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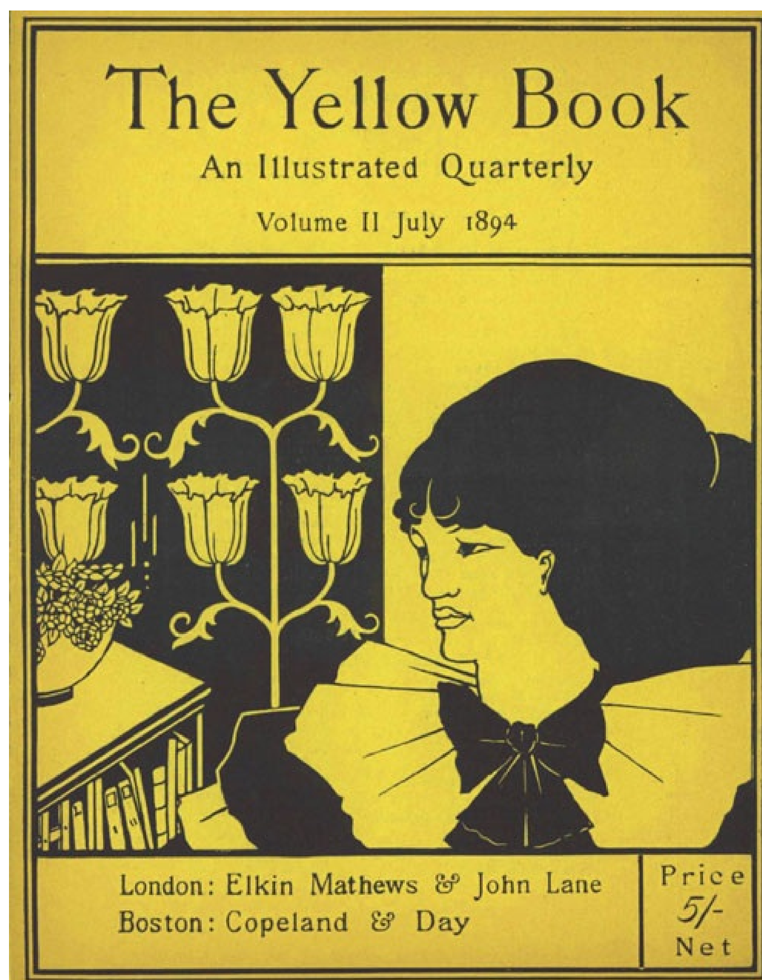
THE YELLOW BOOK

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume II July 1894



Elkin Mathews & John Lane Price
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Volume II July, 1894

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The Renaissance of Venus

By Walter Crane

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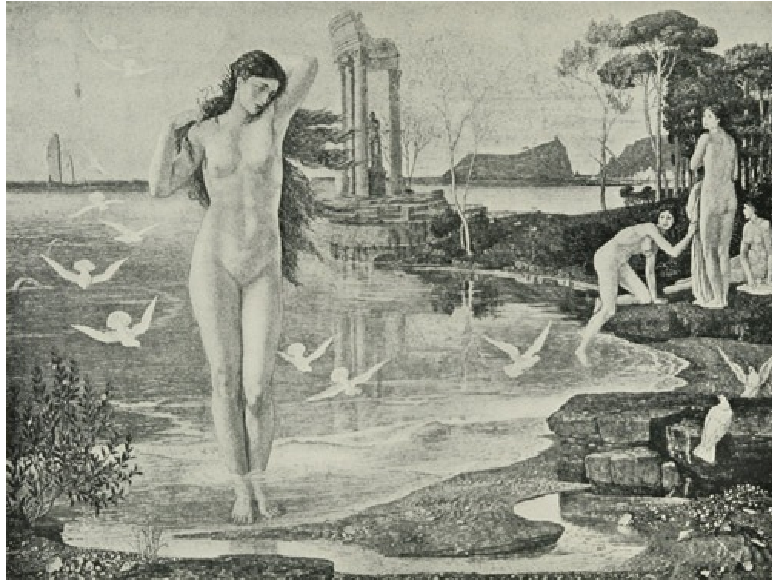


The Gospel of Content

By Frederick Greenwood

I

How it was that I, being so young a man and not a very tactful one, was sent on such an errand is more than I should be able to explain. But many years ago some one came to me with a request that I should go that evening to a certain street at King's Cross, where would be found a poor lady in great distress; that I should take a small sum of money which was given to me for the purpose in a little packet which disguised all appearance of coin, present it to her as a "parcel" which I had been desired to deliver, and ask if there were any particular service that could be done for her. For my own information I was told that she was a beautiful Russian whose husband had barely contrived to get her out of the country, with her child, before his own arrest for some deep political offence of which she was more than cognisant, and that now she was living in desperate ignorance of his fate. Moreover, she was penniless and companionless, though not quite without friends; for some there were who knew of her husband and had a little help for her, though they were almost as poor as herself. But none of these dare approach her, so fearful was she of the danger of their doing so, either to themselves or her husband or her child, and so ignorant of the perfect freedom that political exiles could count upon in England. "Then," said I, "what expectation is there that she will admit me, an absolute stranger to her, who may be employed by the police for anything she knows to the contrary?" The answer was: "Of course that has been thought of. But you have only to send up your name, which, in the certainty that you would have no objection, has been communicated to her already. Her own name, in England, is Madame Vernet."

It was a Saturday evening in November, the air thick with darkness and a drizzling rain, the streets black and shining where lamplight fell upon the mud on the paths and the pools in the roadway, when I found my way to King's Cross on this small errand of kindness. King's Cross is a most unlovely purlieu at its best, which must be in the first dawn of a summer day, when the innocence of morning smiles along its squalid streets, and the people of the place, who cannot be so wretched as they look, are shut within their poor and furtive homes. On a foul November night nothing can be more miserable, more melancholy. One or two great thoroughfares were crowded with foot-passengers who bustled here and there about their Saturday marketings, under the light that flared from the shops and the stalls that lined the roadway. Spreading on every hand from these thoroughfares, with their noisy trafficking so dreadfully eager and small, was a maze of streets built to be "respectable" but now run down into the forlorn poverty which is all for concealment without any rational hope of success. It was to one of these that I was directed—a narrow silent little street of three-storey houses, with two families at least in every one of them.

Arrived at No. 17, I was admitted by a child after long delay, and by her conducted to a room at the top of the house. No voice responded to the knock at the room door, and none to the announcement of the visitor's name; but before I entered I was aware of a sound which, though it was only what may be heard in the grill-room of any coffee-house at luncheon time, made me feel very guilty and ashamed. For the last ten minutes I had been gradually sinking under the fear of intrusion—of intrusion upon grief, and not less upon the wretched little secrets of poverty which pride is so fain to conceal; and now these splutterings of a frying-pan foundered me quite. What worse intrusion could there be than to come prying in upon the cooking of some poor little meal?

Too much embarrassed to make the right apology (which, to be right, would have been without any embarrassment at all) I entered the room, in which everything could be seen in one straightforward glance: the little square table in the centre, with its old green cover and the squat lamp on it, the two chairs, the dingy half carpet, the bed wherein a child lay asleep in a lovely flush of colour, and the pale woman with a still face, and with the eyes that are said to resemble agates, standing before the hearth. Under the dark cloud of her hair she looked the very picture of Suffering—Suffering too proud to complain and too tired to speak. Beautiful as the lines of her face were, it was white as ashes and spoke their meaning; but nothing had yet tamed the upspringing nobility of her tall, slight, and yet imperious form.

Receiving me with the very least appearance of curiosity or any other kind of interest, but yet with something of proud constraint (which I attributed too much, perhaps, to the untimely frying-pan), she waved her hand toward the farther chair of the two, and asked to be excused from giving me her attention for a moment. By that she evidently meant that otherwise her supper would be spoiled. It is not everything that can be left to cook unattended; and since this poor little supper was a piece of fish scarce bigger than her hand, it was all the more likely to spoil and the less could be spared in damage. So I quietly took my seat in a position which more naturally commanded the view out of window than of the cooking operations, and waited to be again addressed.

On the mantel-board a noisy little American clock ticked as if its mission was to hurry time rather than to measure it, the frying-pan fizzed and bubbled without any abatement of its usual habit or any sense of compunction, now and then the child tossed upon the bed from one pretty attitude to another; and that was all that could be heard, for Madame Vernet's movements were as silent as the movements of a shadow. In almost any part of that small room she could be seen without direct looking; but at a moment when she seemed struck into a yet deeper silence, and because

of it, I ventured to turn upon her more than half an eye. Standing rigidly still, she was staring at the door in an intensity of listening that transfigured her. But the door was closed, and I with the best of hearing directed to the same place could detect no new sound: indeed, I dare swear that there was none. It was merely accidental that just at this moment the child, with another toss of the lovely black head, opened her eyes wide; but it deepened the impressiveness of the scene when her mother, seeing the little one awake, placed a finger on her own lips as she advanced nearer to the door. The gesture was for silence, and it was obeyed as if in understood fear. But still there was nothing to be heard without, unless it were a push of soft drizzle against the window-panes. And this Madame Vernet herself seemed to think when, after a little while, she turned back to the fire—her eyes mere agates again which had been all ablaze.

Stooping to the fender, she had now got her fish into one warm plate, and had covered it with another, and had placed it on the broad old-fashioned hob of the grate to keep hot (as I surmised) while she spoke with and got rid of me, when knocking was heard at the outer door, a pair of hasty feet came bounding up the stair, careless of noise, and in flashed a splendid radiant creature of a man in a thin summer coat, and literally drenched to the skin.

It was Monsieur Vernet, whose real name ended in "ieff." By daring ingenuity, by a long chain of connivance yet more hazardous, by courage, effrontery, and one or two miraculous strokes of good fortune, he had escaped from the fortress to which he had been conveyed in secret and without the least spark of hope that he would ever be released. For many months no one but himself and his jailers knew whether he was alive or dead: his friends inclined to think him the one thing or the other according to the brightness or the gloominess of the hour. Smuggled into Germany, and running thence into Belgium, he had landed in England the night before; and walking the whole distance to London, with an interval of four hours' sleep in a cartshed, he contrived to bring home nearly all of the four shillings with which he started.

But these particulars, it will be understood, I did not learn till afterwards. For that evening my visit was at an end from the moment (the first of his appearance) when Vernet seized his wife in his arms with a partial resemblance to murder. Unobserved, I placed my small packet on the table behind the lamp, and then slipped out; but not without a last view of that affecting "domestic interior," which showed me those two people in a relaxed embrace while they made me a courteous salute in response to another which was all awkwardness, their little daughter standing up on the bed in her night-gown, patiently yet eagerly waiting to be noticed by her father. In all likelihood she had not to wait long.

This was the beginning of my acquaintance with a man who had a greater number of positive ideas than any one else that ever I have known, with wonderful intrepidity and skill in expounding or defending them. However fine the faculties of some other Russians whom I have encountered, they seemed to move in a heavily obstructive atmosphere; Vernet appeared to be oppressed by none. His resolutions were as prompt as his thought; whatever resource he could command in any difficulty, whether the least or the greatest, presented itself to his mind instantly, with the occasion for it; and every movement of his body had the same quickness and precision. His pride, his pride of aristocracy, could tower to extraordinary heights; his sensibility to personal slights and indignities was so trenchant that I have seen him white and quivering with rage when he thought himself rudely jostled by a fellow-passenger in a crowded street. And yet any comrade in conspiracy was his familiar if he only brought daring enough into the common business; and wife, child, fortune, the exchange of ease for the most desperate misery, all were put at stake for the sake of the People and at the call of their sorrows and oppressions. And of one sort of pride he had no sense whatever—fine gentleman as he was, and used from his birth to every refinement of service and luxury: no degree of poverty, nor any blameless shift for relieving it, touched him as humiliating. Privation, whether for others or himself, angered him; the contrast between slothful wealth and toiling misery enraged him; but he had no conception of want and its wretched little expedients as mortifying.

