year over and above her private income, she had occasional holidays and two evening dresses, and in course of time a still further blessing was to befall her.

The further blessing came when she had been with the Pawlings for about four years, and it was beginning to be said by papa and mamma that the eldest of the dear little boys certainly ought to go to school now. As he was by far the hardest and most persistent kicker of the three, Beatrice heard this without regret; a governess would still be wanted for the other two. It was at this time that Mr Pawling's old friend, Mr Yardley, came to stay at the house.

Mr Yardley was a youth of about forty-five, by profession a stockbroker, unmarried, priding himself somewhat on a gallant manner with the ladies. He was chubby, tubby, and clean-shaven. His hair was very thin on the top of his head and he took something for it. He had an income of £2000 a year and the most commonplace mind in the City, and he enjoyed both of them thoroughly. His was a mind that would never make a fortune or come to wreck. He was distinctly satisfied with himself. I do not know whether his friends and intimate relations had told him so, or whether he had found it all out for himself, but at the moment when he came on that visit to the Pawlings the decision was firm and hot within him that he must not lead this gay butterfly life any longer. He must settle down.

His gallant but perfectly polite eye fell upon Beatrice Venner. In the drawing-room after dinner he inquired if she was fond of music, and added, as he always did, that he himself was devoted to it, though he was no performer. Pulled

up somewhat short by Beatrice's frank confession that she did not care for music in the least, he added, with a reasonable desire to please, that he himself knew that there were other things, and that he could get along very well without it. The conversation passed to other topics. That day, and the next day, and the next, it was quite obvious to Mrs Pawling that Mr Yardley was paying marked attention to the governess.

There was no illegitimate secrecy about the man. That evening in the smoking-room he explained portentously to Mr Pawling his decision to marry Mr Pawling's governess.

"Good heavens! you don't say so?" said Mr Pawling. "Well," he added, "she's a very good girl, and this will be a rare bit of luck for her."

Beatrice Venner accepted the rare bit of luck with meekness and gratitude. It was true that she was not in the least in love with Mr Yardley, but she admired his income and his other estimable qualities. Certainly, too, she was not in love with anybody else. She received many congratulations. The letter from her sister Ellen was of a somewhat subacid character, implying that she did not expect that they would see much of Beatrice down at Brixton after this. She also added that conscientious scruples would not allow her husband and herself to be present at a wedding in a church. This did not prevent Beatrice from being married in a church in a beautiful white dress and a beautiful lace veil, with two bridesmaids, with the youngest Pawling boy as a page, with The-Voice-



that-breathed-o'er-Eden and, generally speaking, with pomp.

She was quite happy in a placid way for some time after her marriage, and she did not drop her sister down at Brixton. Beatrice had no children, and her sister had many. Beatrice thought of adopting one of them. Her husband, kindly but firmly, thought not. She had been married eight years and the edge of the luxuries had worn off; her remarkable luck had become quite commonplace, and she was beginning to find her husband a very slow man with a tendency to hypochondria, and one day she went to Brixton to her sister's squalid abode to play a game with her sister's new baby, which was a perfect beauty.

She was late in returning, and found that her husband had already got back from the City and was going round the gardens. It was springtime, and she found him standing in the orchard, his frock coat and his silk hat still on him, looking grotesquely out of place. He pointed out the fruit prospects with gravity and with some knowledge of the subject. "It's a queer thing," he said, "that this one tree has got no blossom on it at all."

"I'm glad," she snapped furiously.

He stared at her with his little eyes wide open.

"No, I am not glad," she added quickly, and pressed her lips to the rough bark of the tree and kissed it.

"My dear child," he said in gentle remonstrance, "have you gone quite mad?"



"No," she said, "but I think I shall." Then she ran into the house, and he followed laboriously to inquire what she was crying about.

## V

## THE WOMAN IN THE ROAD

HENDERSON drove slowly. There were several small carts in the road, driven in the indolent, unintelligent, rustic fashion, and little groups of villagers. All were going in the same direction, turning in at the gates of the drive. Henderson had seen the notices of the sale by auction displayed on the outer walls of the garden. Everything apparently was to be sold, and everything included a motor-car. It might be worth while to look at it. Henderson wanted a more powerful car than the one he was driving, and there might be other things that he would like to buy. In any case these auction sales were frequently amusing.

A dealer came up to him as he stepped out of his car and asked if he could execute any commissions. He took Henderson to see the big motor-car. "Mr Jasper only drove it about a month," said the dealer.

"Why is it being sold?"

"Everything is being sold. Mr Jasper is a bankrupt and in prison now."

It was a modern, up-to-date, 36-h.p. car, and Henderson went over it with an engineer's critical eye and could find no fault. When his prolonged

examination was finished he decided that if it went for £400 he would buy it. He believed that it would fetch much more, but at these country sales one never knew.

He gave the dealer his instructions and the dealer bought the car for him for £95.

"Now then," said Henderson to the dealer, "tell me what's wrong."

"There is nothing wrong that a sensible person would take any notice of. These villagers get ideas into their heads. Mr Jasper wasn't liked even before that thing happened, and—"

"Look here! What's this?" said Henderson. He unwound a few long black hairs that were entangled in the acetylene lamp.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the dealer. "They must have come from the woman that he killed."

"Ran a woman down in the road, did he? How was that?"

"He was bad-tempered always, and that day he was drunk too. I suppose she didn't skip out of the road fast enough for him."

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?"

"I supposed you knew it. Everybody about here knows it. Why, it was because of what she said just before she died that no one would bid to-day. She said that she knew she was going to die, but she was not done with that car yet. She was a gipsy, and some people think that gipsies can foretell things. It's all stuff and nonsense to my mind."

"It's absolute stuff and nonsense. Why didn't

you buy the car yourself? You might have made money on it."

"Might, or might not. It's not my line of business. I know nothing about motors, and I've got no capital to put into a thing like that."

A few days later Henderson got his big car home. He was delighted with it. He liked to feel the great power under him and to compare the pace at which he could take the steepest hills now with what he had been able to do on the smaller car. This smaller car he sold for considerably more than he had paid at the auction, and on the whole he considered that it had been a very good day's work for him, and blessed the superstitions and prejudices of ignorant people.

The rest of the story came out in the evidence which Henderson's driver, a Frenchman who spoke no English, gave at the inquest. The interpreter was asked more than once by the coroner if he was quite certain that he was giving the man's evidence correctly. The evidence was that Henderson was driving fast on a straight stretch of road with nothing in sight. There was a stone wall on his left. Suddenly Henderson gave a loud cry, pulled the wheel hard over to the left, and dashed into this wall. By some miracle the Frenchman was not injured in the least, and he did the best he could for his master, who lay unconscious. In a minute or two Henderson opened his eyes and spoke. He said, "Did we go over her?" The driver told him

there had been nobody there. "Of course, there was," said Henderson. "She jumped out suddenly into the middle of the road, right in front of the car—a swarthy sort of woman, looked like a tramp." He tried to say more, but again became unconscious, and died in a state of unconsciousness an hour later.

## VI

### TWO MEN

THE murderer generally knows that he is a murderer; the vain man—who, from a social point of view, is frequently the greater sinner—never knows that he is vain, unless somebody tells him. Even then he must be told with considerable force, and the hypothesis that the teller is jealous must be too absurd to be tenable. Richard Perral was convinced somewhat suddenly of vanity and his other defects by Rhoda Lestrangle.

The social manner may be only skin deep, but it is a tough skin. It takes more than a scratch to get through it. The natural Rhoda came through one night at a dance when Perral made her angry without intending it. When a boy suddenly tears off the boxing-gloves and wishes to continue with bare fists, there is generally somebody handy to stop him. But there happened to be nobody to stop Rhoda—I doubt if anybody could have stopped her. A moment before she had been smiling, and saying the usual things. And before Perral could grasp



what the reason was—though she soon told him—she was being absolutely truthful, absolutely merciless, absolutely brutal. His first feelings were those that he would have had if a woman to whom he was talking had suddenly lost all control of herself through drink or madness. But those feelings changed later. He was swept out of momentary horror into lasting shame.

He had been speaking of Lucy Wyllinger's engagement, which he professed to find incomprehensible. Rhoda was an intimate friend of Lucy's, and understood the engagement perfectly, but as she had no intention of telling Perral anything whatever about it, she said that she thought so, too.

Perral suggested that pique might be the explanation. "In fact," he added fatuously, "I have heard it hinted, though it is ridiculous enough, that I am to blame."

The social manner still held. "What do you mean?" she asked. "Did you advise her in any way?"

"No; not that."

Rhoda's eyes flashed.

"Since you are so fond of explanations, I will tell you one or two things that you had better know—things about yourself."

"Delighted," said Perral, who had not seen the eyes or grasped the situation.

"For instance, I think you do not know that you are the common joke of the set that, by no means for your sake, still tolerates you. I have



seen you leave people whom you evidently thought that your bragging had impressed mightily, and I have been sorry that you did not hear what was said when you had gone. I suppose you cannot help it. It is one of your natural disadvantages; it is one of many. You need not stare at me. I know perfectly well that I have lost my temper. I hope I shall lose my temper again if ever again I hear a cad lying about a woman to satisfy his silly vanity; it is not likely; one is generally careful not to meet your type. If a woman talks to you at dinner, to satisfy conventions and her hostess, you think that she is in love with you. If you had not been as dense as a millstone you must have seen how all women—and Miss Wyllinger particularly—worked and plotted to avoid your society. You shall hear presently what they say of you—of your appearance, your manners, your habit of drinking too much, your blunders, your brag, and your fancied accomplishments. You do not even know the nickname by which everybody calls you. But you shall know it; you are fond of explanations. Afterwards, even your vanity will not tempt you to say that Miss Wyllinger or anybody else was in love with you.”

Perral had gone very white. “I can see that I have offended you, but I think that there is a misunderstanding. I did not say that Miss Wyllinger was in love with me; I even expressed my opinion that the idea was ridiculous.”

“You did not say it? No, because you thought

it would impress me more if you said that others said it, and you did not mean me to think you ridiculous. You are amusing when you try to veil your brag. You always do it so clumsily. But I thought you would make some such spiritless excuse. Well, let me tell you some true stories—things you have done and things other people have said of you."

That was where (he told himself afterwards) he should have left her, but he had a morbid desire now to know the very worst; for all the vainest men live on the edge of a precipice of self-abasement. She gave him chapter and verse, drily and bitterly—she must have hated him for a long time and made notes of things in her mind. The image of himself as he had supposed himself, collapsed in fragments; out of them arose a ghastly figure—himself as he was and now knew that he was. For a moment he had a sense of injustice; he had said a silly thing, from a kind of instinctive vanity and without planning it consciously, but did it merit this virulent punishment? What did it matter? Socially, he was done and finished. Rhoda Lestrangle would cut him, and she would take good care not to be alone in her action. He found himself standing up, speechless. He got out somehow.

After the last carriage had rolled away in the early morning, he was still awake. He sat and thought over the comparative values of suicide, the Catholic Church, active service, the life of a scholar and a recluse. Underneath them all was the idea

that he had to get away from them ; but primarily he had to get away from himself.

A few months later he left England for New York. He returned, three years afterwards, shy, quiet, unselfish, and wealthy. He then married Rhoda Lestrangle.

And if this seems curious, remember that vanity is a vice with a cognate virtue, which is imagination ; and that women, and men, have a tendency to admire their own work.

## VII

### THE ENEMY

*(From the Letters of Lady Raffenstall, formerly  
Miss Hilda Brunton)*

#### FIRST EXTRACT

*(Bearing an Address at Littlehampton).*

YOU must, of course, write and let me know about everything. One feels so much out of it in this forsaken place. For that matter I am not sure that I do not feel even more out of it when I am in London nowadays. The plain fact, which to you, my dear friend, I may mention quite candidly, is that I am definitely middle-aged. I am just forty ; I have grown fatter, or, as most of my dear friends are probably putting it at this present moment, I have "coarsened." On the whole, it is perhaps as well that the illness of my children and the usual doctor's formula have brought me to a hideous and minstrel-haunted seaside. When I am in London

I am so much less sought after nowadays that I grow full of bitterness. After one has had the feast one should lose the hunger. If I had the making of this world I would make it differently in many respects. I *did* have the feast; they say that I have two suicides to my credit and some minor heart-breakages. I could do what I liked; everybody was always trying to get me to go to their things. I was in the Academy three years running, and always by a first-rate man. And the kind people say that I must have been a beauty once, and the unkind people say that I have "coarsened." By the way, do you remember the portrait that Hallom did of me fifteen years ago, just before I was married? He would not sell it, and Harry was rather mad about it. Well, Hallom's dead and has left the portrait specifically to Harry in his will. It is the one where I am all in white, playing with a kitten. My God! What a fool I should look all in white, playing with a kitten now! However, Harry is delighted to have got the portrait, and writes that he has hung it in the library at our house in Hill Street. He does not come down here, by the way, which is scandalous of him. However, he writes letters inquiring affectionately about the children. How one loses everything when one is middle-aged!

This is a boresome letter, all about myself; but you know what the seaside is. There is nothing in one's surroundings which will bear thinking about for one moment. A woman with a fringe and a portable harmonium—neither of which suits



her in the least—has just planted herself in the street outside these windows, and a husky baritone, with Cockney accent, is singing, "There's only one girl hin this world for me!" What a life! Yes, the children are better, thanks. Write again soon.

## SECOND EXTRACT

*(Bearing the Address of a House in Hill Street, W.)*

WHEN one deteriorates in value one ought, I suppose, to become much cheaper. I am seriously thinking of becoming much cheaper. I could still, on the title, get a parcel of little Jews and people from the City to run about after me. No, I was joking, and not in the best taste. In five years' time I shall be all resignation and black cashmere; a peaceful, grey-haired old lady with a saintly life and a spotless reputation, such as is acquired by those who can neither tempt nor be tempted. That, again, is rather horrible, and I am inclined to write no more until I am in a better frame of mind. However, let's try and look at the bright side of things.

The children are quite well, and that is a blessing. Harry gives me no trouble whatever. Of course I knew he was a maniac when I married him; I rather liked him for it. My picture by Hallow in the library has flowers before it perpetually, and lighted candles in the evening. He spends most of the day there with the door locked. Sometimes for two or three days I never exchange three words



with him. This is rather funny, as we are both living in the same house. I really fancy he must be a little mad. I could understand his neglecting me, which he does in the kindest and most gentlemanly way, since I am middle-aged and fat and ugly—or shall we say “coarsened?” Men don’t age so quickly as women, and he is still far from being an old man. That is why I want to know who the enemy is. When he stopped caring a pin’s head about me, who was it for whom he began to care all the world? Who is the enemy? I do not say this by way of complaint. As I said, I am looking now at the bright side of things. So far as I can make out, there is not at this moment in the world a single woman for whom Harry cares twopence. But then, as I said, he is a maniac.

## THIRD EXTRACT

*(Bearing an Address at Grandtown, Morayshire)*

I AM getting seriously annoyed with Harry. I hate to see money fooled away. He is not a pauper, but his expenditure should at least be reasonable. The children and I, with the servants, came on here first. He followed a few days afterwards, and he followed in a special train if you please. When I remonstrated with him on the absurdity of it, he said that he did not take the train for his own sake. As there was nobody else in it, except his valet and the railway officials, I should be glad to know for whose sake he did take

it. By the way, as a further sign of his mania, in that same train he brought with him Hallom's portrait of me from our house in Hill Street. The same silly nonsense with the flowers and candles and the locked room has gone on here. At first I was pleased, even a little flattered, by his adoration of this portrait, but I confess that it begins to madden me exceedingly now. One or two of the people staying in the house have made little jokes about it which I resented very much. One young idiot spoke of the portrait to me the other night as my only possible rival. When the truth is expounded to you by a fool it is even more infuriating than the truth generally is.

I like this place. I do not care if I never go back to London again. I hate Society; I hate most things. I think I shall hate Harry, only I am hardly on familiar enough terms with him to do that.

#### FOURTH EXTRACT

*(Dated a Month later, from the same Address)*

WE have had a scene. That is my great piece of news: a very serious scene. Partly as a kind of practical joke, and partly to satisfy my own feeling, last night, while the men were still lingering over the cigarettes, I got to the shrine of my sacred portrait of his worship, and cut it out of the frame and burnt it. An oil painting, by the way, takes a good deal of burning: it has to be done in sections. I was just finishing off the last little piece; it had

my hand on it with the engagement ring on one of the fingers, when Harry and the rest came in. As I said to him afterwards, I do not in the least mind his losing his temper, and it is quite immaterial to me whether he is in a good temper or a bad, but I will not have him lose his temper with me before people. Last night it was really most embarrassing. You never heard such a volley of abuse. Nobody knew what to do or where to look or what to say. I laughed at him all the time. Amongst other kindly remarks of his was one that he would much sooner I had cut myself up in pieces and burned them.

Since writing the above I have seen Harry. He declines to live in the same house with me any more, and has gone back to town for the present. The funny thing is he says he cannot stand, even for a moment, the presence of a woman whom jealousy has rendered absolutely insane. If it comes to a question of sanity I may have something to say. There will be a separation, I suppose, judicial or otherwise ; I do not much care.

*P.S.*—Thanks for the pamphlet on *Diet for the Obese* ; I shan't trouble about it though. I think I shall live on the Continent in future : that is the place for the used-up. However, I have killed the enemy now.

## VIII

### IDYLL IN A CHURCHYARD

THE churchyard stood well above the village. The nearest way to it was by a path over fields.

At present it lay very quiet in the cool of the summer evening until the quiet was broken by the creak of two large new boots. A man of forty-five, with a complicated face, in deep mourning, and with a lavish band upon his hat came creaking round the corner of the church and then creaked across the grass to a well-kept grave. The face was complicated because it told such different things—years of small commerce in the country had lent it much of the parochial and the commonplace, but the eyes were those of a tired epicure.

The tombstone told in gilt lettering that it was sacred to the memory of Lavinia, for seventeen years the pious and devoted wife of Alexander Hythe. The date of the decease was very recent. A quotation from a favourite hymn completed the inscription. The man removed a very shiny black glove, a glove which had blue high lights on it in the sun, and began to pull up one or two weeds, adjusted the cross of everlastings, which was not quite straight. Then he drew that terrible kid glove on again and folded his fat hands together and closed his tearless eyes.

He opened his eyes again as he heard a step on the gravel. The woman, who had once been good-looking, came along the path towards him. She was neatly dressed in a brown coat and skirt, and she had small feet and hands. One of the hands carried a bunch of white roses. She came across the grass to the mourner, said good-evening timidly, and feared that she intruded. Then she laid her



roses on the grave and would have slipped away, but the man stopped her.

"You needn't go, Mrs Burgess," he said heavily, "not at least so far as I am concerned."

"I just wanted to leave these few roses," she said. "You see, not being a relation, I don't wear any mourning. George, in fact, objected to it just for the funeral. He said that it was carrying things too far. Still, she and I were always friends and— But I do feel that I am intruding. It was a pity I chose just this time."

"What for?" said the man, almost savagely. "You've got all the right here that I have, and perhaps more. Pious and devoted wife it says. She was pious too. I've never seen the weather yet that would keep her out of this church Sunday morning or Sunday evening, not while she had strength to walk."

"Devoted, too," said the woman, warmly.

"Yes," the man said drearily, "Lavinia was devoted enough. She knew her place and never went out of it. She had always got a sharp eye to my interest. How I'm to replace her in the shop I really don't know. But—"

"Well," said the woman a little eagerly.

"You know," he said bitterly, "you know well enough. Regular hell, that's what it was, and I may as well say the truth about it to some living being and get it over. It was your fault too."

"Mine?" the woman gasped.

"Yes," said the man. "I was a boy when I married her, and I was in love with you all the



time. I never told you so—I never breathed a word of it till this moment. I daresay it comes as a shock to you.”

“I never knew it,” the woman said huskily.

“How should you? You were rather a cut above me, and you took all the care you could to keep out of my way. I wasn’t going to make a fool of myself then, though I don’t seem to care so much now. Lavinia was ready, and one thing led to another. Well, I wouldn’t put a lie on a tombstone or anywhere else. She was a pious and devoted wife, and you may leave it at that. I did my duty by her too. This last illness, money was not spared I can tell you. I could show you the bills, though of course it’s no use. Some of the things I could get at trade prices, but not chemist’s stuff, of course. You may say that she had everything she wanted. And I’ve had nothing that I wanted—nothing. Not one solitary thing all my life.”

The woman looked away from him and out into the distance. She spoke hesitatingly. “At that time, when we were quite young, boy and girl together, I suppose it never occurred to you—”

“What?” said the man. And as he looked at her he knew.

For a minute or two neither of them spoke.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t have let myself go like this,” said the man, shyly and apologetically. “When one has kept silence for so many years one might go on to the end. I should have remembered that you were a married woman too.

I ought to have asked after your husband. No worse, I hope?"

The woman nodded, shivered, and began to cry. He came nearer to her, and she ran away from him down the path.

Next day Mr Hythe made some inquiries for a woman to help in the shop to do the work that his late wife had done. He explained that it would be just a temporary appointment.

## IX

### THE LIFE UNDERGROUND

*(From the Unpublished Letters of Horace Marsh of Saxwold)*

So, my dear Edward, it is all over. My sanity is proved to the satisfaction of the lawyers and the medicine men, and poor Herbert will not at present have the management of my affairs. I fear he is sadly disappointed. I have made a new will to-day, and when nature calls me from this world and the contents of that will become known, he will be sadly disappointed again. It is possible that he will try once more then. The old stories of the Temple of Aphrodite in the park and of my underground mansion and of the immense sums that I have squandered on them will be brought out again—anything to prove that I was not of sound disposing mind. Really the newspapers ought to subsidise poor Herbert. He gives them such stories.

And what will you say in my defence when that day comes and I can no longer speak for myself?

You have an easy tolerance, Edward. You admit that I have spent these vast sums, and that I have spent them on objects on which the ordinary rich man would not care to spend twopence. But as you pointed out to Herbert, the money was mine to do with as I would, nor am I, in spite of all the expense, ruined in fortune. On the question of my desire at times to live underground you refused to see any evidence of madness there. "Every man," you added truly, "has some eccentricity or other."

Yes, I am sanguine enough and optimistic enough to believe that even the most commonplace of mortals—a governess or a minor poet—in some respect, mere trifle though it may be, is differentiated from the others. But if you import into that word, eccentricity, any hint of irrationality or weakness, then, so far as my underground life is concerned, I join issue with you. I have my reasons for what I do.

Nor can I admit that I am so very unusual. The temporary withdrawal from the world is a luxury for many natures and a necessity for some. It may be the desert or the mountain-top, or the hermit's cave or, as in my own case, the more complete seclusion of an underground dwelling. One would hear more of such things if more men had the courage of their opinions or could pay the price of their satisfaction.

Imagine, if you can, all that the iron outer doors

of the descending stairs shut out for me. Down there the engines of the world are stopped and the rattle is still. There is no fatal recurrence of day and night, and one loses that intolerable sense of time going on as a turning wheel in a vast mill where mortals are but the grain. Down there it is always the same light and always the same hour. The past that I spent in the world above becomes to me quite unreal, and the present moment is perfect rest. And the future? There seems to be none. The engines of the world are stopped: I am no longer the grain in the mill, I am "the captain of my soul." Free-will may still be a delusion, but the delusion is complete.

You shake your head and talk of neurasthenia; names have never frightened me. You may call it that if you like, and you may call my life underground the treatment. For it is due to that withdrawn and secluded life that I can come back to the world sane and steady and convince the medicine men and disinherit poor Herbert. Names do not frighten me, but I am a coward before facts. This to the ordinary man is an idyllic spot in the open country—a peaceful resting-place for the over-civilised and over-tired. It is not so to me. It is full of torturing facts. I stand appalled as much before the needless and inevitable fecundity as before the pitiless and inevitable destructiveness of nature. All that is inevitable is to me terrifying. It is nothing that the streams run downward and that the stone released from my hand falls to the ground; but it is everything to me that the



stream *must* run downward and the stone *must* fall. It gives me no sensation of beneficent law and order. I feel as I were being carried away, I knew not whither, on some machine that I can neither control nor understand. I am frightened. And just as a terrified child buries its head under the bed-clothes, so I go to my underground dwelling, the expensive construction of which annoyed poor Herbert so much.

Do not tell me—since I am well aware of it—that time goes on and the natural laws are not suspended below ground. I know it; but down there the evidence is less overpowering. Do not think either that this terror is always with me. If it had been so, poor Herbert would have had his way. There are days when a flower is to me the same thing of beauty and fragrance that it is to others, and nights when I can listen to the nightingales in my garden with joy. I can talk then without great trouble of local politics and cricket scores to the somewhat indifferent specimens of my species that live in this neighbourhood. I am—to use your favourite word—normal. And then the day comes when I can see nothing in the flower but a grotesque and purposeless reproduction of its kind, when the song of the nesting bird is the more bitter for its beauty, when every village child in the street is a tragedy. On every life—every useless life—is a senseless death for its birthmark.

And this is, of course, especially terrible in the springtime. The wheel is at the height of its

revolution ; the furnace roars ; the engine throbs. The mighty machine that makes and breaks us works overtime. If only one could find in nature the least human analogy ! If only in the purpose at the back of things one could discern a standard of values which was humanly comprehensible ! But it is not so. Nature knows nothing of utility, or beauty, or nobility as we know them. It knows nothing even of cruelty. If it were maliciously inhuman one might bear it ; but it is not human. And the highest we can think or do may be a jest elsewhere to other beings.

And since it is now the springtime, my dear Edward, and since poor Herbert has made me very tired, you will not hear of me for a week or two.

## X

### SORROW IN THE COUNTRY

THE Poet walked along the winding lane on the hillside in springtime. A mile back a cart had met him—a slow, heavy cart, whose driver lolled in a beery drowsiness, the reins slack in one dropped hand. Since then he had seen no one. On either side the hazels showed their delicate green ; the bluebells grew in profusion ; under the hedge the half-opened curves of the young common ferns still made their faithful promises. Below him lay the plantation, dusky and mysterious. Lower still, not far from the village, came the rat-tat-tat of the workman's hammer ; for there the trees had been

cleared, and some human brute was building for himself a big house, where he should give dinner-parties and be just about as common as other people. But for that, there was, the Poet felt, a pleasure in the suggestions that the scene offered him. A sense of solitude without dreariness, of remoteness not too remote. A half-hour's descent would have taken him down to the village, humming there in the haze.

A turn of the lane brought him suddenly upon a cottage, with thatched roof and white walls; it stood in a little garden, old-fashioned, where the white rhododendrons and big red peonies opened slowly, a restrained and yet inevitable outburst of delights. The garden merged haphazard into an orchard. The white pear-blossom, most precious of all to the bees, had already paid its tribute and ended its little day of beauty. But the apple-trees were glorious in the sun—healthy, sturdy Blenheims, and here and there a rare Ribstone, showing where a dead arm had been lopped off, dying out, the sickly mother of the finest fruit. (Are there not also fine poems from men with the morel ear and all the rest of the stigmata?) And, as in that old rhyme, someone was in the garden hanging out the clothes.

She was hanging out the clothes—clothes of a most intimate character—with a simplicity and a total absence of embarrassment possible when facts are comprehensible but suggestions an unknown language. The Poet liked that particularly. There was nothing shirked. The beauty of the

scene was intrinsic, not gained by a pettifogging trick of trimming and cutting out what was ugly. It was beautiful because it had not cared, and did not care, anything at all about that. The heavenly pinkish snow from the shaken apple-trees was due to the same breeze that played vulgar monkey tricks with the hanging clothes.

She wore a print gown of pale mauve and a coarse apron; neither of them, examined closely, would have been found to be quite clean. They did for working in, and it was the work that threw her into a grand pose. Her head was thrown back, her arms raised high, the dress strained over the deep bosom. She would have been the delight of a sculptor, and the despair of a fashion-plate. Tall, erect, strong, shapely, she seemed as one come back from the old days, before we all grew so clever and so *chétif*, a relic of the healthy animal that dies out of the race as our poisonous civilization does its work. Red lips, big eyes, a mass of black hair twisted up anyhow, the melancholy—one might almost have said sulkiness—of her unintelligent expression, the Poet noted them all. He noted too, with delight, that the mouth was too large and the hands and part of the splendid forearm were red from the wash-tub. That was right. It was all so good because it was so true, and you could afford to see everything.

With the quick enthusiasm of a poet, he wondered how it would be if he stepped across the grass, took her in his arms and kissed her, and as soon as might be, set the wedding-bells a-jingling.



That she would marry him he had no doubt. Not for the offer of his person—an unseemly mixture of the puny and the portly—but for position, and money, and laziness, and fine clothes, and the envy of others. It was not for his own sake that he gave up the mad scheme, though he recognized what misery the load of years with her might mean; it was because he felt there was something that belonged to the garden and to solitude, and that would die if transplanted. He would not even cross the grass to her with a pretext of asking his way, lest her voice should shrilly disappoint him. Rustic words and accent he welcomed as the truth, but the voice—he heard it in imagination as a contralto.

Also the Poet was, as poets so often are, just a little bit afraid.

At that moment she turned and looked at him curiously, and with a clumsy pretence of a pause to light a cigarette, he passed on. He reflected that their curiosities would be very different. She would ask herself if he was stopping down at the "Lion," and if he was one of those artists, and there she would leave it. His wonder as to her was wider and deeper. Memory for a whim marked that page as one that was to remain, and years afterwards the Poet, dying, recalled the scene.

. . . . .

On the evening of the day on which he saw her, long after the rat-tat-tat of the hammer had ceased in the big unfinished house below, when the crescent moon relieved the growing dusk, she came out of

the cottage. The old people were chatting in the kitchen, and it would have been remarked if she had run upstairs. But out here one was not observed, and for a while she sobbed passionately, leaning against the trunk of an apple-tree. She sobbed not on account of the Poet—of whom she had not thought twice—but on account of the beery giant whom he had met driving half-asleep the heavy cart.

## XI

## A CIVIL WAR.

MISS ANNABEL BLAKE and Miss Jessica Wynch possessed certain points of resemblance. They were about the same age, and had about the same moderate income. Both were plain, slightly eccentric, sturdy, and even pugnacious. Both of them hated men and loved gardening. Both were independent, methodical, and hot-tempered. Both had quarrelled with all their relations.

It was chiefly on that account that at the age of thirty they decided to join their forces and take a house and garden in the country together. The relations smiled and said they would give that arrangement just one month to last. They calculated that by then Annabel and Jessica would have flown at each other's throats and parted for ever.