For example. It was in November, that dreary and inclement month, when he began life anew in England with a capital of three shillings and sevenpence. It was a bleak afternoon in December, sleet lightly falling as the dusk came on and melting as it fell, when I found him gathering into a little basket what looked in the half-darkness like monstrous large snails. With as much indifference as if he were offering me a new kind of cigarette, Vernet put one of these things into my hand, and I saw that it was a beautifully-made miniature sailor's hat. The strands of which it was built were just like twisted brown straw to the eye, though they were of the smallness of packthread; and a neat band of ribbon proportionately slender made all complete. But what were they for? How were they made? The answer was that the design was to sell them, and that they were made of the cords—more artistically twisted and more neatly waxed than usual—that shoemakers use in sewing. As for the bands, Madame Vernet had amongst her treasures a cap which her little daughter had worn in her babyhood; and this cap had close frills of lace, and the frills were inter-studded with tiny loops of ribbon—a fashion of that time. There were dozens of these tiny loops, and everyone of them made a band for Vernet's little toy hats. Perhaps in tenderness for the mother's feelings, he would not let her turn the ribbons to their new use, but had applied them himself; and having spent the whole of a foodless day in the manufacture of these little articles, he was now about to go and sell them. He had selected his "pitch" in a flaring bustling street a mile away; and he asked me ("I must lose no time," he said) to accompany him in that direction. I did so, with a cold and heavy stone in my breast which I am sure had no counterpart in his own. As he marched on, in his light and firm soldierly way, he was loud in praise of English liberty: at such a moment *that* was his theme. Arrived near his "pitch," he bade

me good-night with no abatement of the high and easy air that was natural to him; and though I instantly turned back of course, I knew that at a few paces farther the violently proud man moved off the pathway into the gutter, and stood there till eleven o'clock; for not before then did he sell the last of his little penny hats. Another man, equally proud, might have done the same thing in Vernet's situation, but not with Vernet's absolute indifference to everything but the coldness of the night and the too-great stress of physical want.

But this Russian revolutionist was far too capable and versatile a man to lie long in low water. He had a genius for industrial chemistry which soon got him employment and from the sufficiently comfortable made him prosperous by rapid stages. But what of that? Before long another wave of political disturbance rose in Europe; Russia, Italy, France, 'twas all one to Vernet when his sympathies were roused; and after one or two temporary disappearances he was again lost altogether. There was no news of him for months; and then his wife, who all this while had been sinking back into the pallid speechless deadness of the King's Cross days, suddenly disappeared too.

II

For more than thirty years—a period of enormous change in all that men do or think—no word of Vernet came to my knowledge. But though quite passed away he was never forgotten long, and it was with an inrush of satisfaction that, a year or two ago, I received this letter from him:

> ... I have been reading the —— *Review*, and it determines me to solicit a pleasure which I have been at full-cock to ask for many times since I returned to England in 1887. Let us meet. I have something to say to you. But let us not meet in this horrifically large and noisy town. You know Richmond? You know the Star and Garter Hotel there? Choose a day when you will go to find me in that hotel. It shall be in a quiet room looking over the trees and the river, and there we will dine and sit and talk over our dear tobacco in a right place.
>
> "To say one word of the past, that you may know and then forget. Marie is gone—gone twelve years since; and my daughter, gone. I do not speak of them. And do not you expect to find in me any more the Vernet of old days."

Nor was he. The splendidly robust and soldierly figure of thirty-five had changed into a thin, fine-featured old man, above all things gentle, thoughtful, considerate. Except that there was no suggestion of a second and an inner self in him, he might have been an ecclesiastic; as it was, he looked rather as if he had been all his life a recluse student of books and state affairs.

It was a good little dinner in a bright room overlooking the garden; and it was served so early that the declining sunshine of a June day shone through our claret-glasses when coffee was brought in. Our first talk was of matters of the least importance—our own changing fortunes over a period of prodigious change for the whole world. From that personal theme to the greater mutations that affect all mankind was a quick transition; and we had not long been launched on this line of talk before I found that in very truth nothing had changed more than Vernet himself. It was the story of Ignatius Loyola over again, in little and with a difference.

"Yes," said he, my mind filling with unspoken wonder at this during a brief pause in the conversation, "Yes, prison did me good. Not in the rough way you think, perhaps, as of taking nonsense out of a man with a stick, but as solitude. Strict Catholics go into retreat once a year, and it does them good as Catholics: whether otherwise I do not know, but it is possible. You have a wild philosopher whom I love; and wild philosophers are much the best. In them there is more philosophic sport, more surprise, more shock; and it is shock that crystallises. They startle the breath into our own unborn thoughts—thoughts formed in the mind, you know, but without any ninth month for them: they wait for some outer voice to make them alive. Well, once upon a time I heard this philosopher, your Mr. Ruskin, say that only the most noble, most virtuous, most beautiful young men should be allowed to go to the war; the others, never. And he maintained it—ah! in language from some divine madhouse in heaven. But as to that, it is a great objection that your army is already small. Yet of this I am nearly sure; it is the wrong men who go to gaol. The rogues and thieves should give place to honest men—honest *reflective* men. Every advantage of that conclusive solitude is lost on blackguard persons and is mostly turned to harm. For them prescribe one, two, three applications of your cat-o'-nine tails——"

"There is knout like it!" said I, intending a severity of retort which I hoped would not be quite lost in the pun.

"——and then a piece of bread, a shilling, and dismissal to the most devout repentance that brutish crime is ever acquainted with, repentance in stripes. Imprisonment is wasted on persons of so inferior character. Waste it not, and you will have accommodation for wise men to learn the monk's lesson (did you ever think it *all* foolishness?) that a little imperious hardship, a time of seclusion with only themselves to talk to themselves, is most improving. For statesmen and reformers it should be an obligation."

"And according to your experience what is the general course of the improvement? In what direction does it run?"

"At best? In sum total? You know me that I am no monk nor lover of monks, but I say to you what the monk would say were he still a man and intelligent. The chief good is rising above petty irritation, petty contentiousness; it is patience with ills that *must* last long; it is choosing to build out the east wind instead of running at it with a sword."

“And, if I remember aright, you never had that sword out of your hand.”

“From twenty years old to fifty, never out of my hand. But there were excuses—no, but more than excuses; remember that that was another time. Now how different it is, and what satisfaction to have lived to see the change!”

“And what is the change you are thinking of!”

“One that I have read of—only he must not flatter himself that he alone could find it out—in some Review articles of an old friend of Vernet's whose portrait is before me now.” And then, a little to my distress, but more to my pleasure, he quoted from two or three forgotten papers of mine on the later developments of social humanity, the “evolution of goodness” in the relations of men to each other, the new, great and rapid extension of brotherly kindness; observations and theories which were welcomed as novel when they were afterwards taken up and enlarged upon by Mr. Kidd in his book on “Social Evolution.”

“For an ancient conspirator and man of the barricades,” continued Vernet, by this time pacing the room in the dusk which he would not allow to be disturbed, “for a blood-and-iron man who put all his hopes of a better day for his poor devils of fellow-creatures on the smashing of forms and institutions and the substitution of others, I am rather a surprising convert, don't you think? But who could know in those days what was going on in the common stock of mind by—what shall we call it? Before your Darwin brought out his explaining word 'evolution' I should have said that the change came about by a sort of mental chemistry; that it was due to a kind of chemical ferment in the mind, unsuspected till it showed entirely new growths and developments. And even now, you know, I am not quite comfortable with 'evolution' as the word for this sudden spiritual advance into what you call common kindness and more learned persons call 'altruism.' It does not satisfy me, 'evolution.'”

“But you can say why it doesn't, perhaps.”

“Nothing, more, I suppose, than the familiar association of 'evolution' with slow degrees and gradual processes. Evolution seems to speak the natural coming-out of certain developments from certain organisms under certain conditions. The change comes, and you see it coming; and you can look back and trace its advance. But here? The human mind has been the same for ages; subject to the same teaching; open to the same persuasions and dissuasions; as quick to see and as keen to think as it is now; and all the while it has been staring on the same cruel scenes of misery and privation: no, but very often worse. And then, presto! there comes a sudden growth of fraternal sentiment all over this field of the human mind; and such a growth that if it goes on, if it goes on straight and well, it will transform the whole world. Transform its economies?—it will change its very aspect. Towns, streets, houses will show the difference; while as to man himself, it will make him another being. For this is neither a physical nor a mere intellectual advance. As for that, indeed, perhaps the intellectual advance hasn't very much farther to go on its own lines, which are independent of morality, or of goodness as I prefer to say: the simple word! Well, do you care if evolution has pretty nearly done with intellect? Would you mind if intellect never made a greater shine? Will your heart break if it never ascends to a higher plane than it has reached already?”

“Not a bit; if, in time, nobody is without a good working share of what intellect there is amongst us.”

“No, not a bit! Enough of intellect for the good and happiness of mankind if we evolve no more of it. But this is another thing! This is a *spiritual* evolution, spiritual advance and development—a very different thing! Mark you, too, that it is not shown in a few amongst millions, but is common, general. And though, as you have said, it may perish at its beginnings, trampled out by war, the terrible war to come may absolutely confirm it. For my part, I don't despair of its surviving and spreading even from the battle-field. It is your own word that not only has the growth of common kindness been more urgent, rapid and general this last hundred years than was ever witnessed before in the whole long history of the world, but it has come out as strongly in making war as in making peace. It is seen in extending to foes a benevolence which not long ago would have been thought ludicrous and even unnatural. Why, then, if that's so, the feeling may be furthered and intensified by the very horrors of the next great war, such horrors as there *must* be; and—God knows! God knows!—but from this beginning the spiritual nature of man may be destined to rise as far above the rudimentary thing it is yet (I think of a staggering blind puppy) as King Solomon's wits were above an Eskimo's.”

“Still the same enthusiast,” I said to myself, “though with so great a difference.” But what struck me most was the reverence with which he said “God knows!” For the coolest Encyclopedist could not have denied the existence of God with a more settled air than did “the Vernet of old days.”

“And yet,” so he went on, “were the human race to become all-righteous in a fortnight, and to push out angels' wings from its shoulders, every one! every one! all together on Christmas Day, it would still be the Darwinian process. Yes, we must stick to it, that it is evolution, I suppose, and I'm sure it contents me well enough. What matter for the process! And yet do you know what I think?”

Lights had now been brought in by the waiter—a waiter who really could not understand why not. But we sat by the open window looking out upon the deepening darkness of the garden, beyond which the river shone as if by some pale effulgence of its own, or perhaps by a little store of light saved up from the liberal sunshine of the day.

“Do you know what I think?” said Vernet, with the look of a man who is about to confess a weakness of which he is ashamed. “I sometimes think that if I were of the orthodox I should draw an argument for supernatural religion, against your strict materialists, from this sudden change of heart in Christian countries. For that is what it is. It is a change of heart; or, if you like to have it so, of spirit; and the remarkable thing is that it is *nothing else*. Whether it lasts or not, this awakening of brotherliness cannot be completely understood unless that is understood. What else has changed, these hundred years? There is no fresh discovery of human suffering, no new knowledge of the desperate poverty and toil of so many of our fellow-creatures: nor can we see better with our eyes, or understand better what we hear and see. This that we are talking about is a heart-growth, which, as we know, can make the lowliest peasant divine; not a mind-growth, which can be splendid in the coldest and most devilish man. Well, then, were I of the orthodox I should say this. When, after many generations, I see a traceless movement of the spirit of man like the one we are speaking of—a movement which, if it gains in strength and goes on to its natural end, will transfigure human society and make it infinitely more like heaven—I think the divine influence upon the development of man as a spirit may be direct and continuous; or, it would be better to say, not without repetition.”

Vernet had to be reminded that the intellectual development of man had also shown itself in sudden starts and rushes toward perfection—now in one land, now in another; and never with an appearance of gradual progress, as might be expected from the nature of things. And therefore nothing in the spiritual advance which is declared by the sudden efflorescence of “altruism” dissociates it from the common theory of evolution. This he was forced to admit. “I know,” he replied; “and as to intellectual development showing itself by starts and rushes, it is very obvious.” But though he made the admission, I could see that he preferred belief in direct influence from above. And this was Vernet!—a most unexpected example of that Return to Religion which was not so manifest when we talked together as it is to-day.

“You see, I am a soldier,” he resumed, “and a soldier born and bred does not know how to get on very long without feeling the presence of a General, a Commander. That I find as I grow old; my youth would have been ashamed to acknowledge the sentiment. And for its own sake, I hope that Science is becoming an old gentleman too, and willing to see its youthful confidence in the destruction of religious belief quite upset. For upset it certainly will be, and very much by its own hands. Most of the new professors were sure that the religious idea was to perish at last in the light of scientific inquiry. None of them seemed to suspect what I remember to have read in a fantastic magazine article two or three years ago, that unbelief in the existence of a providential God, the dissolution of that belief, would not retard but probably draw on more quickly the greater and yet unfulfilled triumphs of Christ on earth. Are you surprised at that? Certainly it is not the general idea of what unbelief is capable of. 'And what,' says some one in the story, 'what are those greater triumphs?' To which the answer is: 'The extension of charity, the diffusion of brotherly love, greed suppressed, luxury shameful, service and self-sacrifice a common law'—something like what we see already between mother and child, it was said. Now what do you think of that as a consequence of settled unbelief? As for Belief, we must allow that *that* has not done much to bring on the greater triumphs of Christianity.”