But the relations were wrong. Both of the ladies were shrewd enough to see that the only possible *modus vivendi* was one which, as far as

possible, left to each her independence. A book of rules was drawn up in manuscript, each lady possessing her own copy. As the years went on the rules grew in number, to meet every occasion. They were agreed to by both parties, and there were fines for breaking them, and the fines were always paid. The making of these rules caused a good deal of friction, generally ending in an even compromise. Neither lady could claim to be the predominant partner; gradually the spirit of an accurately-measured give-and-take grew up between them. The compromise might, for instance, have been traced in Rule 78, which ordained that fires in the reception-rooms were permissible only between 6 P.M. of October 15th and 10.30 P.M. of the following April 23rd. It took two evenings of animated discussion to make that rule. Once made it passed into the things beyond discussion, and there was no more trouble about it. An entire absence of anything that could possibly have been called a sense of humour helped them.

Thanks to the rules and compromises, Miss Blake and Miss Wynch managed to live together for twenty years. They did not pretend to have much mutual affection, but they enjoyed a little sharpness of the tongue; perfect calm would have bored them. They had, however, a certain amount of mutual respect, since neither was a person who could be put upon, and from the similarity of their tastes it was probably easier for each to live with the other than with anybody else. Besides, there

was a distinct saving of money from living together ; and though they were not precisely miserly, they liked good management.

But in the twenty-first year, in the springtime, when the birds were singing prettily, and the blossoms were looking lovely, and Nature generally seemed smiling and peaceful, the great war broke out between the two ladies. The war had its origin in the garden. The paths and lawns were common ground, though the care of the paths was assigned to Miss Wynch, while Miss Blake was responsible for the lawn. The rest of the garden was divided into equal parts. By Rule 3 Miss Blake owned and cultivated that part of the garden on the left side of the path, and Miss Wynch owned and cultivated the other half on the right side. They employed no gardener, and needed none. These two ladies of fifty could do a piece of hard digging—and no nonsense about it—as well as most men. There were rules that a certain proportion of each allotment was to be kitchen-garden, and the crops for these were to be settled in January by discussion. Otherwise, the two ladies might have had too much of one thing and none of another. This discussion was much less fiery than might have been expected. The capabilities of the land and of its cultivators had been early recognized. When a difficulty did arise, a short squabble and a sternly just compromise settled it. The rest of the allotments, the flower-gardens, never came under discussion at all ; there each proprietor, by Rule 15, was supreme.



Now it happened that Miss Wynch in turning over her seed-packet one evening, came on one that bore no label and no indication of its contents. Miss Blake expressed her opinion, to give her exact words, that Jessica Wynch was a careless fool. Miss Wynch said she had never seen the packet before, and the seedsman must have sent it by mistake. It was probably rubbish, and she should burn it. She added that people who forgot to get the crumb-tray repaired should not call other people careless fools. Miss Blake said that people who burned seeds deserved to live to want bread to eat. Jessica said that Annabel could have the packet for a penny, and the money was paid. Annabel sowed that seed, and it flourished exceedingly. It was a foreign weed—as ugly, vindictive, and prolific as a Chinaman! Where it was put in there was its base of operations for evermore. So the war began. And so far Miss Wynch had right on her side.

Miss Blake made a heap of the weed and set fire to it on a day when the wind carried the smoke across Jessica's allotment. For this infringement of Rule 70 she was fined fourpence. Jessica then threw a healthy collection of large snails across into Miss Blake's flower-beds. Miss Blake appealed to Rule 35, under which rubbish from one allotment might not be deposited on the other. Miss Wynch objected, under the plea that rubbish meant something dead, and the snails were alive. Miss Blake said "Very well," and spent an afternoon in getting together an army of fat caterpillars for

Jessica's roses. In a week's time the two ladies had ceased to speak to one another—whenever speech could be avoided—and took their meals separately.

They would undoubtedly have separated altogether and lived apart, but one day in July, when Jessica was hurrying to the nearest town to get her will altered, she was knocked over by a cart and killed. That stopped the war!

So Miss Blake, having inherited all her enemy's possessions, now lives in the old house alone; and her temper is a little more fiendish than before. So the gardener says, who is now called in to help. He looks after the lawn and the paths, and is permitted to work on Miss Blake's side of the garden. But Miss Blake herself works much harder, with more knowledge, and with more conscientiousness in the garden of her dead enemy. It is on that side that most of the money is spent. Miss Blake surveyed it one summer evening when it was at its best. "I think," she said, "that Jessica would be satisfied."

## XII

### HIS LIFE'S WORK

THE day had been spent very quietly. Now that the work of thirty years was finished, there was none of the triumph of completion and not even the sense of relief that is so often felt when a long task is at length laid aside. All through the house the tone was grave, almost mournful.

The old man in the spare hours that science had left him had found time to win the love of many. This change frightened them. They were anxious about him. What would he do with his mornings now? He had never been easy to interest; of politics he knew nothing; he thought of art generally as a pleasant parlour game for ladies; science and the ties of personal affection had been the only realities for him. And he was about to give up half his realities.

Yes, after the work would come the reward; they did not forget that. The book was not for the general reader, but it was certain of a magnificent reception from the learned. It was a book that had been long expected, for which the scientific world was impatient. Yes, for a time he would find occupation in seeing the book through the press; and then there would be the honour and glory; but what after that? He had been so inseparably linked with the preparation of that book. His health had been good or bad, proportionately as the work had gone well or ill. And so it happened that on the day that he announced the completion of the manuscript, side by side with the spoken words of cheerful congratulation went thoughts that were grave and apprehensive.

The little old gentleman himself took the whole affair with a certain dignity. He gave no sign of exultation or depression. In fact, he was scarcely conscious what his own feelings were, but he told himself that it was vulgar to expect and base to fear. After dinner he retired to the library instead of joining his

family in the drawing-room as usual, and took from the deepest of the drawers in the writing-table the precious manuscript, finished and ready for the printer.

The library was a large room, furnished in the simplest manner, and the simplicity was not an arranged simplicity. It was so, not in the least because he had tried to make it simple, but because he had never tried to make it elaborate. It was not the simplicity of a consciously severe taste, but the less pleasing result of pure chance. The incongruous presents of friends and relatives mingled with the essential apparatus of his studies. One wondered how anybody who wanted that big microscope could also want that violet wool mat or the "crystoleum" representation of a stout Naiad. He had never been guilty of adding one decoration to the room himself; but if people gave him things—well, it was very kind of them. It was Aunt Alice who had given him the pair of candlesticks that he now placed on the table beside his book. They were of white china, and bore views of some of the more tempting parts of Eastbourne. He had never desired them, but he used them with gratitude, and lighted the candles with a match from a box that bore the needless and insensate inscription: "Strike a light." He drew from among the sheets of his book a large diagram, full of minute detail, drawn with exquisite neatness, and peered closely at it. No: there was nothing to correct and nothing to add. To the best of his ability it was finished. He put down the sheet and leaned back in his chair.



He did not share the apprehensions of his relatives about his future. . . . If he pictured it at all, he saw himself busy with an interminable correspondence arising out of his book. Not all the letters that he would receive would be pleasant. There is a deal of jealousy about, even in the scientific world, but there would be the congratulatory messages as well. The effects of the book, as he imagined them, would last for years and years—all the years that were likely to be left him. The work of preparing new editions would alone be enough to keep him fully occupied. He reminded himself that it was vulgar to expect; but in a few minutes he was thinking out phrases of a suitable modesty to use in a reply to an illuminated address from a learned body. Why not? There was thirty years' work, unusual resources, great devotion, and—well, yes—some intelligence in the book. It deserved recognition, and with this comforting thought he grew drowsy, and nodded off to sleep in his chair.

In his sleep he had a dream. He was present at a great banquet, and he became aware that the banquet was given in his honour, and that he would shortly be expected to speak. He had no feeling of nervousness; in his hand were the notes of his speech already written out, but he felt absolutely independent of them. He was full of the happiest ideas, inspired with telling phrases, conscious of power. At last the moment came and amid loud applause he rose to his feet. He almost whispered the prefatory formula: this was

calculated. Managing his voice to perfection, he became more audible as he referred in well-chosen language to the interest which His Royal Highness had always shown in the work of the Society and to the honour that he conferred upon them by his presence. Then he paused and allowed the courteous applause to die away before getting to the real business of his speech. Raising his voice, and with a noble, sweeping gesture, he continued : " Wherever I gaze I see before me. . . . "

And at that moment the arm of the sleeper shot out and upset one of the white china candlesticks with the views upon them. It fell over on the pile of manuscript—the one copy of the great work, waiting for the printer. Awake? No, he sleeps on and on as though nothing had happened.

When you knock over a lighted candle, the candle (except in stories) is generally extinguished by the draught occasioned by the fall. That is what happened in this instance. The precious manuscript was absolutely uninjured, except for a spot of grease which was removed with a flat-iron and blotting-paper on the following day.

And many a time since that night has he longed (ah ! how ardently) that the flame had not failed in its work, that the child had been stillborn, that the book had never seen daylight.

Within a week of its publication, an elderly round-faced German brought out another book on the same subject, the result of forty years' study, of greater resources, and of a finer intelligence.

The junior partner in the firm which published the little old gentleman's book committed suicide, and the book (which was to have been the standard work on the subject for the next ten years) fell flat and unnoticed, and . . . the old gentleman immediately commenced another.

But this is a work which will require many more years yet, and he is no chicken.

### XIII

#### THE END OF THE STORY

THE two old ladies took a penny weekly paper, and took it very seriously. Its due delivery on Saturday morning by the village news vendor was a notable event. They fixed dates by remembering the week when *The Sunday Miscellany* failed to arrive; a local train had broken down, and the paper did not come till the following Monday, and the earth—so far as the old ladies knew it—was upside down. They did not glance hurriedly through it and then fling it aside. They read every word and commented sagely and soberly upon it.

Incidentally, it solved a problem for them. They had never varied from their strict upbringing, and they were forbidden by their consciences to read novels on Sunday. But they were not forbidden to read *The Sunday Miscellany*. Was it not, as its name implied, a Sunday paper? Was it not edited by a clergyman? And it possessed a serial story. They followed every instalment

with the keenest interest. They were critical, too, but rather of the characters in the story than of the author's work.

"Where he was wrong," Priscilla would say, speaking of the hero of *Percival's Atonement*, "was in going to London at all. The good bishop had warned him of the temptations which awaited him there. I cannot help feeling sorry for him, but so far as I can see from the last chapter this week, that poor boy's going to the bad."

"I hope not," said her sister, seriously. "It does look like it this week, but I pin my faith in that girl, Olive Lorraine. I feel convinced that we shall hear a good deal more of her, and I can see already that she is taking an interest in him. However, we shall see next week. It is unfortunate that every week the story stops just at some point where one wants to know more. But I suppose it is unavoidable."

The Editor would have been pleased if he had heard that. The serial stories in *The Sunday Miscellany* were innocuous and stereotyped. The lurid light which they cast on the high life of London was never too lurid. Virtue was always triumphant, and the end was always happy. But with the two old ladies these stories never missed their mark. When in the very first chapter Percival plunged into the dark pool to rescue the drowning kitten, and his father exclaimed: "It is all over; we shall never see him alive again!" it never occurred to the old ladies to ask how on earth the serial story was going to get on if the



hero died in the very first chapter. On the contrary, they took a pessimistic view of the situation. "Thank heaven, he's alive!" exclaimed Priscilla, as she anxiously attacked the next week's instalment.

"Was he injured?" asked her sister eagerly.

"He speaks of a strain on his nervous system, and says he is still very feeble."

That Percival was pretty feeble all the way through the story. But he had a sunny smile and curly hair. Even his London excesses could not quite destroy the old ladies' affectionate admiration for him.

*Percival's Atonement* was a very long serial. The clerical editor, who paid starvation prices in any case, had got a reduction on taking a quantity. At the end of six months Percival was safely engaged to that charming lady, Olive Lorraine; but "in the dim twilight" he had accidentally espied her kissing another man. He did not ask for any explanation. He merely became seriously ill and moaned a good deal. The Percivals of fiction are like that.

And just at this juncture Priscilla, the elder of the two sisters, also fell ill. It was a sudden illness, and ended in her death. She knew that she was dying.

One Sunday afternoon she had lain for a long time without speaking. Her sister had read out to her the chapters of the current number of *The Sunday Miscellany*, and sat by the fireside, waiting for a chance to do something else for Priscilla. In the silence, the clock seemed to tick laboriously, as if the quiet of the room had nearly overwhelmed it.

"I cannot believe," said Priscilla at last, "that Olive Lorraine was guilty. It seems so unlike her. In the twilight a man might very easily make a mistake—it was probably some other girl."

"Or," said her sister, "the man may turn out to have been her brother or her father."

"It is, perhaps, a pity that Percival did not think of these things. I should have liked to have known how the story ended before I died."

"Nonsense!" said her sister. "You're much better. Anybody can see that."

Priscilla shook her head. That night she got little sleep; her mind was much worried about Olive Lorraine and Percival. To the sick woman these absurd characters out of a stupid story had become intensely real. She babbled of them at times when she was light-headed.

And her sister wrote a letter to the author of *Percival's Atonement*, and got a reply of a favourable character by return of post. It was a quite unusually good-natured author.

The sister went to Priscilla in triumph. "I thought, my dear, that your anxiety about Olive and Percival was perhaps making your recovery rather slower than it should be."

"Yes," said Priscilla; "if I only knew that they were safely through this trouble, I feel that my mind would be easier."

"I have taken rather a liberty, Priscilla. I have written to the author of the story, explaining the circumstances, and I have had a most kind reply

from him. He sends me some long slips of paper on which the rest of the story is printed."

"It is kind of him and of you," said Priscilla, "very kind." She seemed to hesitate.

"Would you like me to read them out to you now?"

"No," said Priscilla, firmly. "It is very kind of you both, but I must not take advantage of it. It would be irregular. It would even be a little dishonourable. To my mind it seems very much like cheating at 'Patience.' You are not offended?"

"No, dear. Of course not."

"And you see," Priscilla added, "I shall know the end of all the stories so soon now."

## XIV

### THE ARTISTIC SUCCESS

#### (*Monodrama*)

#### ACT I

*The scene is a garden, old-fashioned, with high yew hedges. In one of the shaded walks Percival Joye Smith, aged eight, paces to and fro, lost in thought. He is attired in pale green plush and frills, surmounted by a foolish beef-eater hat. He has a bad loose mouth, no chin, splendid eyes, and a roomy head of queer shape. He speaks:*

YES, if we are to be strictly accurate, I have thrown the cat on the fire, stolen the money of my governess, and told three large but unsuccessful lies. My governess is perhaps at this moment

reporting my offences to mamma. If not, she is but waiting for the return of my father, in order to appeal to the sterner tribunal. It is time that I looked out for myself.

Flight? I think not. I am aware that in books about boys one runs away, and has ideas about going to sea, and is in other respects very absurd. It may even be that such things sometimes happen. But not in the case of a thoughtful and observant boy with a sentimental mother. He knows something better, and he dislikes adventure, as a rule, and he prefers to take his meals regularly.

Remorse? That is very good if it is done on a large scale, and includes the refusal of food and sleep, and is accompanied by floods of tears, and lasts for days. But all this is very trying, and tends to lessen one's self-respect. It will be a better plan to say something.

Whenever I say something, mamma writes it down in a little book, and puts the date to it. If there are visitors here and I say something that attracts a little attention, I can do what I like with mamma afterwards. My words speak louder than my actions; that is fortunate, for I find words comparatively easy. Before I try to explain to mamma that I was holding the cat up to the window so that it could see out, and that it dropped on the fire accidentally, and that I took the money to give to the missionaries, and that the lies were not real lies, but statements made in joke—before I proceed to these explanations, I



should certainly say something, something that will give them colour and probability. I think, on the whole, I could not do better than go into the drawing-room with a grave face and upturned eyes and ask mamma if the stars are God's daisy-chain.

[*He does so.*]

ACT II

*The scene is a third-floor bed-sitting room in Doughty Street. It is furnished exactly like a third-floor bed-sitting room in Doughty Street. In it sits Percival Joye Smith, aged twenty-five. He wears a shabby tweed suit of a large pattern. He looks dirty, intemperate and partially starved. He smokes cigarettes—his fingers are stained with them—and looks through his letters received by the second post. He speaks:*

So the governor has found it out and stopped it, and the mater ain't to send me any more money. She will continue to write. . . . Plucky lot of good that is without the cash.

I never asked to be born into this beast of a world. It was their look-out. But if they're going to shirk their responsibilities—and I own that the mater has hung on as long as she could—I suppose I must look out for myself. And it's not so easy to look out for oneself when one has been expelled from two schools, sent down from Oxford, has lost one's character, and been abandoned by one's friends.

I could dig, but I won't; I am not in the least ashamed to beg, but I have no luck, and I should have a cart-load of Mendicity Societies down on me in no time. At the first glance it seems that

all means of livelihood are closed to me. I have still a hundred of the money the governor sent me to pay my Oxford bills, when he cut me off, but even with that little capital to invest I see no occupation for me which would be remunerative and pleasing.

*[He smokes two cigarettes, drinks a little gin and water, and resumes:]*

There are just two things that seem to me to be left for a man of spotted character. I might join a mission, and preach; or I might write a great book. In my youth, and since then, I have found the utility of saying things; it is only a question of saying things again, but to the sentimental mother-hearted public this time.

Yes, I will write a work of genius.

*[He does so.]*

ACT III

*The scene is a small flat in Davies Street, W. It is a dull November afternoon, and the room seen is lit with wax candles, free from the "rose shades" so dear to the fashionable writers of Halfpenny Home Blitherings. The room is furnished with exquisite severity, and is one of the few rooms in the West of London at the time that are not overcrowded with furniture. It is unsullied by bamboo, or the "portiére," or the imitation Chippendale table for the exhibit of three-and-sixpenny silver boxes and ornaments. Percival Joye Smith, correctly dressed, aged thirty, sits at the writing-table. He speaks:*

So here—and at my cottage at Sunning—I have everything I want; and five years ago I

had nothing but debts and a bad reputation. Then I starved; and now almost my only source of anxiety is my waist-measurement. Then I was but Smith; and now I am Percival Joye, the author of *Stay With Me* and several other popular novels.

Yes, several other popular novels. That was a beastly thing in the *Critical Review* about that. The old parrot cry of excessive production—spite in the guise of kindness. Oh, damn the thing! It's the penalty of artistic success, and one must put up with it.

It's so good for one—success. To be thought well of, without having to do much to deserve it, makes one moral. I shall write to my father and mother and say that I forgive them, though they never understood me.

[*He does so.*]

#### ACT IV

*The scene is as in Act II.; the time is three o'clock on a summer morning; the dawn comes through a green blind and lights the shabby narrow bed; on it, clad in bright blue pyjamas, lies Percival Joye Smith, aged forty. He is bald, unshaven, wide-awake and tremulous. Beside him, on a wicker-seated chair, are a medicine-bottle, a glass, a stump of candle in a painted china candlestick, some letters, and a smouldering cigarette-end in a Jubilee ash-tray. He speaks:*

POPULARITY! Money! Light come and light go, with both of them. The fashions change. Oh, goodness. Yes. We are wearing our stories

rather longer this season. Selling a good deal of adventure just now. Sin and epigrams are quite out; they are overdone. Some of the smart people are in favour of the simple pagan. Percival Joye? Oh, never asked for nowadays.

It was a quick fire, but it's blazed quite out, dead out.

*[He takes up the letters, and grins.]*

They're all so damned polite. Porter regrets exceedingly that he has no work to offer worthy of my attention; Simpson thinks that to put me on to reviewing would be to cut wood with a razor; Wilton thanks me most cordially for my kind offer, but fears he has no vacancy at present. All alike. They know I'm done.

My own fault? Wickedness? Any amount. Extravagant living? Of course. Add to it all the rest of the purulent mess that goes to make up an artist of my type. But don't forget the kind of world it is. A fine world for tailors!

*[He pours from the bottle and drinks.]*

Three doses instead of one. So when my landlady comes to turn me out of this palace of luxury to-morrow, she'll be disappointed. After all, one can die.

*[He does so.]*



## LINDA

MY elder brother, Lorrimer, married ten years ago the daughter of a tenant farmer. I was at that time a boy at school, already interested in the work which has since made me fairly well known, and I took very little interest in Lorrimer or my sister-in-law. From time to time I saw her, of course, when I paid brief visits to their farm in Dorsetshire during the holidays. But I did not greatly enjoy these visits. Lorrimer seemed to me to become daily more morose and taciturn. His wife had the mind of a heavy peasant, deeply interested in her farm and in little else, and only redeemed from the commonplace by her face. I have heard men speak of her as being very beautiful and as being hideous. Already an artist, I saw the point of it all at once: her eyes were not quite human. Sometimes when she was angry with a servant over some trivial piece of neglect, they looked like the eyes of a devil. She was exceedingly superstitious and had little education.

Our guardian had the good sense to send me to Paris to complete my art education, and one snowy March I was recalled suddenly from Paris to his death-bed. I was at this time twenty-two years of age, and of course the technical guardianship had ceased. Accounts had been rendered, Lorrimer had taken his share of my father's small

fortune and I had taken mine. But we both felt a great regard for this uncle who, during so many years, had been in the place of a father to us. I found Lorrimer at the house when I arrived, and learned then, for the first time, that our uncle had strongly disapproved of his marriage. He spoke of it in the partially conscious moments which preceded his end, and he said some queer things. I heard little, because Lorrimer asked me to go out. After my guardian's death Lorrimer returned to his farm and I to my studies in Paris. A few months later I had a brief letter from Lorrimer announcing the death of his wife. He asked me, and, indeed, urged me not to return to England for her funeral, and he added that she would not be buried in consecrated ground. Of the details of her death he said nothing, and I have heard nothing to this day. That was five years ago, and from that time until this last winter I saw nothing of my brother. Our tastes were widely different—we drifted apart.

During those five years I made great progress and a considerable sum of money. After my first Academy success I never wanted commissions. I had sitters all the year round all the day while the light lasted. I worked very hard, and, possibly, a little too hard. Of my engagement with Lady Adela I will say nothing, except that it came about while I was painting her portrait, and that the engagement was broken off in consequence of the circumstances I am about to relate.

It was then one day last winter that a letter

was brought to me in my studio in Tite Street from my brother Lorrimer. He complained slightly of his health, and said that his nerves had gone all wrong. He complained that there were some curious matters on which he wished to take advice, and that he had no one to whom he could speak on those subjects. He urged me to come down and to stay for some time. If there were no room in the farmhouse that suited me for my painting he would have a studio built for me. This was put in his usual formal and business-like language, but there was a brief postscript—"For Heaven's sake come soon!" The letter puzzled me. Lorrimer, as I knew him, had always been a remarkably independent man, reserved, taking no one into his confidence, resenting interference. His manner towards me had been slightly patronizing, and his attitude towards my painting frankly contemptuous. This letter was of a man disturbed, seeking help, ready to make any concessions.

As I have already said, I had been working far too hard, and wanted a rest. During the last year I had made twenty times the sum that I had spent. There was no reason why I should not take a holiday. The country around my brother's place is very beautiful. If I did work there at all, I thought it might amuse me to drop portraits for a while and to take up with my first love—landscape. There had never been any affection between Lorrimer and myself, but neither had there been any quarrel; there was just the steady and unsentimental family tie. I wrote to him

briefly that I would come on the following day, and I hoped he had, or could get, some shooting for me. I told him that I should do little or no work, and he need not bother about a studio for me. I added: "Your letter leaves me quite in the dark, and I can't make out what the deuce is the matter with you. Why don't you see a doctor if you're ill?"

It was a tedious journey down. One gets off the main line on to an insignificant local branch. People on the platform stare at the stranger and know when he comes from London. In order to be certain where he is going, they read with great care and no sense of shame the labels on his luggage. There are frowsy little refreshment rooms, tended by frowsy old women, who could never at any period of their past have been barmaids, and you can never get anything that you want. If you turn in despair from these homes of the fly-blown bun and the doubtful milk, to the platforms, you may amuse yourself by noting that the further one gets from civilization, the greater is the importance of the railway porter. Some of them quite resent being sworn at. I got out at the least important station on this unimportant line, and as I gave up my ticket, asked the man if Mr Estcourt was waiting for me.

"If," said the man slowly, "you mean Mr Lorrimer Estcourt, of the Dyke Farm, he is outside in his dog-cart."

"What's the sense of talking like that, you



fool?" I asked. "Have you got twenty different Estcourts about here?"

"No," he replied gravely, "we have not, and I don't know that we want them."

I explained to him that I was not interested in what he wanted or didn't want, and that he could go to the devil. He mumbled some angry reply as I went out of the station. Lorrimer leant down from the dog-cart and shook hands with me impassively. He is a big man, with a stern, thin-lipped, clean-shaven face. I noted that his hair had gone very grey, though at this time he was not more than thirty-six years of age. He shouted a direction that my luggage was to come up in the farm cart that stood just behind, bid me rather impatiently to climb up, and brought his whip sharply across his mare's shoulder. There was no necessity to have touched her at all, and, as she happened to be a good one, she resented it. Once outside the station yard, we went like the wind. So far as driving was concerned, his nerves seemed to me to be right enough. The road got worse and worse, and the cart jolted and swayed.

"Steady, you idiot!" I shouted to him. "I don't want my neck broken."

"All right," he said. He pulled the mare in, spoke to her and quieted her. Then he turned to me. "If this makes you nervous," he said, "I'd better turn round and drive you back. A man who is easily frightened wouldn't be of much use to me at Dyke Farm just now."

"When a man drives like a fool, I suppose it's always a consolation to call the man a funk who tells him so. You can go on to your farm, and I'll promise you one thing — when I am frightened I will tell you."

He became more civil at once. He said that was better. As for the driving, he had merely amused himself by trying to take a rise out of a Londoner. His house was six miles from the station, and for the rest of the way we chatted amicably enough. He told me that he was his own bailiff and his own housekeeper—managed the farm like a man and the house like a woman. He said that hard work suited him.

"You must find it pretty lonely," I said.

"I do," he answered. "Lately I have been wishing that I could find it still lonelier."

"Look here," I said, "do you mind telling me plainly what on earth is the matter?"

"You shall see for yourself," he said.

The farmhouse had begun by being a couple of cottages and two or three considerable additions had been made to it at different times; consequently, the internal architecture was somewhat puzzling. The hall and two of the living rooms were fairly large, but the rooms upstairs were small and detestably arranged. Often one room opened into another and sometimes into two or three others. The floor was of different heights, and one was always going up or down a step or two. Three staircases in different parts of the house led from the ground floor to the upper storey. The old

moss-grown tiles of the roof were pleasing, and the whole place was rather a picturesque jumble. But we only stopped in the house for the time of a whisky-and-soda. Lorrimer took me round the garden almost immediately. It was a walled garden and good as only an old garden can be. Lorrimer was fond of it. His spirits seemed to improve, and at the moment I could find nothing abnormal in him. The farm cart, with my luggage, lumbered slowly up, and presently a gong inside the house rang loudly.

"Ah!" said Lorrimer, pulling out his watch, "time to dress. I'll show you your room if you like."

My room consisted really of two rooms, opening into one another. They seemed comfortable enough, and there were beautiful views from the windows of both of them. Lorrimer left me, and I began, in a leisurely way, to dress for dinner. As I was dressing I heard a queer little laugh coming apparently from one of the upper rooms, in the passage. I took little notice of it at first; I supposed it was due to one of the neat and rosy-cheeked maids who were busy about the house. Then I heard it again, and this time it puzzled me. I knew that laugh, knew it perfectly well, but could not place it. Then, suddenly, it came to me. It was exactly like the laugh of my sister-in-law who had died in this house. It struck me as a queer coincidence.

Naturally enough, I blundered on coming downstairs and first opened the door of the dining-room.

I noticed that the table was laid for three people, and supposed that Lorrimer had asked some neighbour to meet me, possibly a man over whose land I was to shoot. One of the maids directed me to the drawing-room, and I went in. At one end of the room a log fire flickered and hissed, and the smell of the wood was pleasant. The room was lit by two large ground-glass lamps, relics of my dead sister-in-law's execrable taste. I had at once the feeling that I was not alone in the room, and almost instantly a girl who had been kneeling on the rug in front of the fire got up and came towards me with hands outstretched.

Her age seemed to be about sixteen or seventeen. She had red hair, perhaps the most perfect red that I have ever seen. Her face was beautiful. Her eyes were large and grey, but there was something queer about those eyes. I noticed it immediately. She was dressed in the simplest manner in white. As she came towards me she gave that little laugh which I had heard upstairs. And then I knew what was strange in her eyes. They also at moments did not look quite human.

"You look surprised," she said. "Did not Mr Estcourt tell you that I should be here? I am Linda, you know." Linda was the name of my dead sister-in-law. The name, the laugh, the eyes—all suggested that this was the daughter of Linda Estcourt. But this was a girl of sixteen or seventeen, and my brother's marriage had taken place only nine years before. Besides, she spoke of him as "Mr Estcourt." I was making some



amiable and some more or less confused reply when Lorrimer entered.

"Ah!" he said. "I see you have already made Miss Marston's acquaintance. I had hoped to be in time to introduce you."

We began to chat about my journey down, the beauty of the country, all sorts of commonplace things. I was struck greatly by her air, at once mysterious and contemptuous. It irritated, and yet it fascinated me. At dinner she said laughingly that it would really be rather confusing now; there would be two Mr Estcourts — Mr Lorrimer Estcourt and Mr Hubert Estcourt. She would have to think of some way of making a distinction.

"I think," she said, turning to my brother, "I shall go on calling you Mr Estcourt, and I shall call your brother Hubert."

I said that I should be greatly flattered, and her grey eyes showed me that I had no need to be. From this time onward she called me Hubert, as though she had known me and despised me all my life. I noticed that two or three times at dinner she seemed to fall into fits of abstraction, in which she was hardly conscious that one had spoken to her; and I noticed, moreover, that these fits of abstraction irritated my brother immensely. She rose at the end of dinner, and said she would see if the billiard-room was lit up. We could come and smoke in there as soon as we liked. I gave a sigh of relief as I closed the door behind her.

"At last!" I said. "Now, then, Lorrimer, perhaps you will tell me who this Miss Marston is?"

"Tell me who you think she is—no, don't. She is my dead wife's younger sister, younger by many years. Her father took the name of Marston shortly before his death. I am her guardian. My wife's dying words were occupied entirely with this sister, about whom she told me much that would seem to you strange beyond belief; and at the time she gave me injunctions, wrested promises from me which, under certain conditions, I shall have to carry out. The conditions may arise; I think they will. I don't mind saying that I'm afraid they will."