“And how is Unbelief to do this mighty work?” said I.

"You would like to know! Why, in a most natural way, and not at all mysterious. But if you ask in how long a time——! Well, it is thus, as I understand. What the destruction of religious faith might have made of the world centuries ago we cannot tell; nothing much worse, perhaps, than it was under Belief, for belief can exist with little change of heart. But these are new times. Unbelief cannot annihilate the common feeling of humanity. On the contrary, we see that it is just when Science breaks religion down into agnosticism that a new day of tenderness for suffering begins, and poverty looks for the first time like a wrong. And why? To answer that question we should remember what centuries of belief taught us as to the place of man on earth in the plan of the Creator. This world, it was 'a scene of probation.' The mystery of pain and suffering, the burdens of life apportioned so unequally, the wicked prosperous, goodness wretched, innocent weakness trodden down or used up in starving toil—all this was explained by the scheme of probation. It was only for this life; and every hour of it we were under the eyes of a heavenly Father who knows all and weighs all; and there will be a future of redress that will leave no misery unreckoned, no weakness unconsidered, no wrong uncompensated that was patiently borne. Don't you remember? And how comfortable the doctrine was! How entirely it soothed our uneasiness when, sitting in warmth and plenty, we thought of the thousands of poor wretches outside! And it was a comfort for the poor wretches too, who believed most when they were most miserable or foully wronged that in His own good time God would requite or would avenge.

"Very well. But now, says my magazine sermoniser, suppose this idea of a heavenly Father a mistake and probation a fairy tale; suppose that there is no Divine scheme of redress beyond the grave: how do we mortals stand to each other then? How do we stand to each other in a world empty of all promise beyond it? What is to become of our scene-of-probation complacency, we who are happy and fortunate in the midst of so much wrong? And if we do not busy ourselves with a new dispensation on their behalf, what hope or consolation is there for the multitude of our fellow-creatures who are born to unmerited misery in the only world there is for any of us? It is clear that if we must give up the Divine scheme of redress as a dream, redress is an obligation returned upon ourselves. All will not be well in another world: all must be put right in this world or nowhere and never. Dispossessed of God and a future life, mankind is reduced to the condition of the wild creatures, each with a natural right to ravage for its own good. If in such conditions

there is a duty of forbearance from ravaging, there is a duty of helpful surrender too; and unbelief must teach both duties, unless it would import upon earth the hell it denies. 'Unbelief is a call to bring in the justice, the compassion, the oneness of brotherhood that can never make a heaven for us elsewhere.' So the thing goes on; the end of the argument being that in this way unbelief itself may turn to the service of Heaven and do the work of the believer's God. More than that: in the doing of it the spiritual nature of man must be exalted, step by step. That may be its way of perfection. On that path it will rise higher and higher into Divine illuminations which have touched it but very feebly as yet, even after countless ages of existence.

“Do you recognise these speculations?” said Vernet, after a silence.

I recognised them well enough, without at all anticipating that so much of them would presently re-appear in the formal theory of more than one social philosopher.

There was a piano in the little room we dined in. For a minute or two Vernet, standing with his cigar between his lips, went lightly over the keys. The movement, though extremely quick, was wonderfully soft, so that he had not to raise his voice in saying:

“I have an innocent little speculation of my own. How long will it be before this spiritual perfectioning is pretty near accomplishment? Two thousand years? One thousand years? Twenty generations at the least! Ah, that is the despair of us poor wretches of to-day and to-morrow. Well, when the time comes I fancy that an entirely new literature will have a new language. There will certainly be a new literature if ever spiritual progress equals intellectual progress. The dawning of conceptions as yet undreamt of, enlightenments higher than any yet attained to, may be looked for, I suppose, as in the natural order of things; and even *without* extraordinary revelations to the spirit, the spiritual advance must have an enormous effect in disabusing, informing and inspiring mental faculty such as we know it now. And meanwhile? Meanwhile words are all that we speak with, and how weak are words? Already there are heights and depths of feeling which they are hardly more adequate to express than the dumbness of the dog can express his love for his master. Yet there is a language that speaks to the deeper thought and finer spirit in us as words do not—moving them profoundly though they have no power of articulate response. They heave and struggle to reply, till our breasts are actually conscious of pain sometimes; but—no articulate answer. Do you recognise——?”

I pointed to the piano with the finger of interrogation.

“Yes,” said Vernet, with a delicate sweep of the keyboard, “it is this! It is music; music, which is felt to be the most subtle, most appealing, most various of tongues even while we know that we are never more than half awake to its pregnant meanings, and have not learnt to think of it as becoming the last perfection of speech. But that may be its appointed destiny. No, I don't think so only because music itself is a thing of late, speedy and splendid development, coming just before the later diffusion of spiritual growth. Yet there is something in that, something which an evolutionist would think apposite and to be expected. There is more, however, in what music is—a voice always understood to have powerful innumerable meanings appealing to we know not what in us, we hardly know how; and more, again, in its being an exquisite voice which can make no use of reason, nor reason of it; nor calculation, nor barter, nor anything but emotion and thought. The language we are using now, we two, is animal language by direct pedigree, which is worth observation don't you think? And, for another thing, when it began it had very small likelihood of ever developing into what it has become under the constant addition of man's business in the world and the accretive demands of reason and speculation. And the poets have made it very beautiful no doubt; yes, and when it is most beautiful it is most musical, please observe: most beautiful, and at the same time most meaning. Well, then! A new nature, new needs. What do you think? What do you say against music being wrought into another language for mankind, as it nears the height of its spiritual growth?”

“I say it is a pretty fancy, and quite within reasonable speculation.”

“But yet not of the profoundest consequence,” added Vernet, coming from the piano and resuming his seat by the window. “No; but what is of consequence is the cruel tedium of these evolutionary processes. A thousand years, and how much movement?”

“Remember the sudden starts towards perfection, and that the farther we advance the more we may be able to help.”

“Well, but that is the very thing I meant to say. Help is not only desirable, it is imperatively called for. For an unfortunate offensive movement rises against this better one, which will be checked, or perhaps thrown back altogether, unless the stupid reformers who confront the new spirit of kindness with the highwayman's demand are brought to reason. What I most willingly yield to friend and brother I do not choose to yield to an insulting thief; rather will I break his head in the cause of divine Civility. Robbery is no way of righteousness, and your gallant reformers who think it a fine heroic means of bringing on a better time for humanity should be taught that some devil has put the wrong plan into their heads. It is his way of continuing under new conditions the old conflict of evil and good.”

“But taught! How should these so-earnest ones be taught?”

“Ah, how! Then leave the reformers; and while they inculcate their mistaken Gospel of Rancour, let every wise man preach the Gospel of Content.”

“Content—with things as they are?”

“Why, no, my friend; for that would be preaching content with universal uncontent, which of course cannot last into a reign of wisdom and peace. But if you ask me whether I mean content with a very very little of this world's goods, or even contentment in poverty, I say yes. There will be no better day till that gospel has found general acceptance, and has been taken into the common habitudes of life. The end may be distant enough; but it is your own opinion that the time is already ripe for the preacher, and if he were no Peter the Hermit but only another, another——”

“Father Mathew, inspired with more saintly fervour——”

“Who knows how far he might carry the divine light to which so many hearts are awakening in secret? This first Christianity, it was but 'the false dawn.' Yes, we may think so.”

Here there was a pause for a few moments, and then I put in a word to the effect that it would be difficult to commend a gospel of content to Poverty.

“But,” said Vernet, "it will be addressed more to the rich and well-to-do, as you call them, bidding them be content with enough. Not forbidding them to strive for more than enough—that would never do. The good of mankind demands that all its energies should be maintained, but not that its energies should be meanly employed in grubbing for the luxury that is no enjoyment but only a show, or that palls as soon as it is once enjoyed, and then is no more felt as luxury than the labourer's second pair of boots or the mechanic's third shirt a week. For the men of thousands per annum the Gospel of Content would be the wise, wise, wise old injunction to plain living and high thinking, only with one addition both beautiful and wise: kind thinking, and the high and the kind thinking made good in deed. And it would work, this gospel; we may be sure of it already. For luxury has became *common*; it is being found out. Where there was one person at the beginning of the century who had daily experience of its fatiguing disappointments, now there are fifty. Like everything else, it loses distinction by coming abundantly into all sorts of hands; and meanwhile other and nobler kinds of distinction have multiplied and have gained acknowledgment. And from losing distinction—this you must have observed—luxury is becoming vulgar; and I don't know why the time should be so very far off when it will be accounted shameful. Certain it is that year by year a greater number of minds, and such as mostly determine the currents of social sentiment, think luxury *low*; without going deeper than the mere look of it, perhaps. These are hopeful signs. Here is good encouragement to stand out and preach a gospel of content which would be an education in simplicity, dignity, happiness, and yet more an education of heart and spirit. For nothing that a man can do in this world works so powerfully for his own spiritual good as the habit of sacrifice to kindness. It is so like a miracle that it is, I am sure, the one way—the one way appointed by the laws of our spiritual growth.

“Yes, and what about preaching the gospel of content to Poverty? Well, there we must be careful to discriminate—careful to disentangle poverty from some other things which are the same thing in the common idea. Say but this, that there must be no content with squalor, none with any sort of uncleanness, and poverty takes its own separate place and its own unsmirched aspect. An honourable poverty, clear of squalor, any man should be able to endure with a tranquil mind. To attain to that tranquillity is to attain to nobleness; and persistence in it, though effort fail and desert go quite without reward, ennobles. Contentment in poverty does not mean crouching to it or under it. Contentment is not cowardice, but fortitude. There is no truer assertion of manliness, and none with more grace and sweetness. Before it can have an established place in the breast of any man, envy must depart from it—envy, jealousy, greed, readiness to take half-honest gains, a horde of small ignoble sentiments not only disturbing but poisonous to the ground they grow in. Ah, believe me! if a man had eloquence enough, fire enough, and that command of sympathy that your Gordon seems to have had (not to speak of a man like Mahomet or to touch on more sacred names), he might do wonders for mankind in a single generation by preaching to rich and poor the several doctrines of the Gospel of Content. A curse on the mean strivings, stealings, and hoardings that survive from our animal ancestry, and another curse (by your permission) on the gaudy vanities that we have set up for objects in life since we became reasoning creatures.”

* * * * *

In effect, here the conversation ended. More was said, but nothing worth recalling. Drifting back to less serious talk, we gossiped till midnight, and then parted with the heartiest desire (I speak for myself) of meeting soon again. But on our way back to town Vernet recurred for a moment to the subject of his discourse, saying:

“I don't make out exactly what you think now of the prospect we were talking of.”

My answer pleased him. “I incline to think,” said I, “what I have long thought: that if there is any such future for us, and I believe there is, we of the older European nations will be nowhere when it comes. In existence—yes, perhaps; but gone down. You see we are becoming greybeards already; while you in Russia are boys, with every mark of boyhood on you. You, you are a new race—the only new race in the world; and it is plain that you swarm with ideas of precisely the kind that, when you come to maturity, may re-invigorate the world. But first, who knows what deadly wars?”

He pressed his hand upon my knee in a way that spoke a great deal. We parted, and two months afterwards the Vernet whose real name ended in “ieff” was “happed in lead.”

Poor Cousin Louis

By Ella D'Arcy

There stands in the Islands a house known as «Les Calais.» It has stood there already some three hundred years, and to judge from its stout walls and weather-tight appearance, promises to stand some three hundred more. Built of brown home-quarried stone, with solid stone chimney-stacks and roof of red tiles, its door is set in the centre beneath a semi-circular arch of dressed granite, on the keystone of which is deeply cut the date of construction:

J V N I
1 6 0 3

Above the date straggle the letters, L G M M, initials of the forgotten names of the builder of the house and of the woman he married. In the summer weather of 1603 that inscription was cut, and the man and woman doubtless read it with pride and pleasure as they stood looking up at their fine new homestead. They believed it would carry their names down to posterity when they themselves should be gone; yet there stand the initials to-day, while the personalities they represent are as lost to memory as are the builders' graves.

At the moment when this little sketch opens, Les Calais had belonged for three generations to the family of Renouf (pronounced Rennuf), and it is with the closing days of Mr. Louis Renouf that it purposes to deal. But first to complete the description of the house, which is typical of the Islands: hundreds of such homesteads placed singly, or in groups—then sharing in one common name—may be found there in a day's walk, although it must be added that a day's walk almost suffices to explore any one of the Islands from end to end.