"Why does she bear her sister's name? Why does she address you as 'Mr Estcourt'? And why do you address her as 'Miss Marston,' when she introduces herself to me simply as 'Linda'?"

"Her mother had three daughters. The eldest was called Linda. When she died, the second, who was my wife, took that name. When my wife died the name descended to the third of them. There has always been a Linda in the family. The rest is simply Miss Marston's own whim. She has several."

"Who chaperons her here?" I asked.

He smiled. "That question is typical of you. She is little more than a child, and she has an almost excessively respectable governess living here to look after her. Only I can't be bothered

with the governess at dinner quite every night. Does that satisfy you?"

"No; well, perhaps yes. I suppose so."

"It may make your rigid mind a little easier if I tell you—and it is the truth—that if I had my own way I would turn Miss Marston out of this house to-morrow, and that I would never set eyes on her again; that I have a horror of her, and she has a contempt of me."

"And of most other people, I fancy. Well, anyhow, what's the trouble?"

"I haven't the time to tell you a long story now; she will be waiting for us. Besides, you would merely laugh at me. You have not yet seen for yourself. What would you say if I told you of a compact made years and years ago with some power of evil, and that this girl was concerned in the fulfilment of it?"

"What should I say? Very little. I should get a couple of doctors to sign you up at once."

"Naturally. You would think me mad. Well, wait here for a few weeks, and see what you make of things. In the meantime, come along to the billiard-room."

The billiard-room was an addition that Lorrimer himself had made to the house. We found Linda crouched on the rug in front of the blazing fire; I soon found that this was a favourite attitude with her. Her coffee cup was balanced on her knees. Her eyes stared into the flames. She did not seem to notice our entrance.

"Miss Marston," said my brother. There was

a shade of annoyance in his voice. She looked up at him with a disdainful smile. "Do you care to give Hubert a game?" he asked.

"Not yet. I want to watch a game first. You two play, and I'll mark."

"What am I to give you, Lorrimer?" I asked. "Thirty?" He was not even a moderate player. I had always been able to give him at least that.

"You had better play even," said Linda. "And I think you will be beaten, Hubert."

I looked at Lorrimer in astonishment. "Very well, Miss Marston," he said, as he took down his cue. I could only suppose that during the last few years his play had improved considerably. And even then I did not see why Linda had interfered. How on earth could she know what my game was like?

"This is your evening," I said to Lorrimer after his first outrageous fluke.

"It would seem so," he answered, and fluked again. And this went on. His game had not improved; he did the wrong things and did them badly, and they turned out all right. Now and again I heard Linda's brief laugh, and looked up at her. Her eyes seemed to have power to coax a lagging ball into a pocket; one had a curious feeling that she was controlling the game. I did my best with all the luck dead against me. It was a close finish, but I was beaten, as Linda said I should be.

Linda would not play. She said she was tired,



and suddenly she looked tired. The light went out of her eyes. She lit a cigarette, and went back to her place on the rug before the fire. Lorrimer talked about his farm with me. The quiet of the place seemed almost ghastly to a man who was used to London. Presently Linda got up to go to bed. "Good-night, Mr Estcourt," she said, as she shook hands with my brother. Then she turned to me: "Good-night, Hubert. You shouldn't quarrel with ticket-collectors about nothing. It's silly, isn't it?" She kissed me on the cheek, and ran off laughing. She left me astounded by her words and insulted by her kiss.

Lorrimer turned out the lights over the billiard-table, and we sat down again by the fire.

"What did you think of that game?" he asked.

"It was remarkable."

"Nothing more?"

"I never saw a game like it before. But there was nothing impossible about it."

"Very well. And did you have a row with that ticket-collector?"

"Not a row exactly. He annoyed me, and I may have called him a fool. I suppose you overheard and told her about it."

"I could not have overheard. I was outside the station buildings and you were on the further platform."

"Yes, that's true. It's a queer coincidence."

"I tried that, too, at first—the belief that things were remarkable, but not impossible, and that

queer coincidences happen. Personally I can't keep it up any more."

"Look here," I said. "We may as well go to the point at once. Why do you want me here? Why did you send for me?"

"Suppose I said that I wanted you to marry Miss Marston?"

"I thought that at the time of my engagement with Adela I wrote and gave you the news."

"You did. The artistic temperament does sometimes do a brilliant business thing for itself. Lady Adela Marys—"

"We won't discuss her."

"Then suppose we discuss you. You are half in love with Linda already."

"Very well," I said, "let us carry the supposition a little further. Suppose that I or anybody else was entirely in love with her, what on earth would be the use? The one thing that one can feel absolutely certain about in her is that she has an amused contempt for the rest of her species, male and female. It's not affected, it's perfectly genuine. Even if I wished to marry her, she would not look at me."

"Really?" said Lorrimer, with a sneer. "She seemed fond enough of you when she said good-night."

"That," I said meditatively, "was the cleverest kiss that ever was kissed. It finished what the interchange of Christian names began. It settled the situation exactly—that I was the fool of a

brother, and she the good-natured, though contemptuous sister."

"You needn't look at it like that. It is important, exceedingly important that she should be married."

"Marry her yourself—it won't be legal in this country, but it will in others, and I don't know that it matters."

"No, I don't know that it matters. On the day I wrote to you I did ask her to be my wife. She replied that it was disagreeable to have to speak of such things, and that they need not be allowed to come to the surface again, but that, as a matter of fact, *au fond* we hated one another. It was true. I do hate her. What I do for her is for my dead wife's sake, for the promises I made, and, perhaps, a little for common humanity. There are others who would marry her. The man whose pheasants you will be shooting next week would give his soul for her cheerfully, and it's no use. Very likely it will be of no use in your case."

"What was the story that you had not time to tell me after dinner?"

The door opened, and a servant brought in the decanters and soda-water and arranged them on the table by Lorrimer's side. He did not speak until the servant had gone out of the room, and then he seemed to be talking almost more to himself than to me.

"At night, when one wakes up in the small hours, after a bad dream or hearing some sudden

noise in the house, one believes things of which one is a little ashamed next morning."

He paused, and then leant forward, addressing me directly. "Look here; I'll say it in a few words. You won't believe it, and that doesn't matter a tinker's curse to me. You'll believe it a little later if you stop here. Generations ago, in the time of the witches, a woman who was to have been burned as a witch escaped miraculously from the hands of the officers. It was said that she had a compact with the devil; that at some future time he should take a living maiden of her line. Death and marriage are the two ways of safety for any woman of that family. The compact has not yet been carried out, and Linda is the last of the line. She bears the signs of which my wife told me. One by one I watch them coming out in her. Her power over inanimate objects, her mysterious knowledge of things which have happened elsewhere, the terror which all animals have of her. A year or two ago she was always about the farm on the best of terms with every dog and horse in the place. Now they will not let her come near them. Well, it is my business to save Linda. I have given my promise. I wish her to be married. If that is not possible, and the moment arrives, I must kill her."

"Why talk like a fool?" I said. "Come and live in London for a week. It strikes me that both Linda and yourself might perhaps be benefited by being put into the hands of a specialist.



In any case, don't tell these fairy stories to a sane man like myself."

"Very well," he said, getting up. "I must be going to bed. I am out on the farm before six every morning, and I shall probably have breakfasted before you are up. Miss Marston and Mrs Dennison—that's her old governess—breakfast at nine. You can join them if you like, or breakfast by yourself later."

Long after my brother had gone to bed I sat in the billiard-room thinking the thing over, angry with myself, and, indeed, ashamed, that I could not disbelieve quite as certainly as I wished. At breakfast next morning I asked Linda to sit to me for her portrait, and she consented. We found a room with a good light. Mrs Dennison remained with us during the sitting.

This went on for days. The portrait was a failure. I have the best of the several attempts that I made still. The painting's all right. But the likeness is not there; there is something missing in the eyes. I saw a great deal of Linda, and I came at last to this conclusion, that I had no explanation whatever of the powers which she undoubtedly possessed. I also learned that she herself was well acquainted with the story of her house. She alluded to the fact that neither of her sisters was buried in consecrated ground; no woman of her family would ever be.

"And you?" I asked.

"I am not sure that I shall be buried at all. To me strange things will happen."

I had letters occasionally from Lady Adela. I was glad to see that she was getting tired of the whole thing. My conduct had not been so calculating and ignoble as Lorrimer had supposed. She was a very beautiful woman. It was easy enough to suppose that one was in love with her—until one happened to fall in love. I determined to go to London to see Lady Adela, and to give her the chance, which I was sure she wanted, to throw me over. I promised Lorrimer that I would only be away for one night. Lady Adela missed her appointment with me at her mother's house, and left a note of excuse. Something serious had happened, I believe, with regard to a dress that she was to wear that night. But, really, I do not remember what her excuse was. I went back to my rooms in Tite Street, and there I found a telegram from Mrs Dennison. It told me in plain language, and with due regard to the fact that each word cost a halfpenny, that my brother, in a fit of madness, had murdered Linda Marston and taken his own life. I got back to my brother's farm late that night.

The evidence at the inquest was simple enough. Linda had three rooms, opening into one another, the one furthest from the passage being her bedroom. At the time of the murder Mrs Dennison was in the second room, reading, and Linda was playing the piano in the room which opened into the passage. Mrs Dennison heard the music stop suddenly. Linda was whimsical in her playing, as in everything else. There was a pause, during

which the governess was absorbed in her book. Then she heard in the next room Lorrimer say distinctly: "It is all right, Linda. I have come to save you." This was followed by three shots in succession. Mrs Dennison rushed in and found the two lying dead. She was greatly affected at the inquest, and as few questions as possible were put to her.

Some time afterwards Mrs Dennison told me a thing which she did not mention at the inquest. Shortly after the music had stopped, and before Lorrimer entered the room, she had heard another voice, as though someone were speaking with Linda. This third voice, and Linda's own, were in low tones, and no words could be heard. I thought this over, and I remembered that Lorrimer fired three times, and that the third bullet was found in another part of the room.

Lady Adela was certainly quite right to give me up, which she did in a most tactful and sympathetic letter.

## THE GOOD NAME

THERE was once a girl of whom her friends—that is to say her enemies—used to observe: “You never would have thought it to look at her.”

Nor would you. She had the wondering and affectionate eyes of a child. There was not a vestige of cruelty in her pretty mouth. If there was any vanity in the way she did her brown hair it was the vanity that finds its best means in simplicity. Her voice was low and sympathetic. Her general appearance suggested, if anything, an unusual degree of shyness. The girl had left a trail of broken hearts behind her. She had done all that was mad, and wicked, and shameless, and delightful. But certainly you would never have thought it if you had looked at her. She was just twenty-three when she first of all heard of the flower which is called the flower of the good name. Everybody about her believed in the existence of that flower, chiefly, perhaps because no one had ever found it. It was to be found only by the most virtuous among women. A few unkind words and their chance was gone. The most inconsiderable flirtation and you would never find the white flower. This girl never even looked for it. Her girl friends made a point of going to look for it every Sunday. Uncharitable people said that they did this in order to improve their reputa-



tions. It was a way of saying that they conscientiously believed that they had a chance.

But the shameless girl never went to look for it at all. Early on a summer morning she went for a bathe. As she came back from the seashore with her wet hair hanging down her back and not looking quite so nice as usual, she was conscious that she had swum far and that the morning was hot, and that it would be no bad thing to sit down and rest. Her seat was a boulder of granite. She sat there and whistled a tune—which was disgraceful and boylike—and looked across the meadow before her. And there in the meadow she found it—a white flower, shaped like a seven-rayed star, each petal edged with gold and a heart of gold in the centre. She gave an exclamation of surprise, which was slightly vulgar. Then she bent down and examined the flower more closely. Then she picked it and kissed it.

What was she to do next? The first thing was to take that flower to some man of science and learning and to get its genuineness fully established. Then she would go and visit all those cats, who, as she was well aware, were in the habit of saying things about her, and she would wear that flower conspicuously so that they might see it. But she would talk only of the weather so that they might think that her finding of the flower was to her but a trifle which she had always known must happen one day or another.

Then she changed her mind. No good woman could have changed her mind with greater rapidity

than did this sinful little vixen. No, it was no good. All the learning and science affidavits and sworn statements in the world would never have convinced anybody that she had found the white flower. Really, she could hardly believe it herself. She looked back over her past—she was only twenty-three, but she had quite a good deal of past. As she thought out its tempestuous incidents there were times when she smiled, and times when her eyes grew sad, and once when she closed them altogether. It was beyond belief. It could not be true that she had found the white flower. Well, there it was in her hand, and the gold of its pollen had stained her red lips.

Then the thought came to her that perhaps after all she had found this flower not by virtue of her past but by virtue of her future; not for what she was, but for what she was to become. She took the flower home and pressed it between the leaves of a missal, and said nothing whatever about it. But she was going to be a little saint now, and on this point she did not change her mind.

Years afterwards, her friends—that is to say her enemies—used to observe: "Yes, but you should have known her as she used to be." Such testimony, and here and there a little gratitude and her consciousness of her goodness were all the rewards that her goodness ever got. And of these, the last was most satisfying. There came an evening when she had watched the sun setting to music and felt too unearthly for anything. That evening she went to her missal and took out the flower and

carried it with her to a man of great learning. He immediately fired three Latin words right into the middle of it and one of these words was "vulgaris." "It has sometimes been confused," he added, "with the flower of the good name."

"Really?" said the saint, with an intelligent smile, "give a woman a good name and she may as well hang herself."

"I beg pardon?" said the man of learning coldly.

She did not repeat the statement. She went away to find some lonely and appropriate spot where she might cry.

## THREE DIALOGUES

### BIRTH

[The scene is the drawing-room in Mrs Hanford Blake's house in Mayfair. The time is the afternoon, three days after the birth of Alicia Theodora Eltham Gervis, daughter of the Hon. Rupert Gervis and Theodora, his wife, and granddaughter of Mrs Hanford Blake.]

THE room is large and fussy. There are only two men in it: Mr Arthur Agger, a sexagenarian, and Rupert Gervis. They talk apart: at least Mr Agger talks, and the young father listens as well as can be expected under the circumstances. Around Mrs Hanford Blake is gathered a pretty feminine group: Mrs Agger, who is dark-eyed, red-lipped, and thirty years younger than her husband: Mrs and Miss Sturt, who are both doing good work, but are less plain than one would have supposed, and Mrs Hector K. Girder, who is just too perfectly sweet for words. Lady Rothen is upstairs inspecting Alicia Theodora Eltham Gervis, but she will be down directly. Do wait.

There is a sound of talk and tea-cups. Outside in the hall there is a gentle rain of cards of congratulation and inquiry. The muffled knocker is busy, and from time to time one hears the soft thud of a sample packet of babies' food in the letter-box.



MRS BLAKE: Yes, Theo is wonderful. The doctor is more than satisfied. But that does not prevent me from taking every possible precaution.

THE GROUP: How right! How wise!

MRS BLAKE: I have to exercise my authority a little. What is the use of being a grandmother if one doesn't? Now, there's Rupert.

MRS STURT: Ah, yes!

MRS BLAKE: We are all so fond of him, but really at such times the father is a perfect nuisance in the house. But for me he would be in and out of Theo's room all day; I have had to make the strictest rules about it. And it's so bad for him too; he goes nowhere and does nothing but mope about the house; his only occupation is to walk to Regent Street once a day to buy a ring or bangle for Theo.