Les Calais shares its name with none. It stands alone, completely hidden, save at one point only, by its ancient elms. On either side of the doorway are two windows, each of twelve small panes, and there is a row of five similar windows above. Around the back and sides of the house cluster all sorts of outbuildings, necessary dependencies of a time when men made their own cider and candles, baked their own bread, cut and stacked their own wood, and dried the dung of their herds for extra winter fuel. Beyond these lie its vegetable and fruit gardens, which again are surrounded on every side by its many rich vergées of pasture land.

Would you find Les Calais, take the high road from Jacques-le-Port to the village of St. Gilles, then keep to the left of the schools along a narrow lane cut between high hedges. It is a cart track only, as the deep sun-baked ruts testify, leading direct from St. Gilles to Vauvert, and, likely enough, during the whole of that distance you will not meet with a solitary person. You will see nothing but the green running hedgerows on either hand, the blue-domed sky above, from whence the lark, a black pin-point in the blue, flings down a gush of song; while the thrush you have disturbed lunching off that succulent snail, takes short ground flights before you, at every pause turning back an ireful eye to judge how much farther you intend to pursue him. He is happy if you branch off midway to the left down the lane leading straight to Les Calais.

A gable end of the house faces this lane, and its one window in the days of Louis Renouf looked down upon a dilapidated farm- and stable-yard, the gate of which, turned back upon its hinges, stood wide open to the world. Within might be seen granaries empty of grain, stables where no horses fed, a long cow-house crumbling into ruin, and the broken stone sections of a cider trough dismantled more than half a century back. Cushions of emerald moss studded the thatches, and lilliputian forests of grass blades sprang thick between the cobble stones. The place might have been mistaken for some deserted grange, but for the contradiction conveyed in a bright pewter full-bellied water-can standing near the well, in a pile of firewood, with chopper still stuck in the topmost billet, and in a tatterdemalion troop of barn-door fowl lagging meditatively across the yard.

On a certain day, when summer warmth and unbroken silence brooded over all, and the broad sunshine blent the yellows, reds, and greys of tile and stone, the greens of grass and foliage, into one harmonious whole, a visitor entered the open gate. This was a tall, large young woman, with a fair, smooth, thirty-year-old face. Dressed in what was obviously her Sunday best, although it was neither Sunday nor even market-day, she wore a bonnet diademed with gas-green lilies of the valley, a netted black mantilla, and a velvet-trimmed violet silk gown, which she carefully lifted out of dust's way, thus displaying a stiffly starched petticoat and kid spring-side boots.

Such attire, unbeautiful in itself and incongruous with its surroundings, jarred harshly with the picturesque note of the scene. From being a subject to perpetuate on canvas, it shrunk, as it were, to the background of a cheap photograph, or the stage adjuncts to the heroine of a farce. The silence too was shattered as the new comer's foot fell upon the stones. An unseen dog began to mouth a joyous welcome, and the fowls, lifting their thin, apprehensive faces towards her, flopped into a clumsy run as though their last hour were visible.

The visitor meanwhile turned familiar steps to a door in the wall on the left, and raising the latch, entered the flower garden of Les Calais. This garden, lying to the south, consisted then, and perhaps does still, of two square grass-plots with a broad gravel path running round them and up to the centre of the house.

In marked contrast with the neglect of the farmyard was this exquisitely kept garden, brilliant and fragrant with flowers. From a raised bed in the centre of each plot standard rose-trees shed out gorgeous perfume from chalices of every shade of loveliness, and thousands of white pinks justled shoulder to shoulder in narrow bands cut within the borders of the grass.

Busy over these, his back towards her, was an elderly man, braces hanging, in coloured cotton shirt. “Good afternoon, Tourtel,” cried the lady, advancing. Thus addressed, he straightened himself slowly and turned round. Leaning on his hoe, he shaded his eyes with his hand. “Eh den! it's you, Missis Pedvinn,” said he; “but we didn't expec' you till to-morrow?”

“No, it's true,” said Mrs. Poidevin, “that I wrote I would come Saturday, but Pedvinn expects some friends by the English boat, and wants me to receive them. Yet as they may be staying the week, I did not like to put poor Cousin Louis off so long without a visit, so thought I had better come up to-day.”

Almost unconsciously, her phrases assumed apologetic form. She had an uneasy feeling Tourtel's wife might resent her unexpected advent; although why Mrs. Tourtel should object, or why she herself should stand in any awe of the Tourtels, she could net have explained. Tourtel was but gardener, the wife housekeeper and nurse, to her cousin Louis Renouf, master of Les Calais. “I sha'n't inconvenience Mrs. Tourtel, I hope? Of course I shouldn't think of staying tea if she is busy; I'll just sit an hour with Cousin Louis, and catch the six o'clock omnibus home from Vauvert.”

Tourtel stood looking at her with wooden countenance, in which two small shifting eyes alone gave signs of life. “Eh, but you won't be no inconvenience to de ole woman, ma'am,” said he suddenly, in so loud a voice that Mrs. Poidevin jumped; “only de apple-gôche, dat she was gain' to bake agen your visit, won't be ready, dat's all.”

He turned, and stared up at the front of the house; Mrs. Poidevin, for no reason at all, did so too. Door and windows were open wide. In the upper storey, the white roller-blinds were let down against the sun, and on the broad sills of the parlour windows were nosegays placed in blue china jars. A white trellis-work criss-crossed over the façade, for the support of climbing rose and purple clematis which hung out a curtain of blossom almost concealing the masonry behind. The whole place breathed of peace and beauty, and Louisa Poidevin was lapped round with that pleasant sense of well-being which it was her chief desire in life never to lose. Though poor Cousin Louis—feeble, childish, solitary—was so much to be pitied, at least in his comfortable home and his worthy Tourtels he found compensation.

An instant after Tourtel had spoken, a woman passed across the wide hall. She had on a blue linen skirt, white stockings, and shoes of grey list. The strings of a large, bibbed, lilac apron drew the folds of a flowered bed-jacket about her ample waist; and her thick yellow-grey hair, worn without a cap, was arranged smoothly on either side of a narrow head. She just glanced out, and Mrs. Poidevin was on the point of calling to her, when Tourtel fell into a torrent of words about his flowers. He had so much to say on the subject of horticulture; was so anxious for her to examine the freesia bulbs lying in the tool-house, just separated from the spring plants; he denounced so fiercely the grinding policy of Brehault the middleman, who purchased his garden stuff to resell it at Covent Garden—“my good! on dem freesias I didn't make not two doubles a bunch!”—that for a long quarter of an hour all memory of her cousin was driven from Mrs. Poidevin's brain. Then a voice said at her elbow, “Mr. Rennuf is quite ready to see you, ma'am,” and there stood Tourtel's wife, with pale composed face, square shoulders and hips, and feet that moved noiselessly in her list slippers.

“Ah, Mrs. Tourtel, how do you do?” said the visitor; a question which in the Islands is no mere formula, but demands and obtains a detailed answer, after which the questioner's own health is politely inquired into. Not until this ceremony had been scrupulously accomplished, and the two women were on their way to the house, did Mrs. Poidevin beg to know how things were going with her “poor cousin.”

There lay something at variance between the ruthless, calculating spirit which looked forth from the housekeeper's cold eye, and the extreme suavity of her manner of speech.

“Eh, my good! but much de same, ma'am, in his health, an' more fancies dan ever in his head. First one ting an' den anudder, an' always tinking dat everybody is robbin' him. You rem-ember de larse time you was here, an' Mister Rennuf was abed? Well, den, after you was gone, if he didn't deck-clare you had taken some of de fedders of his bed away wid you. Yes, my good! he tought you had cut a hole in de tick, as you sat dere beside him an' emptied de fedders away into your pocket.”

Mrs. Poidevin was much interested. “Dear me, is it possible?... But it's quite a mania with him. I remember now, on that very day he complained to me Tourtel was wearing his shirts, and wanted me to go in with him to Lepage's to order some new ones.”

“Eh! but what would Tourtel want wid fine white shirts like dem?” said the wife placidly. “But Mr. Louis have such dozens an' dozens of 'em dat dey gets hidden away in de presses, an' he tinks dem stolen.”

They reached the house. The interior is quite as characteristic of the Islands as is the outside. Two steps take you down into the hall, crossing the further end of which is the staircase with its balustrade of carved black oak. Instead of the mean painted sticks, known technically as

“raisers,” and connected together at the top by a vulgar mahogany hand-rail—a fundamental article of faith with the modern builder—these old Island balustrades are formed of wooden panels, fretted out into scrolls, representing flower, or leaf, or curious beaked and winged creatures, which go curving, creeping, and ramping along in the direction of the stairs. In every house you will find the detail different, while each resembles all as a whole. For in the old days the workman, were he never so humble, recognised the possession of an individual mind, as well as of two eyes and two hands, and he translated fearlessly this individuality of his into his work. Every house built in those days and existing down to these, is not only a confession, in some sort, of the tastes, the habits, the character, of the man who planned it, but preserves a record likewise of every one of the subordinate minds employed in the various parts.

Off the hall of Les Calais are two rooms on the left and one on the right. The solidity of early seventeenth-century walls is shown in the embrasure depth (measuring fully three feet) of windows and doors. Up to fifty years ago all the windows had leaded casements, as had every similar Island dwelling-house. To-day, to the artist's regret, you will hardly find one. The showy taste of the Second Empire spread from Paris even to these remote parts, and plate-glass, or at least oblong panes, everywhere replaced the mediæval style. In 1854, Louis Renouf, just three and thirty, was about to bring his bride, Miss Marie Mauger, home to the old house. In her honour it was done up throughout, and the diamonded casements were replaced by guillotine windows, six panes to each sash.

The best parlour then became a “drawing-room”; its raftered ceiling was whitewashed, and its great centre-beam of oak infamously papered to match the walls. The newly married couple were not in a position to refurnish in approved Second Empire fashion. The gilt and marble, the console tables and mirrors, the impossibly curved sofas and chairs, were for the moment beyond them; the wife promised herself to acquire these later on. But later on came a brood of sickly children (only one of whom reached manhood); to the consequent expenses Les Calais owed the preservation of its inlaid wardrobes, its four-post bedsteads with slender fluted columns, and its Chippendale parlour chairs, the backs of which simulate a delicious intricacy of twisted ribbons. As a little girl, Louisa Poidevin had often amused herself studying these convolutions, and seeking to puzzle out among the rippling ribbons some beginning or some end; but as she grew up, even the simplest problem lost interest for her, and the sight of the old Chippendale chairs standing along the walls of the large parlour scarcely stirred her bovine mind now to so much as reminiscence.

It was the door of this large parlour that the housekeeper opened as she announced, “Here is Mrs. Pedvinn come to see you, sir,” and followed the visitor in.

Sitting in a capacious “berceuse,” stuffed and chintz-covered, was the shrunken figure of a more than seventy-year-old man. He was wrapped in a worn grey dressing-gown, with a black velvet skull-cap, napless at the seams, covering his spiritless hair, and he looked out upon his narrow world from dim eyes set in cavernous orbits. In their expression was something of the questioning timidity of a child, contrasting curiously with the querulousness of old age, shown in the thin sucked-in lips, now and again twitched by a movement in unison with the twitching of the withered hands spread out upon his knees.

The sunshine, slanting through the low windows, bathed hands and knees, lean shanks and slippered feet, in mote-flecked streams of gold. It bathed anew rafters and ceiling-beam, as it had done at the same hour and season these last three hundred years; it played over the worm-eaten furniture, and lent transitory colour to the faded samplers on the walls, bringing into prominence one particular sampler, which depicted in silks Adam and Eve seated beneath the fatal tree, and recorded the fact that Marie Hochedé was seventeen in 1808 and put her “trust in God”; and the same ray kissed the check of that very Marie's son, who at the time her girlish fingers pricked the canvas belonged to the enviable myriads of the unthought-of and the unborn.

“Why, how cold you are, Cousin Louis,” said Mrs. Poidevin, taking his passive hand between her two warm ones, and feeling a chill strike from it through the violet kid gloves; “and in spite of all this sunshine too!”

“Ah, I'm not always in the sunshine,” said the old man; “not always, not always in the sunshine.” She was not sure that he recognised her, yet he kept hold of her hand and would not let it go.

“No; you are not always in de sunshine, because de sunshine is not always here,” observed Mrs. Tourtel in a reasonable voice, and with a side glance for the visitor.

“And I am not always here either,” he murmured, half to himself. He took a firmer hold of his cousin's hand, and seemed to gain courage from the comfortable touch, for his thin voice changed from complaint to command. “You can go, Mrs. Tourtel,” he said; “we don't require you here. We want to talk. You can go and set the tea-things in the next room. My cousin will stay and drink tea with me.”

“Why, my cert'nly! of course Mrs. Pedvinn will stay tea. P'r'aps you'd like to put your bonnet off in the bedroom, first, ma'am?”

“No, no,” he interposed testily, “she can lay it off here. No need for you to take her upstairs.”

Servant and master exchanged a mute look; for the moment his old eyes were lighted up with the unforeseeing, unveiled triumph of a child; then they fell before hers. She turned, leaving the room with noiseless tread; although a large-built, ponderous woman, she walked with the

softness of a cat.

“Sit down here close beside me,” said Louis Renouf to his cousin, “I've something to tell you, something very important to tell you.” He lowered his voice mysteriously, and glanced with apprehension at window and door, squeezing tight her hand. “I'm being robbed, my dear, robbed of everything I possess.”

Mrs. Poidevin, already prepared for such a statement, answered complacently, “Oh, it must be your fancy, Cousin Louis. Mrs. Tourtel takes too good care of you for that.”

“My dear,” he whispered, “silver, linen, everything is going; even my fine white shirts from the shelves of the wardrobe. Yet everything belongs to poor John, who is in Australia, and who never writes to his father now. His last letter is ten years old—ten years old, my dear, and I don't need to read it over, for I know it by heart.”

Tears of weakness gathered in his eyes, and began to trickle over on to his check.

“Oh, Cousin John will write soon, I'm sure,” said Mrs. Poidevin, with easy optimism; “I shouldn't wonder if he has made a fortune, and is on his way home to you at this moment.”

“Ah, he will never make a fortune, my dear, he was always too fond of change. He had excellent capabilities, Louisa, but he was too fond of change.... And yet I often sit and pretend to myself he has made money, and is as proud to be with his poor old father as he used to be when quite a little lad. I plan out all we should do, and all he would say, and just how he would look ... but that's only my make-believe; John will never make money, never. But I'd be glad if he would come back to the old home, though it were without a penny. For if he don't come soon, he'll find no home, and no welcome.... I raised all the money I could when he went away, and now, as you know, my dear, the house and land go to you and Pedvinn.... But I'd like my poor boy to have the silver and linen, and his mother's furniture and needlework to remember us by.”

“Yes, cousin, and he will have them some day, but not for a great while yet, I hope.”

Louis Renouf shook his head, with the immovable obstinacy of the very old or the very young.

“Louisa, mark my words, he will get nothing, nothing. Everything is going. They'll make away with the chairs and the tables next, with the very bed I lie on.”

“Oh, Cousin Louis, you mustn't think such things,” said Mrs. Poidevin serenely; had not the poor old man accused her to the Tourtels of filching his mattress feathers?

“Ah, you don't believe me, my dear,” said he, with a resignation which was pathetic; “but you'll remember my words when I am gone. Six dozen rat-tailed silver forks, with silver candlesticks, and tray, and snuffers. Besides odd pieces, and piles and piles of linen. Your cousin Marie was a notable housekeeper, and everything she bought was of the very best. The large table-cloths were five guineas apiece, my dear, British money—five guineas apiece.”

Louisa listened with perfect calmness and scant attention. Circumstances too comfortable, and a too abundant diet, had gradually undermined with her all perceptive and reflective powers. Though, of course, had the household effects been coming to her as well as the land, she would have felt more interest in them; but it is only human nature to contemplate the possible losses of others with equanimity.

“They must be handsome cloths, cousin,” she said pleasantly; “I'm sure Pedvinn would never allow me half so much for mine.”

At this moment there appeared, framed in the open window, the hideous vision of an animated gargoyle, with elf-locks of flaming red, and an intense malignancy of expression. With a finger dragging down the under eyelid of either eye, so that the eyeball seemed to bulge out—with a finger pulling back either corner of the wide mouth, so that it seemed to touch the ear—this repulsive apparition leered at the old man in blood-curdling fashion. Then catching sight of Mrs. Poidevin, who sat dumfounded, and with her “heart in her mouth,” as she afterwards expressed it, the fingers dropped from the face, the features sprang back into position, and the gargoyle resolved itself into a buxom red-haired girl, who, bursting into a laugh, impudently stuck her tongue out at them before skipping away.

The old man had cowered down in his chair with his hands over his eyes; now he looked up. “I thought it was the old Judy,” he said, “the old Judy she is always telling me about. But it's only Margot.”

“And who is Margot, cousin?” inquired Louisa, still shaken from the surprise.

“She helps in the kitchen. But I don't like her. She pulls faces at me, and jumps out upon me from behind doors. And when the wind blows and the windows rattle she tells me about the old Judy from Jethou, who is sailing over the sea on a broomstick, to come and beat me to death. Do you know, my dear,” he said piteously, “you'll think I'm very silly, but I'm afraid up here by myself all alone? Do not leave me, Louisa; stay with me, or take me back to town with you. Pedvinn would let me have a room in your house, I'm sure? And you wouldn't find me much trouble, and of course I would bring my own bed linen, you know.”

“You had best take your tea first, sir,” said Mrs. Tourtel from outside the window; she held scissors in her hand, and was busy trimming the roses. She offered no excuse for eavesdropping.

The meal was set out, Island fashion, with abundant cakes and sweets. Louisa saw in the silver tea-set another proof, if need be, of her cousin's unfounded suspicions. Mrs. Tourtel stood in the background, waiting. Renouf desired her to pack his things; he was going into town. “To be sure, sir,” she said civilly, and remained where she stood. He brought a clenched hand down upon the table, so that the china rattled. “Are you master here, or am I?” he cried; “I am going down to my cousin Pedvinn's. To-morrow I shall send my notary to put seals on everything, and to take an inventory. For the future I shall live in town.”

His senility had suddenly left him; he spoke with firmness; it was a flash-up of almost extinct fires. Louisa was astounded. Mrs. Tourtel looked at him steadily. Through the partition wall, Tourtel in the kitchen heard the raised voice, and followed his curiosity into the parlour. Margot followed him. Seen near, and with her features at rest, she appeared a plump touzle-headed girl, in whose low forehead and loose-lipped mouth, crassness, cruelty, and sensuality were unmistakably expressed. Yet freckled cheek, rounded chin, and bare red mottled arms, presented the beautiful curves of youth, and there was a certain sort of attractiveness about her not to be gainsaid.

“Since my servants refuse to pack what I require,” said Renouf with dignity, “I will do it myself. Come with me, Louisa.”

At a sign from the housekeeper, Tourtel and Margot made way. Mrs. Poidevin would have followed her cousin, as the easiest thing to do—although she was confused by the old man's outbreak, and incapable of deciding what course she should take—when the deep vindictive baying of the dog ushered a new personage upon the scene.

This was an individual who made his appearance from the kitchen regions—a tall thin man of about thirty years of age, with a pallid skin, a dark eye and a heavy moustache. His shabby black coat and tie, with the cords and gaiters that clothed his legs, suggested a combination of sportsman and family practitioner. He wore a bowler hat, and was pulling off tan driving gloves as he advanced.

“Ah my good! Doctor Owen, but dat's you?” said Mrs. Tourtel. “But we wants you here badly. Your patient is in one of his tantrums, and no one can't do nuddin wid him. He says he shall go right away into town. Wants to make up again wid Doctor Lelever for sure.”

The new comer and Mrs. Poidevin were examining each other with the curiosity one feels on first meeting a person long known by reputation or by sight. But now she turned to the housekeeper in surprise.

“Has my cousin quarrelled with his old friend Doctor Lelever?” she asked. “I've heard nothing of that.”

“Ah, dis long time. He tought Doctor Lelever made too little of his megrims. He won't have nobody but Dr. Owen now. P'r'aps you know Doctor Owen, ma'am? Mrs. Pedvinn, Doctor; de master's cousin, come up to visit him.”

Renouf was heard moving about overhead; opening presses, dragging boxes.

Owen hung up his hat, putting his gloves inside it. He rubbed his lean discoloured hands lightly together, as a fly cleans its forelegs.

“Shall I just step up to him?” he said. “It may calm him, and distract his thoughts.”

With soft nimbleness, in a moment he was upstairs. “So that's Doctor Owen?” observed Mrs. Poidevin with interest. “A splendid-looking gentleman! He must be very clever, I'm sure. Is he beginning to get a good practice yet?”

“Ah, bah, our people, as you know, ma'am, dey don't like no strangers, specially no Englishmen. He was very glad when Mr. Renouf sent for him.... 'Twas through Margot there. She got took bad one Saturday coming back from market from de heat or de squidge” (crowd), “and Doctor Owen he overtook her on the road in his gig, and druv her home. Den de master, he must have a talk with him, and so de next time he fancy hisself ill, he send for Doctor Owen, and since den he don't care for Dr. Lelever no more at all.”

“I ought to be getting off,” remarked Mrs. Poidevin, remembering the hour at which the omnibus left Vauvert; “had I better go up and bid cousin Louis good-bye?”

Mrs. Tourtel thought Margot should go and ask the Doctor's opinion first, but as Margot had already vanished, she went herself.

There was a longish pause, during which Mrs. Poidevin looked uneasily at Tourtel; he with restless furtive eyes at her. Then the housekeeper reappeared, noiseless, cool, determined as ever.

“Mr. Rennuf is quiet now,” she said; “de Doctor have given him a soothing draught, and will stay to see how it acts. He tinks you'd better slip quietly away.”

On this, Louisa Poidevin left Les Calais; but in spite of her easy superficiality, her unreasoning optimism, she took with her a sense of oppression. Cousin Louis's appeal rang in her ears: “Do not leave me; stay with me, or take me back with you. I am afraid up here, quite alone.” And after all, though his fears were but the folly of old age, why, she asked herself, should he not come and

stay with them in town if he wished to do so? She resolved to talk it over with Pedvinn; she thought she would arrange for him the little west room, being the furthest from the nurseries; and in planning out such vastly important trifles as to which easy-chair and which bedroom candlestick she would devote to his use, she forgot the old man himself and recovered her usual stolid jocundity.

When Owen had entered the bedroom, he had found Renouf standing over an open portmanteau, into which he was placing hurriedly whatever caught his eye or took his fancy, from the surrounding tables. His hand trembled from eagerness, his pale old face was flushed with excitement and hope. Owen, going straight up to him, put his two hands on his shoulders, and without uttering a word, gently forced him backwards into a chair. Then he sat down in front of him, so close that their knees touched, and fixing his strong eyes on Renouf's wavering ones, and stroking with his finger-tips the muscles behind the ears, he threw him immediately into an hypnotic trance.

“You want to stay here, don't you?” said Owen emphatically. “I want to stay here,” repeated the old man through grey lips. His face was become the colour of ashes, his hands were cold to the sight. “You want your cousin to go away and not disturb you any more? Answer—answer me.” “I want my cousin to go away,” Renouf murmured, but in his staring, fading eye were traces of the struggle tearing him within.

Owen pressed down the eyelids, made another pass before the face, and rose on his long legs with a sardonic grin. Margot, leaning across a corner of the bed, had watched him with breathless interest.

“I b'lieve you're de Evil One himself,” she said admiringly.

Owen pinched her smooth chin between his tobacco-stained thumb and fingers.

“Pooh! nothing but a trick I learned in Paris,” said he; “it's very convenient to be able to put a person to sleep now and again.”

“Could you put any one to sleep?”

“Any one I wanted to.”

“Do it to me then,” she begged him.

“What use, my girl? Don't you do all I wish without?”

She grimaced, and picked at the bed-quilt laughing, then rose and stood in front of him, her round red arms clasped behind her head. But he only glanced at her with professional interest.

“You should get married, my dear, without delay. Pierre would be ready enough, no doubt?”—“Bah! Pierre or annuder—if I brought a weddin' portion. You don't tink to provide me wid one, I s'pose?”—“You know that I can't. But why don't you get it from the Tourtels? You've earned it before this, I dare swear.”

It was now that the housekeeper came up, and took down to Louisa Poidevin the message given above. But first she was detained by Owen, to assist him in getting his patient into bed.

The old man woke up during the process, very peevish, very determined to get to town. “Well, you can't go till to-morrow den,” said Mrs. Tourtel; “your cousin has gone home, an' now you've got to go to sleep, so be quiet.” She dropped all semblance of respect in her tones. “Come, lie down!” she said sharply, “or I'll send Margot to tickle your feet.” He shivered and whimpered into silence beneath the clothes.

“Margot tells him 'bout witches, an ogres, an scrapels her fingures 'long de wall, till he tinks dere goin' to fly 'way wid him,” she explained to Owen in an aside. “Oh, I know Margot,” he answered laconically, and thought, “May I never lie helpless within reach of such fingers as hers.”