MRS GIRDER: Now, I call that just too sweet. Why, when my little girl was born Hector meant well, but he didn't know anything but Guava jelly. The supply of Guava jelly got so far ahead of the demand that I had to speak about it.

MRS AGGER: Now really, Nancy!

MRS GIRDER: I'm telling you the truth. Hector's like that, and so are many men. When one is ill they get bubbles in their think-tanks, and Guava on the brain. And you've got to put up with it.

MISS STURT: I don't know whether Mr Gervis wants an occupation, Mrs Blake; but if he does I am sure we could find him one. Mamma and I are trying to get up a—

MRS AGGER: Now, Mrs Blake, you really must tell us more about that little angel upstairs. Eight pounds, you said.

MRS BLAKE: And a half.

MRS AGGER: Oh, that's splendid! I've (*looking defiant and speaking rapidly*) got no babies of my own, you know, but I adore them and know all about them. I think the names you have chosen are quite perfect, aren't they, Nancy?

MRS GIRDER: Why, yes. It's most important to get a child named properly. Now Hector wanted to call our little girl Georgina Washington, but I wouldn't have it. I'm patriotic, but there is a limit. "Why, what do you mean?" I said. "That's unlucky. Suppose she took it from the name and couldn't tell a lie. How would she get on? It's as bad as making her colour-blind." So we called her Irene Veronica.

MRS AGGER: Nancy, you are altogether beyond.

MRS STURT: Personally, I have always set my face against even the ordinary social—

[*At this moment Lady Rothen enters in a state of ecstasy, hands clasped, eyes bright, triumphant.*]

LADY ROTHEN: Seen it! Held it! Kissed it!

MRS BLAKE: *Her*. Not it.

LADY ROTHEN: Of course. Poor mite. She's a little woman. Kissed her—*Her*—HER!

MRS GIRDER: Now, Lady Rothen, you mustn't be so proud; we've all been up, and we've all taken her.

LADY ROTHEN (*with supreme dignity*): But she didn't cry when I took her—HER.

MRS GIRDER: She only cried with me because she wanted my new hat. And I don't blame her. I nearly cried myself before I persuaded Hector that I couldn't live without it. That's a child with ideas. That's a child that will get on.

MISS STURT: I think I should care for hats too, if only I could put out of my mind the many toiling millions who never know what it is to have even the simplest—

ARTHUR AGGER (*aside to his wife*): I say, what the devil's the use of sticking here? Can't we go?

MRS AGGER: Oh, Arthur, I'm taking Nancy to Paquin's in the brougham. You can't come there; you had better take a taxi to your club.

ARTHUR AGGER: What? A taxi? Stuff and nonsense! I take the 'bus.

[*The Aggers and Mrs Girder go out. Rupert Gervis makes for the door, but is swept back again by a rolling tide of Sturt. They pin him in a corner and tell him all about a cottage-hospital. Lady Rothen becomes suddenly confidential in her manner.*]

LADY ROTHEN: Jane, I oughtn't to say it, I suppose, but I hate that woman.

MRS BLAKE: What? Mrs Girder?

LADY ROTHEN: Oh, no! She's a darling, in spite of her frivolity. She's a good wife and a good mother. It is Mrs Agger that I hate. That woman dishonours her sex.

MRS BLAKE: But, my dear, you surprise me. I have never heard a word against Mrs Agger—not the faintest breath of scandal.

LADY ROTHEN: I don't mean that. It's her marriage makes me furious. Her beauty even now is a joy to look at; she had youth, health, and the sweetest ways; she would have been a bride for a king among men—and she marries that thing. Do you mean to tell me that she or any woman could by any possibility love that disgusting brute?

MRS BLAKE: S-s-s-h! Really!

LADY ROTHEN: I can't help it. It makes my blood boil. Men of that type should be made to understand that with all their wealth there are some things that they can't buy. Women who marry them are traitors to their sex.

MRS BLAKE: Well, my dear, I don't know. He's not nice to look at, and his manners and customs are slightly—what shall I say?

LADY ROTHEN: Repulsive's a good word.

MRS BLAKE: Well, they certainly are not tempting. But everybody is agreed that he's the kindest of husbands; she spends money like water and has everything she wants.

LADY ROTHEN: Everything?

MRS BLAKE: Well, it's no good her breaking her heart about *that*. She is in many ways a most fortunate woman. And I don't know that we have any fair grounds for saying that she isn't fond of her husband. All women are not alike. Any sign of strength tells, and his big fortune is a sign of strength.

LADY ROTHEN: Or unscrupulousness.

MRS BLAKE: He's generous; she's grate-



ful. And how far is it from gratitude to love?

LADY ROTHEN: About as far as from the earth to the moon and back.

MRS BLAKE: Don't you believe the sentimentalists, my dear; or the cynics either. I've seen many such marriages arrange themselves very well indeed in practice. It ought to turn out all wrong, but in my experience it doesn't; and I'm an old woman now.

LADY ROTHEN: You? You're the youngest grandmother in London. We won't quarrel, Jane, but I warn you that if you are Alicia's grandmother I am her godmother, and I will never let her make a marriage like that.

MRS BLAKE: Well now, my dear, what sort of husband would you approve of for Alicia.

LADY ROTHEN (*unhesitatingly*): A soldier.

MRS BLAKE: I know you will think me sadly unromantic, but I cannot agree with you. We three women, you and Theo and I, have the child's happiness to consider, and what is superficially attractive is not always the most conducive to happiness in the long run. Your soldier might be very desirable in every other way, but there are the risks of his profession to be considered. Think of Alicia, left perhaps at the age of thirty, with a lifelong sorrow and loneliness. On the other hand if she married a capitalist—she need not necessarily take the oldest and ugliest—he would not be exposing himself to any such risks.

LADY ROTHEN : No, they generally take good care of themselves.

MRS BLAKE : There would be no fear that she might lose her husband before they had been married a year perhaps.

LADY ROTHEN : No fear ! You mean no hope.

MRS BLAKE (*rather warmly*) : Really I think you let your tongue run away with you. You cannot seriously mean—

LADY ROTHEN (*with equal warmth*) : I assure you that whatever you may think about it—

[*At this moment Rupert Gervis and Mrs and Miss Sturt come forward together.*]

RUPERT GERVIS : Well. What's all the quarrel about ?

[*Lady Rothen and Mrs Blake suddenly realize what the quarrel really is about.*]

LADY ROTHEN : Jane, if you tell him, I'll never speak to you again.

MRS BLAKE : I don't dream of telling him. It's nothing that concerns you, my dear Rupert ; at least not at present.

RUPERT : All right. Regular bag of mysteries this house is nowadays.

[*He goes to the door.*]

MRS BLAKE : You are not to go up to Theo.

RUPERT (*gloomily*) : All right. Wasn't going to. Only fetching my cheque-book.

MRS STURT : He has been kind enough to promise us a donation for one of our charities. You were more fortunate than I, Lady Rothen ; Alicia was asleep when I saw her.

LADY ROTHEN: Isn't she adorable!

MISS STURT: To think that there is a new little life come into the world!

LADY ROTHEN: That little bundle of flannel—how many hearts she may break!

MRS BLAKE: She may have an immense influence over men.

MISS STURT: She may change the map of Europe.

MRS STURT: She may alter our theory of the universe.

LADY ROTHEN: I wonder what she would say if she could know what lies before her. Here she is, and she doesn't know what is to happen to her. She was never asked; here she is—poor mite! and she has got to go through with it. Really I wonder what she would say.

[*The door opens, as Rupert returns, envelope in hand. From the upper storey of the house is heard, faintly in protest, the voice of Alicia Theodora Eltham Gervis.*]

A. T. E. GERVIS (*in the distance*): Yee-ow, yee-ow, yee-ow!

MRS BLAKE: Nothing wrong with her lungs, at any rate.

RUPERT (*handing the envelope to Mrs Sturt*): Here's that—er—

MRS STURT: Thank you so much. I always find it easy to get money from people who have just had a great joy or a great sorrow. I wonder why it is.

RUPERT: Reason upset, I suppose.

LADY ROTHEN: I expect he adores the child, doesn't he?

RUPERT: If I may be allowed an opinion, he doesn't.

ALL: What!

RUPERT: No, I'm not particularly fond of it. I'm naturally slow and I don't know it well enough. I shall get fond of it, but I can't manage the instantaneous enthusiasm and interest that you all can. You've settled its marriage already, haven't you?

LADY ROTHEN: There may have been something said.

MRS BLAKE: I didn't know you were listening.

RUPERT: Wasn't. Conjectured it. You've mapped out a career for her. You've settled whether she is to be buried or cremated, and how she ought to leave any property of which she may have a disposing power. The way of a woman with a baby astounds me, especially when it's somebody else's baby. How do you manage to fall in love instantaneously with a three-day-old infant who talks like this?

[*He opens the door.*]

A. T. E. GERVIS (*in the distance*): Yee-ow, yee-ow, yee-ow!

LADY ROTHEN: We are just going, if you would like to run up, Jane, to see that everything is all right.

MRS BLAKE: I confess that I didn't quite like the sound of that cry.

RUPERT: Nor did I.



MRS BLAKE: It sounded to me as if the child were in pain. I think I should like to reassure myself. But don't go.

LADY ROTHEN: Must, unfortunately.

*[Good-byes. Kiss-pecking. Mrs Blake goes up to the nursery. Rupert with almost indecent alacrity scoops Lady Rothen into her brougham, removes the two Sturts, who will walk, and closes the front door. He surveys the empty hall.]*

RUPERT: Coast clear? That's all right.

*[He slithers stealthily and rapidly up the stairs to Theo's room.]*

#### MARRIAGE

[The scene is a bleak hill surmounted by a ruined chapel, outside a provincial town. It is a clear day in spring, the air still and the sun shining. One can see the housetops and the church-spire in the valley below, and hear an inordinate sound of joyous bells. A man (Edward Hearne, to be precise) with a dead-beat face, a worn, blue serge suit—a briar pipe, which he is smoking too fast and biting too hard, an age of twenty-five years, and an artistic temperament, has climbed to the top of the hill in search of solitude; so also has a woman (Anna Larose, to be accurate) who has twenty years, was awake all last night and crying most of the time, and is beautiful on fire-and-darkness lines. As he turns the corner of the chapel he meets her, to the disgust of both. She really smiles, and he contorts his mouth with a similar purpose, but a different result. They shake hands.]

ANNA: What? You?

EDWARD: Y-yes. I suppose so.

ANNA: Do you mean to tell me that Mrs Gervis hasn't requested the pleasure of the assistance of Mr Hearne at the marriage of her daughter, Alicia Theodora Eltham—and all the rest of it?

EDWARD: Oh, yes, I was asked!

ANNA: But you surprise me. I've met you at their house so often, and it was always thought that you and Alicia were such good friends.

EDWARD: Very good friends.

ANNA: Then why aren't you there?

EDWARD: In case you meet any of them, and hear my name mentioned, I am at the present moment in London, whither I have been summoned by Messrs Agnew to settle about the sale of one of my pictures.

ANNA: But you are not in London.

EDWARD: If we are going to be accurate, neither have I sold a picture, neither am I likely to sell a picture, neither have Messrs Agnew ever heard of me, nor would it make the least difference to them if they had.

ANNA: What an unnecessarily elaborate fib!

EDWARD: Yes, I know it's not good. Men get so little practice.

ANNA: And the real reason why you are here instead of being in your place in the church is that the artistic temperament loathes the big social function.

EDWARD: The real reason why I am here is that I wanted to be alone.

ANNA (*not in the least angry, but recognizing that her self-respect requires that she shall not take this tamely*): I was just going on, in any case. It was not necessary to be insufferable.

EDWARD: I beg your pardon. I hardly know what I'm saying this morning. Do, please, stop.

ANNA: If I am to stop, it will perhaps occur to you that I also may wish to be alone.

EDWARD (*with a sigh*): All right; I'll go if you like. I hate the world this morning, and I think you know why. But I wish you would let me stay with you. Down in the street or in some infernal drawing-room I should be civil enough, and say the usual things about croquet and so on. But here we are a woman and a man out of the world, and you were one of her best friends, and—

ANNA: As you wish. Stop if you will. I'm horribly tired; can't you find somewhere where we can sit down.

EDWARD: Yes, you look tired. Will this do?  
[*He indicates a low flat tombstone. They sit down.*]

ANNA: That will do beautifully. What a view one gets from here! And the air's so soft and clear to-day.

EDWARD (*perfunctorily*): Yes.

ANNA: Oh, I know what you want to talk about, of course! But what is the use? The time's past. They're in the vestry by now, asking where they are to sign their names. If you loved Alicia, why didn't you tell her so? Why didn't you marry her?

EDWARD: Instead of leaving her to that brute.

ANNA: He is not a brute.

EDWARD: Oh, no! Excellent young man! Will be a baronet one of these days. I did not tell her because I loved her. There was never the ghost of a chance for me. While I said nothing I

could still hang on and hang on. If I had spoken, that would have ended everything at once. I was happy enough; I never expected her to care about me; I was content as long as she did not care about some other man.

ANNA: Even if she had cared about you, you could not have—well, as we're speaking plainly, you know her people would never have permitted it.

EDWARD: If she had cared for me they couldn't have stopped it. I've not been stopped by my circumstances; I have been stopped by myself. That would be humiliating if I had ever had any pride. I was the hopeless detrimental. By all the rules of the game I ought to be handsome and accomplished and beloved; and my rival, as he is wealthy and a germ of a baronet, ought to be hideous, and old, and stupid, and she ought to be marrying him against her will at the instigation of an ambitious mother. The reverse is the case. Why, he's an abominably handsome man.

ANNA: Do you think so?

EDWARD: Of course. Don't you?

ANNA: He's not bad-looking.

EDWARD: Then he has all the accomplishments. The poor and lowly born ought according to all the stories to come out strongly here. What rubbish! Accomplishments mean education, and education means money. I can't shoot, or ride, or fence, and I have the cheek to call myself a man. There is not a single thing that I can think of that I can do, except paint; and a good many people would tell you that I can't do that.



ANNA: Do you really think him so very accomplished?

EDWARD: Haven't I just said so?

ANNA: So you did. Go on.

EDWARD: And he's also a good fellow. I don't suppose he's much more of a saint than other men.

ANNA (*indignantly*): How dare you say that? It's the cowardly thing men always say when they meet a better man than themselves. One has only to look at him to—

EDWARD: Well?

ANNA: Leave it; go on.

EDWARD: I didn't mean to imply that he forged cheques or picked pockets. I'm not interested enough in him to want to do him an injustice. That's honest; it's not affectation. My trouble is not that she has married him, but that she should have married anybody. A moment ago, when I was laboriously doing him justice, commending his points, you did not seem to believe me; but when I hint at the possibility of spots on the sun, you turn again and rend me. What can I say to please you?

ANNA: Nothing; nothing can please me. I know you have suffered, though you speak flippantly or even cynically, but I can hardly pity you. It is your own fault. You must have known that she would marry: you can't have supposed that your silly philandering could go on for ever.

EDWARD: It was not silly, and it was not philandering, and I did not suppose it could go

on for ever. But though the child knows that its bun is finite, it is none the happier when it has finished it; and though I knew somewhere at the back of my head that she would marry, I shirked thinking about it. One does not care to think of the fall of an angel.

ANNA: Spare me the rhapsodies. You should have spoken to her—

EDWARD: We've been through all that. Do you yourself think she could ever have cared for me?