He took a step and stumbled over a portmanteau lying open at his feet. “Put your mischievous paws to some use,” he told the girl, “and clear these things away from the floor;” then remembering his rival Le Lièvre; “if the old fool had really got away to town, it would have been a nice day's work for us all,” he added.

Downstairs he joined the Tourtels in the kitchen, a room situated behind the living-room on the left, with low green glass windows, rafters and woodwork smoke-browned with the fires of a dozen generations. In the wooden racks over by the chimney hung flitches of home-cured bacon, and the kettle was suspended by three chains over the centre of the wide hearth, where glowed and crackled an armful of sticks. So dark was the room, in spite of the daylight outside, that two candles were set in the centre of the table, enclosing in their circles of yellow light the pale face and silver hair of the housekeeper, and Tourtel's rugged head and weather-beaten countenance.

He had glasses ready, and a bottle of the cheap brandy for which the Island is famous. “You'll take a drop of something, eh, Doctor?” he said as Owen seated himself on the joncière, a padded settle—green baize covered, to replace the primitive rushes—fitted on one side of the hearth. He stretched his long legs into the light, and for a moment considered moodily the old gaiters and cobbled boots. “You've seen to the horse?” he asked Tourtel.

“My cert'nly; he's in de stable dis hour back, an' I've given him a feed. I tought maybe you'd make a night of it?”

“I may as well for all the work I have to do,” said Owen with sourness; “a damned little Island this for doctors. Nothing ever the matter with anyone except the 'creeps,' and those who have it spend their last penny in making it worse.”

“Dere's as much illness here as anywhere,” said Tourtel, defending the reputation of his native soil, “if once you gets among de right class, among de people as has de time an' de money to make dereselves ill. But if you go foolin' roun' wid de paysans, what can you expec'? We workin' folks can't afford to lay up an' buy ourselves doctors' stuff.”

“And how am I to get among the right class?” retorted Owen, sucking the ends of his moustache into his mouth and chewing them savagely. “A more confounded set of stuck-up, beggarly aristocrats I never met than your people here.” His discontented eye rested on Mrs. Tourtel. “That Mrs. Pedvinn is the wife of Pedvinn the Jurat, I suppose?”—“Yes, de Pedvinns of Rohais.” “Good people,” said Owen thoughtfully; “in with the de Càterelles, and the Dadderney (d'Aldenois) set. Are there children?”—“Tree.”

He took a drink of the spirit and water; his bad temper passed. Margot came in from upstairs.

“De marster sleeps as dough he'd never wake again,” she announced, flinging herself into the chair nearest Owen.

“It's 'bout time he did,” Tourtel growled.

“I should have thought it more to your interest to keep him alive?” Owen inquired. “A good place, surely?”

“A good place if you like to call it so,” the wife answered him; “but what, if he go to town, as he say to-night? and what, if he send de notary, to put de scellés here?—den he take up again wid Dr. Lelever, dat's certain.” And Tourtel added in his surly key, “Anyway, I've been workin' here dese tirty years now, an' dat's 'bout enough.”

“In fact, when the orange is sucked, you throw away the peel? But are you quite sure it is sucked dry?”

“De house an' de lan' go to de Pedvinns, an' all de money die too, for de little he had left when young John went 'crost de seas, he sunk in a 'nuity. Dere's nuddin' but de lining, an' plate, an' such like, as goes to de son.”

“And what he finds of that, I expect, will scarcely add to his impedimenta?” said Owen grinning. He thought, “The old man is well known in the island, the name of his medical attendant would get mentioned in the papers at least; just as well Le Lièvre should not have the advertisement.” Besides, there were the Poidevins.

“You might say a good word for me to Mrs. Pedvinn,” he said aloud, “I live nearer to Rohais than Lelever does, and with young children she might be glad to have some one at hand.”

“You may be sure you won't never find me ungrateful, sir,” answered the housekeeper; and Owen, shading his eyes with his hand, sat pondering over the use of this word “ungrateful,” with its faint yet perceptible emphasis.

Margot, meanwhile, laid the supper; the remains of a rabbit-pie, a big “pinclos” or spider crab, with thin, red knotted legs, spreading far over the edges of the dish, the apple-gôche, hot from the oven, cider, and the now half-empty bottle of brandy. The four sat down and fell to. Margot was in boisterous spirits; everything she said or did was meant to attract Owen's attention. Her cheeks flamed with excitement; she wanted his eyes to be perpetually upon her. But Owen's interest in her had long ceased. To-night, while eating heartily, he was absorbed in his ruling passion: to get on in the world, to make money, to be admitted into Island society. Behind the pallid, impenetrable mask, which always enraged yet intimidated Margot, he plotted incessantly, schemed, combined, weighed this and that, studied his prospects from every point of view.

Supper over, he lighted his meerschaum; Tourtel produced a short clay, and the bottle was passed between them. The women left them together, and for ten, twenty minutes, there was complete silence in the room. Tourtel let his pipe go out, and rapped it down brusquely upon the table.

“It must come to an end,” he said, with suppressed ferocity; “are we eider to spen' de whole of our lives here, or else be turned off at de eleventh hour after sufferin' all de heat an' burden of de day? Its onreasonable. An' dere's de cottage at Cottu standin' empty, an' me havin' to pay a man to look after de tomato houses, when I could get fifty per cent. more by lookin' after dem myself.... An' what profit is such a sickly, shiftless life as dat? My good! dere's not a man, woman, or chile in de Islan's as will shed a tear when he goes, an' dere's some, I tells you, as have suffered from his whimsies dese tirty years, as will rejoice. Why, his wife was dead already when we come here, an' his on'y son, a dirty, drunken, lazy vaurien too, has never been near him for fifteen years, nor written neider. Dead most likely, in foreign parts.... An' what's he want to stay for, contraryin' an' thwartin' dem as have sweated an' laboured, an' now, please de good God, wan's to sit 'neath de shadow of dere own fig-tree for de short time dat remains to dem?... An' what do we get for stayin'? Forty pound, Island money, between de two of us, an' de little I makes from de flowers, an' poultry, an' such like. An' what do we do for it? Bake, an' wash, an' clean, an' cook, an' keep de garden in order, an' nuss him in all his tantrums.... If we was even on his testament, I'd say nuddin. But everything goes to Pedvinns, an' de son John, and de little bit of

income dies wid him. I tell you 'tis 'bout time dis came to an end."

Owen recognised that Destiny asked no sin more heinous from him than silence, perhaps concealment; the chestnuts would reach him without risk of burning his hand. "It's time," said he, "I thought of going home. Get your lantern, and I'll help you with the trap. But first, I'll just run up and have another look at Mr. Rennuf."

For the last time the five personages of this obscure little tragedy found themselves together in the bedroom, now lighted by a small lamp which stood on the wash-hand-stand. Owen, who had to stoop to enter the door, could have touched the low-pitched ceiling with his hand. The bed, with its slender pillars, supporting a canopy of faded damask, took up the greater part of the room. There was a fluted headpiece of the damask, and long curtains of the same material, looped up, on either side of the pillows. Sunken in these lay the head of the old man, crowned with a cotton nightcap, the eyes closed, the skin drawn tight over the skull, the outline of the attenuated form indistinguishable beneath the clothes. The arms lay outside the counterpane, straight down on either side; and the mechanical playing movement of the fingers showed he was not asleep. Margot and Mrs. Tourtel watched him from the bed's foot. Their gigantic shadows thrown forward by the lamp, stretched up the opposite wall, and covered half the ceiling. The old-fashioned mahogany furniture, with its fillets of paler wood, drawn in ovals, upon the doors of the presses, their centrepieces of fruit and flowers, shone out here and there with reflected light; and the looking-glass, swung on corkscrew mahogany pillars between the damask window curtains, gleamed lake-like amidst the gloom.

Owen and Tourtel joined the women at the bedfoot; though each was absorbed entirely in his own egotisms, all were animated by the same secret desire. Yet, to the feeling heart, there was something unspeakably pleading in the sight of the old man lying there, in his helplessness, in the very room, on the very bed, which had seen his wedding-night fifty years before; where as a much-wished-for and welcomed infant, he had opened his eyes to the light more than seventy years since. He had been helpless then as now, but then the child had been held to loving hearts, loving fingers had tended him, a young and loving mother lay beside him, the circumference of all his tiny world, as he was the core and centre of all of hers. And from being that exquisite, well-beloved little child, he had passed thoughtlessly, hopefully, despairfully, wearily, through all the stages of life, until he had come to this—a poor, old, feeble, helpless, worn-out man, lying there where he had been born, but with all those who had loved him carried long ago to the grave: with the few who might have protected him still, his son, his cousin, his old friend Le Lièvre, as powerless to save him as the silent dead.

Renouf opened his eyes, looked in turn at the four faces before him, and read as much pity in them as in masks of stone. He turned himself to the pillow again and to his miserable thoughts.

Owen took out his watch, went round to count the pulse, and in the hush the tick of the big silver timepiece could be heard.

"There is extreme weakness," came his quiet verdict.

"Sinking?" whispered Tourtel loudly.

"No; care and constant nourishment are all that are required; strong beef-tea, port wine jelly, cream beaten up with a little brandy at short intervals, every hour say. And of course no excitement; nothing to irritate, or alarm him" (Owen's eye met Margot's); "absolute quiet and rest." He came back to the foot of the bed and spoke in a lower tone. "It's just one of the usual cases of senile decay," said he, "which I observe every one comes to here in the Islands (unless he has previously killed himself by drink), the results of breeding in. But Mr. Renouf may last months, years longer. In fact, if you follow out my directions there is every probability that he will."

Tourtel and his wife shifted their gaze from Owen to look into each other's eyes; Margot's loose mouth lapsed into a smile. Owen felt cold water running down his back. The atmosphere of the room seemed to stifle him; reminiscences of his student days crowded on him: the horror of an unperverted mind, at its first spectacle of cruelty, again seized hold of him, as though no twelve callous years were wedged in between. At all costs he must get out into the open air.

He turned to go. Louis Renouf opened his eyes, followed the form making its way to the door, and understood. "You won't leave me, doctor? surely you won't leave me?" came the last words of piercing entreaty.

The man felt his nerve going all to pieces.

"Come, come, my good sir, do you think I am going to stay here all night?" he answered brutally.... Outside the door, Tourtel touched his sleeve. "And suppose your directions are not carried out?" said he in his thick whisper.

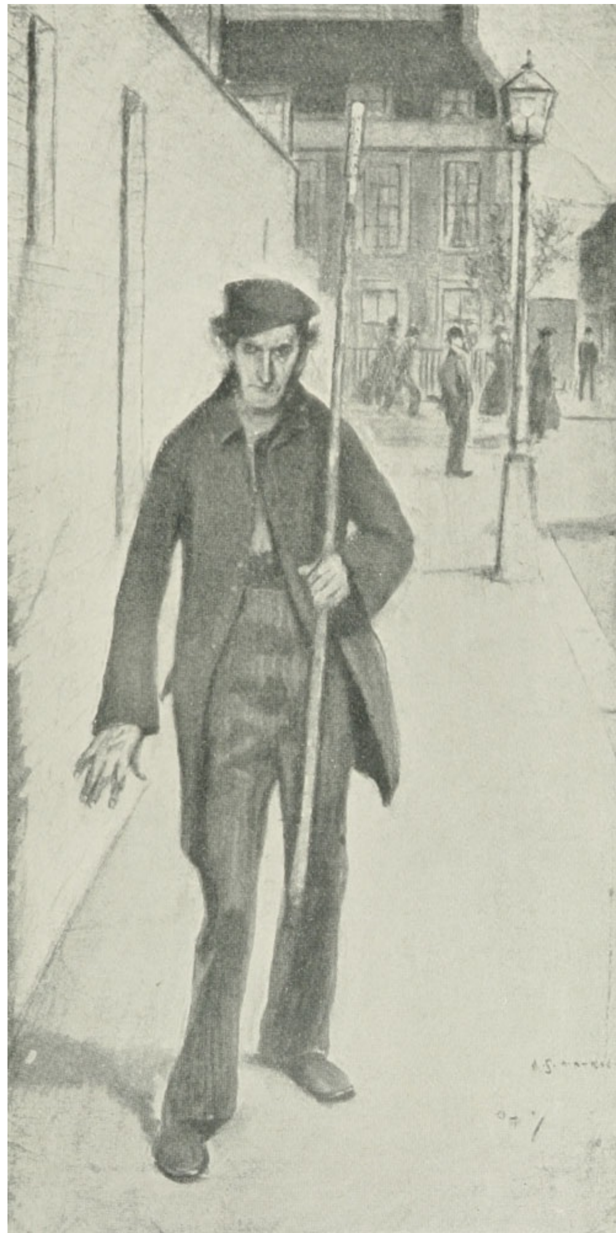
Owen gave no spoken answer, but Tourtel was satisfied. "I'll come an' put the horse in," he said, leading the way through the kitchen to the stables. Owen drove off with a parting curse and cut with the whip because the horse slipped upon the stones. A long ray of light from Tourtel's lantern followed him down the lane. When he turned out on to the high road to St. Gilles, he reined in a moment, to look back at Les Calais. This is the one point from which a portion of the house is visible, and he could see the lighted window of the old man's bedroom plainly through the trees.

What was happening there? he asked himself; and the Tourtel's cupidity and callousness, Margot's coarse cruel tricks, rose before him with appalling distinctness. Yet the price was in his hand, the first step of the ladder gained; he saw himself to-morrow, perhaps in the drawing-room of Rohais, paying the necessary visit of intimation and condolence. He felt he had already won Mrs. Poidevin's favour. Among women, always poor physiognomists, he knew he passed for a handsome man; among the Islanders, the assurance of his address would pass for good breeding; all he had lacked hitherto was the opportunity to shine. This his acquaintance with Mrs. Poidevin would secure him. And he had trampled on his conscience so often before, it had now little elasticity left. Just an extra glass of brandy to-morrow, and to-day would be as securely laid as those other episodes of his past.

While he watched, some one shifted the lamp ... a woman's shadow was thrown upon the white blind ... it wavered, grew monstrous, and spread, until the whole window was shrouded in gloom.... Owen put the horse into a gallop ... and from up at Les Calais, the long-drawn melancholy howling of the dog filled with forebodings the silent night.

The Lamplighter

By A. S. Hartrick



The Composer of “Carmen”

By Charles Willeby

What little has been written about poor Bizet is not the sort to satisfy. The men who have told of him cannot have written with their best pen. Even those who, one can see, have started well, albeit impelled rather than inspired by a profound admiration for the artist and the man, have fallen all too short of the mark, and ultimately drifted into the dullest of all dull things—the compilation of mere dates and doings. I know of no pamphlet devoted to him in this country. He was much misunderstood in life; he has been, I think, as much sinned against in death. The symbol of posthumous appreciation which asserts itself to the visitor to Père Lachaise, is exponential of compliment only when reckoned by avoirdupois. Neglected in life, they have in death weighed him down with an edifice that would have been obnoxious to every instinct in his sprightly soul—a memorial befitting perhaps to such an one as Johannes Brahms, but repugnant as a memento of the spirit that created “Carmen.” It is an emblem of French formalism in its most determined aspect. And in truth—as Sainte-Beuve said of the Abbé Galiani—“they owed to him an honourable, choice, and purely delicate burial; *urna brevis*, a little urn which should not be larger than he.” The previous inappreciation of his genius has given place to posthumous laudation, zealous indeed, but so indiscriminating as to be vulgar. Like many another man, he had to take “a thrashing from life”; and although he stood up to it unflinchingly, it was only in his death certificate that he acquired passport to fame.

Just eighteen years before it was that Bizet had written from Rome: “We are indeed sad, for there come to us the tidings of the death of Léon Benouville. Really, one works oneself half crazy to gain this Prix de Rome; then comes the huge struggle for position; and after all, perchance to end by dying at thirty-eight! Truly, the picture is the reverse of encouraging.” Here was his own destiny, *nu comme la main*, save that the fates begrudged him even the thirty-eight years of his brother artist—called him when he could not but

"contrast
The petty done—the undone vast."

But his early life was not unhappy. He had no pitiful struggle with poverty in childhood, at all events. Some tell us he was precocious—terribly so; but I had rather take my cue from his own words, «Je ne me suis donné qu'à contre-cœur à la musique,» than dwell upon his precocity, real or fictional. It was only hereditarily consistent that he should have a musical organisation. His father was a teacher of music, not without repute; his mother was a sister of François Delsarte, who, although unknown to Grove, has two columns and more devoted to him by Fetis, by whom he is described as an «artiste un peu étrange, quoique d'un mérite incontestable, doué de facultés très diverses et de toutes les qualités nécessaires à l'enseignement.» What there was of music in their son the parents sought to encourage assiduously, and Bizet himself has shown us in his work, more clearly than aught else could, that the true dramatic sense was innate in him. And that he loved his literature too, was well proved by a glance at the little *appartement* in the Rue de Douai, which he continued to occupy until well-nigh the end.

In 1849—he was just over his tenth year—Delsarte took him to Marmontel of the Conservatoire. “Without being in any sense of the word a prodigy,” says the old pianoforte master, “he played his Mozart with an unusual amount of taste. From the moment I heard him I recognised his individuality, and I made it my object to preserve it.” Then Zimmerman, with whom *l'enseignement* was a disease, heard of him and sought him for pupil. But Zimmerman seems to have tired of him as he tired of so many and ended by passing him on to Gounod. From entry to exit—an interval of eight years—Bizet's academic career was a series of *premiers et deuxièmes prix*. They were to him but so many stepping-stones to the coveted Grand Prix de Rome. He longed to secure this—to fly the crowded town and seek the secluded shelter of the Villa Medici. And in the end he had his way. In effect, he commenced to live only after he had taken up his abode on the little Pincian Hill. Even there life was a trifle close to him, and some time passed before he really fixed his focus.

In Italy, more than in any other part of the world, the life of the present rests upon the strata of successive past lives. And although Bizet was no student, carrying in his knapsack a superfluity of culture, this place appealed to him from the moment that he came to it, and the memory of it lingered long in after days.

The villa itself was a revelation to him. The masterpiece of Renaissance façade over which the artist would seem to have exhausted a veritable mine of Greek and Roman bas-reliefs; the garden with its lawns surrounded by hedges breast-high, trimmed to the evenness of a stone-wall; the green alleys overshadowed by ilex trees; the marble statues looking forlornly regretful at Time's defacing treatment; the terrace with its oaks gnarled and twisted with age; the fountains; the roses; the flower-beds; and in the distance, “over the dumb Campagna-sea,” the hills melting into light under the evening sky—all these made an *intaglio* upon him such as was not readily to be effaced, and which he learned to love. Perhaps because, after all, Italy is even more the land of beauty than of what is venerable in art, he did not feel the want of what Mr. Symonds calls the “mythopœic sense.” It is a land ever young, in spite of age. Its monuments, assertive as they are, so blend with the landscape, are so in harmony with the surroundings, that the yawning gulf of years that would separate us from them is made to vanish, and they come to live with us.

And the place was teeming with tradition. From the time, 1540, when it had been designed by Hannibal Lippi for Cardinal Ricci, passing thence into the hands of Alexandro de' Medici, and later into those of Leo XI., it had been the home of art; and then, on its acquisition by the French Academy in 1804, it became the home of artists. Here had lived and worked and dreamed David, Ingres, Delaroche, Vernet, Hérold, Benoist, Halévy, Berlioz, Thomas, Gounod, and the minor host of them. In truth the list awed Bizet not a little, and had he needed an incentive here it was. For the rest, he was supremely content. As a *pensionnaire* of the Academy he had two hundred francs a month, and he apportioned them in this wise: *Nourriture*, 75fr.; *vin*, 25fr.; *retenue*, 25fr.; *location de piano*, 15fr.; *blanchissage*, 5fr.; *bois*, *chandelles*, *timbre-poste*, *&c.*, 10fr.; *gants*, 5fr.; *perte sur le change de la monnaie,* 5fr. Even then he wrote: “I have more than thirty francs *pour faire le grand garçon*.” In another letter he says: “I seem to cling to Rome more than ever. The longer I know it, the more I love it. Everything is so beautiful. Each street—even the filthiest of them—has its own charm for me. And perhaps what is most astonishing of all, is that those very things which startled me most on my arrival, have now become a part of and necessary to my very existence—the madonnas with their little lamps at every corner; the linen hanging out to dry from the windows; the very refuse of the streets; the beggars—all these things really divert me, and I should cry out if so much as a dung-heap were removed.... More too, every day, do I pity those imbeciles who have not been more fully able to appreciate their good fortune in being *pensionnaires* of the Academy. But then one cannot help observing that they are the very ones who have achieved nothing. Halévy, Thomas, Gounod, Berlioz, Massé—they all loved and adored their Rome.”

Then on the last day of the same year: “I seem to incline more definitely towards the theatre, for I feel a certain sense of drama, which, if I possessed it, I knew not of till now. So I hope for the best. But that is not all. Hitherto I have vacillated between Mozart and Beethoven, between Rossini and Meyerbeer, and suddenly I know upon what, upon whom to fix my faith. To me there are two distinct kinds of genius: the inspirational and the purely rational, I mean the genius of nature and the genius of erudition; and whilst I have an immense admiration for the second, I cannot deny that the first has all my sympathies. So, *mon cher*, I have the courage to prefer, and to say I prefer, Raphael to Michael Angelo, Mozart to Beethoven, Rossini to Meyerbeer, which is, I suppose, much the same as saying that if I had heard Rubini I would have preferred him to Duprez. Do not think for a moment that I place one above the other—that would be absurd. All I maintain is that the matter is one of taste, and that the one exercises upon my nature a stronger influence than does the other. When I hear the 'Symphonie Héroïque,' or the fourth act of the 'Huguenots,' I am spell-bound, aghast as it were; I have not eyes, ears, intelligence, enough even to admire. But when I see 'L'École D'Athènes,' or 'La Vierge de Foligno,' when I hear 'Les Noces de Figaro,' or the second act of 'Guillaume Tell,' I am completely happy; I experience a sense of comfort, a complete satisfaction: in effect, I forget everything.”

This, then, is what Rome did for Bizet; but, be it said, for Bizet *très jeune encore*. For a time the result is patent in his work, but afterwards there comes, although no revulsion, a distinct variation of feeling, which has in it something of compromise. The genius innate in him was inspirational before it was—if it ever was—erudite. Even in his later days there was for him no cowering before his culture. In 1867 he wrote in the *Revue Nationale*—the only critique, by the way, he ever wrote—under the pseudonym of Gaston de Betzi: “The artist has no name, no nationality. He is inspired or he is not. He has genius or he has not. If he has, we welcome him; if he has not, we can at most respect him, if we do not pity and forget him.”

He was the same in all things: “I have no comrades,” he said, “only friends.” And there is one sentence that he wrote from Rome that might well be held up to the *gamins* of the French Conservatoire. «Je ne veux rien faire *de chic*; je veux avoir des *idées* avant de commencer un morceau.»

In August of his second year Bizet left Rome on a visit to Naples. He carried a letter to Mercadente. On his return good news and bad awaited him. Ernest Guiraud, his good friend and quondam fellow-student in the class of Marmontel, has just been proclaimed Prix de Rome. And this at the very moment Bizet was to leave the Villa; for the Academy would have it that their musical *pensionnaires* should pass the third year in Germany. The prospect was entirely repugnant to Bizet. So he went to work against it, directing his energies in the first place against Schnetz, “the dear old director” as they called him. Schnetz, owning to a soft spot for his young *pensionnaire*, was overcome, and through him I fancy the powers that were in Paris. However, Bizet was permitted to remain in his beloved Rome. Delighted, he wrote off to Marmontel: “I am daily expecting Guiraud, and words cannot express how glad I shall be to see him. Would you believe it, it is two years since I have spoken with an intelligent musician? My colleague Z—— bores me frightfully. He speaks to me of Donizetti, of Fesca even, and I reply to him with Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Gounod.”

This last year spent with Guiraud was perhaps the happiest of his life. At the close of it the two set off together on a ramble through the land, with fancy for their only guide. They had got so far as Venice when news of his mother's dangerous illness called Bizet to her side. He arrived in time to say farewell, and he never returned to Italy.

Of work done at the Villa, “Vasco de Gama” is the only tangible sample; “but I have not wasted my time,” he wrote, “I have read a good many volumes of history, and ever so much more literature of all kinds. I have travelled, I have learned something of the history of art, and I really am a bit of a connoisseur in painting and sculpture. All I want now, on my return, are *trois jolis actes* for the Théâtre Lyrique.”

And shortly we find him in full swing with «Les Pêcheurs des Perles.» It was produced on the 30th September of 1863, and had some eighteen representations. «La Jolie Fille de Perth,» which followed it four years later, had, I think, twenty-one. In between these two works, we are told, Bizet, in a fit of violent admiration for Verdi, strove to emulate him in an opera entitled «Ivan le Terrible.» It is said to have been completed and handed to the management of the Théâtre Lyrique. Then Bizet, recognising as suddenly that he had made a mistake, withdrew the score and burned it.