ANNA! Oh, I don't know. She thought that you could paint. She told me so once.

EDWARD: Did she? What were her words? How did she say it? Oh, what does it matter! Even if I could paint, what would it matter? Women don't love men for that.

*[A long pause. Anna sits with her head resting on her hands, looking far into the blue. Edward paces to and fro miserably, but sits down again when she speaks.]*

ANNA: Did you send anything?

EDWARD: A wedding-present? Yes. Silver candlesticks.

ANNA: You should have sent one of your pictures.

EDWARD: Too personal. And what did you give them?

ANNA (*unshrinkingly*): Fish-slice.

EDWARD: Why?

ANNA: Is there anything more unromantic than a fish-slice?

EDWARD: No.

ANNA: Well, that's why.

EDWARD: Oh! (*There is another long pause. The sound of cheering comes faintly up from the valley below. A look of irritation passes over his face as he hears it. White butterflies dance in the sun, and he watches them. Suddenly he speaks*) Lord, what a beautiful day for the sacrifice! Why are the wedding ceremonies performed in public?

ANNA (*impatiently*): Oh, I don't know!

EDWARD: It's appalling, Alicia and that brute beside her with everybody in the church staring—Alicia in the newspapers—Alicia all in white, with her train of bridesmaids—why, what am I saying? You were to have been the first bridesmaid yourself. Why—

ANNA: No, no. That's wrong.

EDWARD: I'm sure I was told so.

ANNA: People say anything.

EDWARD: But you're not there. Good Heavens! Why didn't that strike me before? Not even there! I go on talking about myself, and—well?

ANNA: You don't think that a father, a mother, two sons, and a daughter, are about enough from one house; that the other daughter hadn't better stop at home or go for a walk?

EDWARD: No, Miss Larose, not in this case. You ought not to have absented yourself; you were her best friend almost, weren't you?

ANNA: That's a strong phrase; I can't say. Talk about yourself again.

EDWARD: I'm an insufferable, unmanly, unattractive fool, and I've had the cheek to break my heart just as if I were somebody. There's the last word about me. Pass on. Alicia?

ANNA (*scornfully*): Oh, spare me! I know the colour of her eyes and hair, and how long she takes to do it as a general thing. Pass Alicia.

EDWARD: Then we'll discuss the bridegroom-brute.

ANNA (*sharply*): No.

EDWARD: Why not?

ANNA: I said no. Leave it, please.

EDWARD: Then we return to you again. Why are you not at the wedding? Oh, happy thought! You are in the same position as I am; you are smitten with the charms of the noble and high-souled bridegroom. You are the maid that never told her love, but let the worm of something or other—never could remember quotations—play the deuce with her damask cheek. Your aching heart—(*He stops suddenly, seeing the look on her face, and realizing that unconsciously and unintentionally his stupid gibe has hit right home*)—I beg your pardon, I'd no idea, I'm terribly sorry. How can I have made such a brutal blunder? Anna, for God's sake, don't cry! Forgive me!

ANNA (*rising to her feet*): I am not going to cry. I forgive you. You never meant to hurt me. I know that. After all, why shouldn't you know? I would sooner cut my tongue out than tell a woman; I would sooner hold my hand in the fire than let a woman know. But we are in the same



condemnation, aren't we? And I feel what you said just now, that we are out of the world up here on this hill-top, and can say things that we should never have dreamed of in the streets below. Why, it's almost like being dead. Afterwards when we come down from here, never speak of it again to me. It was not his fault; thank God, he never knew! He won't be able to talk me over with Alicia at least. Oh, how tired I am, how tired I am.

EDWARD (*thoughtfully*): I wonder if there is anything that I could say—no, no.

ANNA: Edward—I don't think I ever called you by that name before—shall we be real friends?

EDWARD: Yes, dear. Always. (*He takes her hand and kisses it.*) It will all be over by now, shall I take you home?

[*They go down the hill in silence and hand in hand. Sometimes they slip a little on the close-cropped turf, but they feel more than mortal all the same. They pause a moment at the foot of the hill.*]

ANNA: I shall tell them that the walk has quite cured my headache. Don't come any further with me, please. Mamma is asking you for the 6th, dinner. I hope you will be able to come.

EDWARD: It will give me much pleasure.

ANNA: Good-bye, Mr Hearne.

EDWARD: Good-bye, Miss Larose.

## DEATH

[The scene is the dining-room at No. 23 Alberto Parade, Hoxley-on-Sea, where the Rev. James Theodore Blake has a curacy. He is considered to have married beneath him. The oval table is laid for breakfast. At one side Mrs Blake presides over a black-tin percolator and two plain and practical cups, flanked by a milk-jug of a different pattern. She has thirty-nine years, eleven stone eight, a double chin, no corsets—these will occur later in the morning—and a pale blue dressing-gown that is due at the cleaner's. James has a weak, thin face, and gazes abstractedly at a hot-water dish surmounted by a pewter cover. He bends towards it and closes his eyes.]

JAMES : Benedictus, benedicat ! (*He lifts the pewter cover and turns to his wife.*) Have you any preference, Edith ?

EDITH : There's not much difference between kippers. Give me the smallest.

JAMES : The smaller.

EDITH : Smaller then. I seem put off my appetite this morning.

JAMES : I don't think that is a very happy phrase, is it, Edith ?

EDITH : Oh, do keep your temper, James ! I do my best, but Rome wasn't built in a day. These things slip out. Why don't you open your letters ? (*Bitterly.*) There may be a fortune in 'em.

[*As he speaks he opens his letters one by one.*]

JAMES : Barkham, for the kitchen sink, two and three.

EDITH : Barkham knows how to stick it on. I could have done it myself if I'd had a cane.

JAMES : Barkham was here only twenty minutes.

I timed him. The Canon regrets that he will be unable to dine on Thursday.

EDITH: Well, that's something saved.

JAMES: True. (*At the next letter he pauses and puts his hand over his eyes.*) Edith, my Aunt Alicia is dead.

EDITH: What? At last?

JAMES: Edith!

EDITH: Well, you always said when she died our troubles would be over.

JAMES: But do not forget that I have lost an aunt.

EDITH: No, of course not. Does the letter say anything?

JAMES: It is from the solicitor. It appears that I am the residuary legatee.

EDITH: What does that mean?

JAMES: I am given to understand that I inherit almost the whole of her fortune.

EDITH: Well, it never rains but it pours.

JAMES: You seem to forget that I have lost an aunt.

EDITH: But you only saw her three times in your life.

JAMES: An aunt is still an aunt.

EDITH: And she was a Ritualist.

JAMES: But beneath these outward forms she has shown that she had a strong sense of duty. She has recognized that all that we have is only held on trust, and that it is our duty to leave it to our nearest kin. This will be a disappointment to the Wildersons. I cannot profess to be sorry

in that respect. Yes, there is some justice in this imperfect world after all.

EDITH: Oh, James, if you only knew how happy I feel!

JAMES: Must I say it again? I have lost a dear aunt.

EDITH: Yes! Oh, yes! I'm sure I feel that too. What you must do, James, is to keep yourself up. It's not a question of expense any more, and however reluctant you may be, you must not let yourself break down. Think what a lot of business is going to be thrown on your hands. In that case, I think one kipper is an insufficient breakfast for a man. Now, even against your own inclination couldn't you—

JAMES: I should never have thought of it if you had not mentioned it. You are always so practical, Edith, I leave that branch entirely to you. Shall we say an egg, boiled or poached, whichever gives the least trouble?

EDITH: I'll run and poach a couple of eggs for you myself. The gel's upstairs with the children.

JAMES: Do not say gel. Say the servant, or call her by her name, Martha.

EDITH: What a one you are for grammar! Martha, then. Now, I'll be off. And here's Hector come to say good-morning.

[*As she goes out Hector enters. He is a remarkably plain boy of nine, with a very solemn demeanour, suggesting great age. He shakes hands with his father.*]



HECTOR: Good-morning, father. Is there anything of importance in the paper this morning?

JAMES: I have not yet opened the paper this morning. My attention has been occupied with some sad news, which has just reached me by post. A dear aunt of mine has just passed away.

HECTOR: Oh! Let me see; your aunt would be my great-aunt.

JAMES: Yes, my boy. She was your great-aunt Alicia.

HECTOR: I do not remember that I ever met her, and the relation does not seem to be very close; don't you think that, under the circumstances, it would be enough if I had a black band on the sleeve of my light suit. I suggest it because I know we are not rich, and the expense of a new black suit is considerable. The money might be spent in other ways that I could tell you of.

JAMES: No, Hector, I wish you to be dressed in complete mourning. You are so much older than your years, that I may mention to you what, in an ordinary way, a father would not discuss with a boy of nine; by the death of my Aunt Alicia I became a rich man, and am intending to give up this curacy and to adopt a style of life more in accordance with the means that Providence has been pleased to bestow on me. The price of your new clothes is a matter no longer of any great importance.

HECTOR: Oh? (*He reflects a minute and then puts his question somewhat bluntly.*) Are you more sorry she's dead, or more glad you're rich?

JAMES: How can you ask such a question?

HECTOR: Well, I didn't know.

JAMES: The loss of an aunt must inevitably—ah! there's your mother.

[*Edith enters with the poached and supplemental eggs on a very hot plate, which she is anxious to put down quickly.*]

EDITH: There, James. Two beauties. Mind the plate. I've pretty nigh burnt my hands off with it.

JAMES: Thank you. You are very good. I shall enjoy these. Hector, go outside for a moment. (*Hector goes out.*) Don't say "pretty nigh," my dear; say "very nearly."

EDITH: All right, dear. Very nearly. (*Calling.*) You can come in again, Hector.

HECTOR (*from without*): It is time I went up to take the children in the multiplication table.

EDITH: What a good boy he is! Not a bit like other boys! Really, he is a great help, and there's nothing he won't do. He is working a pair of slippers for himself. Wonderful!

JAMES: When I have recovered from the blow which I received this morning, it will be some pleasure to think that we shall be able now to put the education of the children on a different basis. Hector must go to school, ultimately to Eton. The younger children will have a governess. I shall in all probability accept a college living where the income is practically nothing—that is of no importance to us—but the vicarage is large and situated in a pretty country. There will be

an ample garden and so forth. I shall look out for a place where the work is light, and I shall employ a curate. I shall in that way have leisure for those literary pursuits which are most to my taste, and perhaps are more valuable than purely parochial work. I have sometimes felt that at present I am a razor used for cutting wood.

EDITH: That's true enough, I'm sure.

JAMES: Even the little I have been able to find time for has not been without promise and profit.

EDITH: You mean what you write for the papers?

JAMES: I have made on an average seven shillings from the *Comic Halfpennyworth* alone. I have also had occasional work in the *Children's Sunday*, the editor of which says he will always be glad to consider anything of mine. And you must remember, Edith, that has been done under very trying circumstances. There has been the worry about money, and I have no working room, and my time has been very limited, and I have suffered from the want of a proper holiday. When I start work in a spacious and well-furnished library, looking out on to beautiful grounds, invigorated by good food, refreshed by a long holiday on the Continent every year, without a care, not over-worked, taking riding exercise every afternoon—

EDITH: Oh, James!

JAMES: Then I think I may be able to produce something in comparison with which what has gone before will seem but child's play.

EDITH: Oh, James! Shall we keep a horse then?

JAMES: Our position will make it essential that we shall keep horses, and there will be a pony for the children as well, I hope. But in the meantime there is much to be done. You must order mourning for yourself and the children. Let it be plain but of the best quality. It should be put in hand this morning. I must go up North to-night; the solicitor wishes to see me about the funeral; in fact, I gather that the whole matter is left more or less in my hands.

EDITH: Poor James! I don't envy you the long journey in a wretched third-class—

JAMES: Under the circumstances I shall go by sleeping-saloon.

EDITH: Oh (*timidly*)! You don't think there will be any difficulty about ready money? Of course it's coming, but still—

JAMES: The solicitor will advance anything that I may require. He implies as much in his letter, and puts it very delicately. I shall certainly employ him. Tact, that is what one wants in a solicitor.

EDITH: I feel almost as if I should open my eyes and find it all a dream.

JAMES: Alas! It is no dream. She has gone. The end was peaceful. She was eighty-three; I shall never shake her by the hand again.

EDITH: You were never what could be called intimate, though, were you? It's not as if—

JAMES: An aunt must always be an aunt.

EDITH: Well, yes.

JAMES: I trust I shall bear the blow with



fortitude and resignation. But the tie of blood is a very real one. She has shown that herself. During her life the Wildersons saw far more of her than I did, but at the last the claim of relationship told. I am not sorry for the Wildersons; I consider they did their best to rob me.

*[Hector enters, wearing a pained expression.]*

HECTOR: I am sorry to say that Henrietta refuses to learn anything, and has been impertinent.

EDITH: You run along. I dare say if the truth were known there are faults on both sides.

HECTOR: I hope not.

EDITH: Well, I'll come in a minute.

HECTOR: Thank you. *(He goes out.)*

EDITH: I suppose I may write to my two sisters.

JAMES: Certainly.

EDITH: They'll like to hear the good news—I mean I must break it to them about your Aunt Alicia.

JAMES: I think the latter is the better way of expressing it. You must remember that money is not everything.

EDITH: No, James. I shall be better able to see that now.

*[She goes out. James rises from the table and paces to and fro. His expression is one of gravity and solemnity. As his thoughts flit on the expression changes, giving place to a broad and ecstatic smile. He rubs his large, fat hands softly together.]*

# A Catalogue of the Publications of T. Werner Laurie.

-----

- ABBEYS OF GREAT BRITAIN, The (H. Clairborne Dixon and E. Ramsden). 6s. net. (Cathedral Series.)
- ABBEYS OF ENGLAND, The (Elsie M. Lang). Leather, 2s. 6d. net. (Leather Booklets.)
- ADAM (H. L.), The Story of Crime. Fully Illustrated. Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.
- ADDISON (JULIA), Classic Myths in Art. Illustrated with 40 plate reproductions from famous painters. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- ADVENTURES OF AN EMPRESS (Helene Vacaresco). 6s.
- AFLALO (F. G.), Sunshine and Sport in Florida and the West Indies. 60 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 16s. net.
- ALIEN, The (Helene Vacaresco). 6s.
- ANTHONY (E.) ("Cut Cavendish"), The Complete Bridge Player. With a Chapter on Misery Bridge. (Vol. I., Library of Sports.) 320 pages. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.
- ARMOUR (J. OGDEN), The Packers and the People. Eight Illustrations. 380 Pages. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.
- ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE, The (Gordon Holmes). 6s.
- ART IN THE DUMPS (Eugene Merrill). 1s. net.
- ARTIST'S LIFE, The (John Oliver Hobbes). 2s. 6d. net.
- BEAUTY SHOP, The (Daniel Woodroffe). 6s.
- BECKE (L.), Notes from My South Sea Log. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- BECKE (L.), My Wanderings in the South Seas. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.
- BECKE (L.), Sketches in Normandy. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.
- BELL AND ARROW. The (Nora Hopper), 6s.
- BENNETT (A.). See Phillpotts.
- BIOGRAPHY FOR BEGINNERS, The (E. Clerihew). 6s. net.
- BLAND (Hubert) ("Hubert" of the *Sunday Chronicle*), Letters to a Daughter. Illustrated Frontispiece. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net ; paper, 1s. net.

- BLAND (Hubert) ("Hubert" of the *Sunday Chronicle*),  
With the Eyes of a Man. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d.
- BLIND REDEEMER, The (David Christie Murray), 6s.
- BLINDMAN'S MARRIAGE (Florence Warden). 6s.
- BLYTH (J.), A New Atonement. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- BRIDGE PLAYER, The Complete (Edwyn Anthony). 2s. 6d.  
net.
- BRIDGES (J. A.), Reminiscences of a Country Politician.  
Demy 8vo, 8s. 6d. net.
- BROWNE (J. Penman), Travel and Adventure in the Ituri  
Forests. Demy 8vo, 16s. net.
- BUILDING OF A BOOK, The (F. H. Hitchcock). 6s. net.
- BULLOCK (Shan F.), The Cubs. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s. ;  
Prize Edition, 3s. 6d.
- BULLOCK (Shan F.), Robert Thorne : The Story of a London  
Clerk. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- BUMPUS (T.F.), The Cathedrals of England and Wales. (The  
Cathedral Series, Vols. III., IV., V.). With many plates  
and minor decorations, and specially designed heads and  
tailpieces to each chapter. Octavo, decorative cover, cloth  
gilt, 6s. net each ; in leather, 10s. 6d. net per vol.
- BUMPUS (T. F.), The Cathedrals and Churches of Northern  
Italy. With 80 plates, nine of them in colour, and a  
coloured frontispiece by F. L. Griggs, 9 x 6½. 16s. net.
- BUMPUS (T. F.), The Cathedrals of Northern Germany and  
the Rhine. (The Cathedral Series, Vol. VI.). With many  
plates and minor decorations. 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net,  
leather, 10s. 6d. net.
- BUMPUS (T. F.), Old London Churches. In 2 vols. (Uni-  
form with the Cathedral Series.) Many illustrations.  
Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net each.
- BURLESQUE NAPOLEON, The (Philip W. Sergeant),  
10s. 6d. net.
- BURROWS (G. T.), Some Old Inns of England. (The Leather  
Booklets, Vol. II.) 24 illustrations. 5 x 3, stamped  
leather, 2s. 6d. net.
- BUTLER (W. M.), The Golfers' Guide. With an Introduction  
by Dr. Macnamara. (Vol. III., Library of Sports.) Crown  
8vo., 2s. 6d. net.
- CAMP FIRES IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES (W. T.  
Hornaday), 16s. net.

- CAPTAINS AND THE KINGS**, The (Henry Haynie). 6s. net.
- CARREL** (Frederic), *The Adventures of John Johns*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.
- CASTLES OF ENGLAND**, The (E. B. D'Auvergne). Leather, 2s. 6d. net. (Leather Booklets.)
- CATHEDRAL GUIDE**, The Pocket (W. J. Roberts). Leather. 2s. 6d. net. (Leather Booklets.)
- CATHEDRAL SERIES**, The. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net each.
- Vol. I. *The Cathedrals of Northern France*. By Francis Miltoun. With 80 Illustrations from original drawings, and many minor decorations, by Blanche M'Manus. 1 vol., decorative cover.
- Vol. II. *The Cathedrals of Southern France*. By Francis Miltoun.
- Vols. III., IV., V. *The Cathedrals of England and Wales*. B. T. Francis Bumpus. With many plates and minor decorations, and specially designed heads and tail-pieces to each chapter. 3 vols, decorative cover; also in leather, 10s. 6d. net per vol.
- Vol. VI. *The Cathedrals of Northern Germany and the Rhine*. By T. Francis Bumpus. With many plates and minor decorations. Also in leather, 10s. 6d. net.
- Vol. VII. *The Cathedrals of Northern Spain*. By Charles Rudy. Many Illustrations.
- CATHARINE**: *The Human Weed* (L. Parry Truscott). 6s.
- CHAIN INVISIBLE**, The (Ranger Gull). 6s.
- CLASSIC MYTHS IN ART** (Julia Addison). 6s. net.
- CLASSICAL LIBRARY**, The. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. net each.
- Vol. I. *The Works of Virgil*. Translated into English by C. Davidson. With notes and a memoir. With photo-gravure frontispiece.
- Vol. II. *The Works of Horace*. Translated into English by C. Smart. With notes and a memoir. With photo-gravure frontispiece.
- CLERIHEW** (E.), *Biography for Beginners*. A New Nonsense Book. With 40 diagrams by G. K. Chesterton. Medium 4to, 6s. net.
- COBB** (T.), *A Sentimental Season*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- COENEN** (Frans), *Essays on Glass, China, Silver, etc.* In connection with the Willet-Holthuysen Museum Collection, Amsterdam. With 32 Illustrations. Crown 4to, 6s. net.



- CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG MAN (George Moore), 6s.  
COST, The (D. G. Phillips). 6s.  
COURTSHIPS OF CATHERINE THE GREAT, The (P. W. Sergeant). 10s. 6d. net.  
CROSLAND (T. W. H.), The Wild Irishman. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 5s.  
CROSS (Victoria), Six Women. A Novel. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s.  
CROSS (Victoria), Life's Shop Window. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.  
CROWNED SKULL, The (Fergus Hume). 6s.  
CUBS, The (Shan F. Bullock). 6s.  
D'AUVERNGE (E. B.), The Castles of England. (The Leather Booklets Series, Vol. III.). With 30 illustrations. 5 × 3, stamped leather, 2s. 6d. net.  
DAVIDSON (C.), The Works of Virgil. Translated into English. With notes and a memoir. With photogravure frontispiece (Classical Library, Vol. I.) Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 2s. 6d.  
DAVIDSON (GLADYS), Stories from the Operas. In 2 Vols. (Music Lovers' Library, Vols. II. and III.). Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.  
DAYS STOLEN FROM SPORT (Philip Geen). 10s. 6d. net.  
DICK DONOVAN (see Muddock).  
DIXON (H.C.) and E. Ramsden, Cathedrals of Great Britain. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.  
DRAKE (M.), The Salving of the Derelict. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.  
DRAKE (M.), Lethbridge of the Moor. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.  
DYKE (J. C. Van), The Opal Sea. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.  
DYKE (J. C. Van), Studies in Pictures. An Introduction to the Famous Galleries. 42 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.  
ECLECTIC LIBRARY, The. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 1s. net each.  
Vol. I. The Scarlet Letter. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. 320 pages.  
ENGLAND AND WALES, The Cathedrals of (T. Francis Bumpus). In three vols. 6s. net each; leather, 10s. 6d. each  
ENGLAND, The Cathedrals of (Mary Taber), 6s. net.  
EVIL EYE, The (Daniel Woodroffe). 6s.

- FAIR WOMEN, The Book of (Translated by Elsie M. Lang).  
6s. net.
- FINANCIER'S WIFE, The (Florence Warden). 6s.
- FISHERMAN, The Complete (W. M. Gallichan). 2s. 6d. net.
- FISHING FOR PLEASURE AND CATCHING IT (E. Marston). Cloth, 3s. 6d. net ; leather, 5s. net.
- FRANCE, The Cathedrals of Northern (Francis Miltoun). 6s. net.
- FRANCE, The Cathedrals of Southern (Francis Miltoun). 6s. net.
- FRIENDS THE FRENCH, My (R. H. Sherard). 16s. net
- GALLICHAN (W. M.), The Complete Fisherman. Illustrated. (Library of Sports, Vol. II.) Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.
- GEEN (P.), Days Stolen for Sport. Illustrated. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.
- GIBERNE (Agnes), Rowena. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- GIVEN PROOF, The (H. H. Penrose). 6s.
- GLASS, CHINA, AND SILVER, Essays on (Frans Coenen). 6s. net.
- GOLFER'S MANUAL, The (W. Meredith Butler). 2s. 6d. net.
- GRIFFITH (G.), The Mummy and Miss Nitocris. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- GULL (Ranger), The Chain Invisible. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- GULL (Ranger), Retribution. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HARDY (Rev. E. J.), What Men Like in Women. Crown 8vo, paper, 1s. net ; cloth, 2s.
- HAWTHORNE (N.), The Scarlet Letter. (Eclectic Library, Vol. I.) 320 pages. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 1s. net.
- HAYNIE (H.), The Captains and the Kings: Intimate Reminiscences of Notabilities. 348 pages.  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ , cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- HITCHCOCK (F. H.), The Building of a Book. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.
- HOBBS (J. O.), The Artist's Life, and Other Essays. With frontispiece and a cover design by Charles E. Dawson. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.
- HOLMES (Gordon), The Arncliffe Puzzle. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HOPPER (Nora) (Mrs. Hugh Chesson), The Bell and the Arrow. An English Love Story. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.
- HORACE, The Works of (C. Smart). 2s. 6d. net.

- HORNADAY (W. T.), *Camp Fires in the Canadian Rockies.* with 70 illustrations from photographs taken by John M. Phillips and two maps. Demy 8vo, 16s. net.
- HOSKEN (Heath). See Stanton.
- HUME (Fergus), *Lady Jim of Curzon Street.* A Novel. Cover design by Charles E. Dawson. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s ; paper, 1s. net ; cloth, 1s. 6d. net.
- HUME (Fergus), *The Crowned Skull.* A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HUME (Fergus), *The Path of Pain.* A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HUNEKER (J.), *Melomaniacs: Wagner, Ibsen, Chopin, Nietzsche, etc.* Crown 8vo, 6s. net.
- HUNEKER (J.), *Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists.* Illuminating critical studies of modern revolutionary playwrights. Crown 8vo, 6s. net.
- HUNEKER (J.), *Visionaries.* Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HUNT (Violet), *The Workaday Woman.* A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- HUSBAND HUNTER, *The (Olivia Roy).* 6s.
- ICONOCLASTS (James Huneker). 6s. net.
- INDIA (Pierre Loti). 10s. 6d. net.
- INGLEBY (L. C.), *Oscar Wilde: A Literary Appreciation.* Demy 8vo, 12s. 6d. net.
- IRVINE (A. M.), *Roger Dinwiddie, Soul Doctor.* A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- ITALY, *The Cathedrals of Northern (T. Francis Bumpus).* 16s. net.
- JAPP (A. H.), *R. L. Stevenson: A Record, an Estimate, and a Memorial.* Illustrated with facsimile letters and photogravure frontispiece. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- JOHN BULL AND JONATHAN, *With (John Morgan Richards).* 16s. net.
- JOHN JOHNS, *The Adventures of (Frederic Carrel).* 2s. 6d. net.
- JOHNSON (Trench H.), *Phrases and Names: Their Origins and Meanings.* Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- JUNGLE TRAILS AND JUNGLE PEOPLE (Caspar Whitney). 12s. net.
- KENNARD (H. P.), *The Russian Peasant.* 19 illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- KING'S WIFE, *The (Helene Vacaresco).* 6s.
- KUROPATKIN, *The Campaign with (Douglas Story).* 10s. 6d. net.

- LADY JIM OF CURZON STREET (Fergus Hume). Cloth, 6s. ; paper, 1s. net. ; cloth, 1s. 6d.
- LADY LEE (Florence Warden). 6s.
- LANG (E. M.), Literary London. 42 illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- LANG (E. M.), The Book of Fair Women. By Federigo Luigino of Udine. Translated from the Venetian edition of 1554. With 6 pictures. Foolscape 8vo, hand-made paper, parchment binding. 6s. net.
- LANG (E. M.), The Abbeys of England. (The Leather Booklets, Vol. V.) Illustrated. 5 x 3, stamped leather, 2s. 6d. net.
- LAST EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH, The (P. W. Sergeant). 12s. 6d. net.
- LAST MIRACLE, The (M. P. Shiel). 6s.
- LATHROP (E.), Where Shakespeare Set His Stage. With numerous full-page illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth, 8s. 6d. net.
- LEATHER BOOKLETS, The. 5 x 3, stamped leather, 2s. 6d. net each.
- Vol. I. The Pocket Cathedral Guide. By W. J. Roberts. 30 illustrations.
- Vol. II. Some Old Inns of England. By G. T. Burrows. 24 illustrations.
- Vol. III. The Castles of England. By E. B. d'Auvergne. With 30 Illustrations.
- Vol. IV. Some Old London Memorials. By W. J. Roberts. With 25 photographs by the author.
- Vol. V. The Abbeys of England. By Elsie M. Lang. 20 illustrations.
- LETHBRIDGE OF THE MOOR (Maurice Drake). 6s.
- LETTERS TO A DAUGHTER (Hubert Bland). 3s. 6d. net ; paper, 1s. net.
- LIFE IN THE LAW (John George Witt). 6s. net.
- LIFE'S SHOP WINDOW (Victoria Cross). 6s.
- LINDSAY'S LOVE, A (Charles Lowe). 6s.
- LITERARY LONDON (Elsie M. Lang). 6s. net.
- LOTI (Pierre), India. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.
- LOTUS LAND (P. A. Thompson). 16s. net.
- LOVER OF QUEEN ELIZABETH, The (Aubrey Richardson). 12s. 6d. net.
- LOWE (C.), A Lindsay's Love. A Tale of the Tuileries and the Siege of Paris. A Novel. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s.



- LUCY OF THE STARS (Frederick Palmer). 6s.
- MACHRAY (R.), *The Night Side of London*. With 95 pictures by Tom Browne, R.I., R.B.A. Cloth, 2s. net; paper, 1s. net.
- MACQUOID (K. S.), *Pictures in Umbria*. With 50 original illustrations by Thomas R. Macquoid, R.I. (Uniform with the Cathedral Series.) 6s. net.
- MALVERY (O. C.), *The Speculator*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- MAN AND HIS FUTURE (Lt.-Col. W. Sedgwick). 7s. 6d. net.
- MARRIAGE BROKER, *The* (Florence Warden). 6s.
- MARSTON (E.), *Fishing for Pleasure and Catching It*. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, leather, 5s. net; cloth, 3s. 6d. net.
- 2835 MAYFAIR (Frank Richardson). 6s.
- MEADE (L.T.), *The Red Ruth*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- MELOMANICS (James Huneker). 6s. net.
- MERRILL (E.), *Art in the Dumps*. A Satire on the commercialism of British literature, drama, painting, and music. Cloth, 2s. net.; paper, 1s. net.
- MILTOUN (F.), *The Cathedrals of Northern France*. With 80 illustrations from original drawings, and many minor decorations, by Blanche McManus. (The Cathedral Series, Vol. I.) Decorative cover.  $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{8}$ , cloth gilt, 6s. net.
- MILTOUN (F.), *The Cathedrals of Southern France*. With 90 illustrations by Blanche McManus. 1 vol. Decorative cover. 568 pages. 8vo,  $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ , cloth gilt, 6s. net. (Cathedral Series, Vol. II.)
- MODERN MEDICINE FOR THE HOME (E. R. Walker). Cloth, 1s. 6d.; paper, 1s. net.
- MOORE (George), *Confessions of a Young Man*. New Edition revised. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.
- MOTOR LOG BOOK, *My*. A handy record for recording dates, runs, time, distances, weather, roads, cost of repairs, petrol, entertaining, etc. Crown 8vo, leather, full gilt, 4s. 6d. net; cloth, 2s. 6d. net.
- MUDDOCK (J. E. Preston, "Dick Donovan"), *Pages from an Adventurous Life*. Very fully illustrated. Demy 8vo, 16s. net.; club edition, 21s. net.
- MUDDOCK (J. E. Preston), *Tangled Destinies*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.
- MUDDOCK (J. E. Preston), *Thurtell's Crime*. A Novel. Crown 8vo, 6s.