M. Charles Pigot, who is chiefly responsible for this story, goes on to say that the libretto was the work of MM. Louis Gallet and Edouard Blau. But in that he is not correct, for Gallet himself tells us that he knew Bizet only ever so slightly at the time, and that neither to him nor to Blau is due a single line of this «Ivan.»

Then there were “Griselidis,” of which, in a letter dated February of 1871, Bizet speaks as *très avancée*; «Clarisse Harlowe»; and the «Calendal» of M. Sardou, to each of which he referred in the same year as *à peine commencée*. There was also an opera in one act written by M. Carvalho, and actually put into rehearsal at the Opéra Comique. But none of these saw the light, and I have little doubt they all met their fate on a certain eventful day, shortly before he died, when Bizet remorselessly destroyed a whole pile of manuscript. And in truth these early works had little value of themselves. They were but so many rungs of the ladder by which he climbed to the heights of “Djamileh,” of «L'Arlésienne,» and of “Carmen.” No musician ever took longer to know himself than did Georges Bizet. His period of hesitation, of vacillation, was unduly protracted. For why, it is hard to tell; but one cannot help feeling that the terrible *lutte pour la vie* had a deal to do with it. Those early years in Paris were very hard ones. “Believe me,” he wrote from le Vésinet (always a favourite spot with him), “believe me, it is exasperating to have one's work interrupted for days to write *solos de piston*. But what would you? I must live. I have just rushed off at a gallop half-a-dozen melodies for Heugel. I trust you may like them. At least I have carefully chosen the verses. ... My opera and my symphony are both of them *en train*. But when, oh when, shall I finish them? Yet I do nothing but work, and I come only once a week to Paris. Here I am well out of the way of all *flaneurs*, *raseurs*, *diseurs de riens*, *du monde enfin*, *hélas*.” Then a few days later: “I am completely prostrate with fatigue. I can do nothing. I have even been obliged to give up orchestrating my symphony; and now I feel it will be too late for this winter. I am going to lie down, for I have not slept for three nights, and all seems so dark to me. To-morrow, too, I have *la musique gaie* to write.”

Just then time was pressing him hard. He was under contract to produce «La Jolie Fille de Perth» by the end of the year, and he was already well into October. It became a matter of fifteen and sixteen hours work a day; for there were lessons to be given, proofs to be corrected, piano transcriptions to be made, and the rest. And, truth to tell, he was terribly lacking in method. He was choke-full of ideas, he was indeed borne along by a very torrent of them; and if only he could have stopped to collect himself it would have been well for him. But no; before he realised it, «La Jolie Fille» was finished and in rehearsal. Then for the time he was able to put enough distance between himself and his work to value it. And it seems to have pleased him. “The final rehearsal,” he writes to Galabert (by this time his confidant in most things), “has produced a great effect. The piece is really highly interesting, the interpretation is excellent, and the costumes are splendid. The scenery is new and the orchestra and the artists are full of enthusiasm. But more than all this, *cher ami*, the score of 'La Jolie Fille' is *une bonne chose*. The orchestra lends to all a colour and relief for which, I confess, I never dared to hope. I think I have arrived this time. Now, *il faut monter, monter, monter, toujours*.”

Shortly after this he married Geneviève Halévy, the daughter of the composer of «La Juive,» and lived almost exclusively at le Vésinet. There, at 8, Rue des Cultures, a rustic place enough, one might find Georges Bizet, seated in his favourite corner of the lovely garden, *en chapeau de canotier*, smoking his pipe and chatting to his friends. It had been the home of Jacques Halévy, and Bizet had been wont to do his courting there. Now the old man was no more, and in the long summer days, the daughter and the son—for Halévy had been as a father to Bizet—missed sorely the familiar figure hard at work with rake or hoe at his beloved flower-beds. They were the passion of his later days, and they well repaid his care. Even in the middle of a lesson—and he taught up to well-nigh the last weeks of his life—would he rush out to uproot a noxious weed that might chance to catch his eye. “How well I remember my first day there,” says Louis Gallet. "The war was not long finished, and the traces of it were with us yet. True, Paris had resumed her lovely girdle of green; but beneath this verdure reflected in the tardy waters of the Seine, there was enough still to tell the terrible tale of ruin. One could not go to Pecq or le Vésinet without some difficulty. Bizet, to save me trouble, had taken care to meet me at Rueil, whence we made for the little place where he was staying for the summer. The day was lovely, and 'Djamileh' made great strides as we talked and paced the pretty garden walks. This habit of discussing while walking, what was uppermost in his mind, was always, to me, a powerful characteristic of Georges Bizet. I do not remember any important discussion between us that did not take place during a stroll, or at all events whilst walking, if only to and from his study. We talked long that afternoon—of the influence of Wagner on the future of musical art, of the reception in store for 'Djamileh,' both by the public and by the Opéra Comique itself. This latter, indeed, was no light matter. The Direction was then undertaken by two parties: that of Du Locle, tending towards advancement in every form; that of De Leuven, clinging with all the force of tradition to the past.

"Then in the evening nothing would do but Bizet should see me well on my way to Paris. The bridges were not yet restored. So we set off on foot, in company with Madame Bizet, to find the

ferry-boat. How delicious was that walk by the little islets in the cool of the twilight; along the towing-path so narrow and overrun with growth that we were obliged to proceed in Indian file. And how merry we were, until perchance we stumbled on the fragment of a shell lying hidden in the grass, or came face to face with some majestic tree, still smarting from its wounds, when there would rise before us in all its vividness the terrible scene so recently enacted on that spot. Then we talked of the war and all its sorrows; and we tried to descry there on the right, in the shade of Mount Valerien, the spot where Henri Regnault fell.

"At length we found the ferry, and reached the other bank. There at the end of the path we could see the lights of the station; so we separated. And although I made many after visits, none remained so firmly fixed in my memory, or left me so happy an impression as did this, my first to Bizet's summer home."

During the siege itself, he had been forced to remain in Paris. But it was much against his will, and he seems to have chafed sorely at it. Yet it is difficult to picture Bizet bellicose. "Dear friend," he writes to Guiraud, who was stationed at some outpost, "the description you give of the palace you are living in makes us all believe that luck is with you. But every day we think of the cold, the damp, the ice, the Prussians, and all the other horrors that surround you. As for me, I continue to reproach myself with my inaction, for in truth my conscience is anything but at rest; but you know well what keeps me here. We really cannot be said to eat any longer. Suzanne has just brought in some horse bones, which I believe are to form our meal. Geneviève dreams nightly of chickens and lobsters."

Not till the following year, during the days of the Commune, do we find him at le Vésinet. Then he writes (also to Guiraud): "Here we are without half our things, without our books, without anything in fact, and absolutely there are no means of getting into Paris.... So, dear friend, if you have any news, do, I pray you, let us have it. I read the Versailles papers, but they tell their wretched readers (and expect them to believe it) that France is 'très tranquille,' Paris alone excepted (*sic*). The day before yesterday was anything but tranquil. For twelve hours there was nothing but a continuous cannonade.... But *we* are safe enough, for although the Prussian patrols continue to increase in number we are not inconvenienced by them, and they will not, in all probability, occupy le Vésinet. But it seems quite impossible to say how all this is going to end. I am absolutely discouraged, and what is more, I fear, dear friend, there is worse trouble ahead of us. I am off now to the village to look at a piano; I must work and try to forget it all."

He finished "Djamileh" at le Vésinet. It was produced at the Opéra Comique in May of 1872. Gallet tells us that he did not write the book specially for Bizet. Under the title of "Namouna," it had been given by M. du Locle to Jules Duprato, a musician and a «prix de Rome.» But Duprato *paressait agréablement*, and never got much further with it than the composition of a certain *air de danse* to the verses commencing: «Indolente, grave et lente,» which are to be found also in Bizet's score. Then there came a time when the Opéra Comique, truly one of the most good-natured of institutions in its own peculiar way, so far belied its reputation as to tire of this idling on the part of M. Duprato. So the work passed on to Bizet. He suggested change of title, and «Namouna» became "Djamileh." But it remained nevertheless the poem of Musset.

"Je vous dirais qu' Hassan racheta Namouna
* * * * *
Qu'on reconnut trop tard cette tête adorée
Et cette douce nuit qu'elle avait espérée
Que pour prix de ses maux le ciel la lui donna.

Je vous dirais surtout qu' Hassan dans cette affaire
Sentit que tôt ou tard la femme avait son tour
Et que l'amour de soi ne vaut pas l'autre amour."

There you have the whole story. It is but an *état d'âme*—a little love scene, simple enough in a way, yet so delicate and so full of colour. It was a matter of "atmosphere," not of structure, a masterpiece of style rather than of situation; and from its first rehearsal as an opera it was doomed. In truth, these rehearsals were amusing. There was old Avocat—they used to call him Victor—the typical *régisseur* of tradition; a man who could tell of the *premières* of «Pré-aux-Clercs» and «La Dame Blanche,» and, what is more, expected to be asked to tell of them. From his corner in the wings he listened to the music of this "Djamileh," his face expressive of a pity far too keen for words. But it was a matter of minutes only before his pity turned to rage, and eventually he stumped off to his sanctum, banging his door behind him with a vehemence that augured badly for poor Bizet. As for De Leuven, his co-director: had he not written. «Postillon de Lonjumeau»? and was it not the most successful work of Boiledieu's successor? The fact had altered his whole life. Ever after, all he sought in opera was some similarity with Le Postillon. And there was nothing of Adam in this music, still less anything of De Leuven in the poem. That was sufficient for him. «Allons,» said he one day to Gallet, who arrived at rehearsal just as Djamileh was about to sing her *lamento*: «allons, vous arrivez pour le De Profundis.»

As for the public, they understood it not at all, this charming miniature. «C'est indigne,» cried one; «c'est odieux,» from another; «c'est très drôle,» said a third. «Quelle cacophonie, quelle audace, c'est se moquer du monde. Voilà, où mène le culte de Wagner à la folie. Ni tonalité, ni mesure, ni rythme; ce n'est plus de la musique,» and the rest. The press itself was no better, no whit more rational. Yet this "Djamileh" was rich in premonition of those very qualities that go to make "Carmen" the immortal work it is. It so glows with true Oriental colour, is so saturate with

the true Eastern spirit, as to make us wonder for the moment—as did Mr. Henry James about Théophile Gautier—whether the natural attitude of the man was not to recline in the perfumed dusk of a Turkish divan, puffing a chibouque. Here the tints are stronger, mellower, and more carefully laid on than in «Les Pêcheurs des Perles.» There is, too, all the *bizarrerie*, as well as all the sensuousness of the East. Yet there is no obliteration of the human element for sake of the picturesque. Wagnerism was the cry raised against it on all sides; yet, if it be anything but Bizet, it is surely Schumann. It was, in effect, all too good for the public—too fine for their vulgar gaze, their indiscriminating comment. And Reyer, farseeing amongst his fellows, spoke truth when he said in the *Débats*: "I feel sure that if M. Bizet knows that his work has been appreciated by a small number of musicians—being *cognoscenti*—he will be more proud of that fact than he would be of a popular success. 'Djamileh,' whatever be its fortunes, heralds a new epoch in the career of this young master."

Then came «L'Arlésienne,» as all the world knows, a dismal failure enough. It was to Bizet a true labour of love. From the day that Carvalho came to him proposing that he should add *des mélodrames* to this tale of fair Provence, to the day of its production some four months later, he was absorbed in it. The score as it now stands represents about half the music that he wrote. The prelude to the third act of "Carmen," and the chorus, «Quant aux douaniers,» both belonged originally to «L'Arlésienne,» The rest was blue pencilled at rehearsal. And of all the care he lavished on it, perhaps the finest, certainly the fondest, was given to his orchestra. Every instrument is ministered to with loving care. Luckily for him, fortunately too for us, he knew not then what sort of lot awaited this scrupulous score of his. He knew he wrote for Carvalho—for the Vaudeville; but that was all. And they gave him twenty-five musicians—a couple of flutes and an oboe (this latter to do duty too for the cor-anglais); one clarinet, a couple of bassoons, a saxophone, two horns, a kettle-drum, seven violins, one solitary alto, five celli, two bass, and his choice of one other. The poor fellow chose a piano; but they never saw the irony of it. All credit to his little band, they did their best. But the most that they could do was to cull the tunes from out his score. The consolation that we have is, that, so far as the piece as a piece is concerned, no orchestra in the world could have saved it. It was doomed to failure for all sorts of reasons. Daudet himself goes very near the mark when he says that "it was unreasonable to suppose that in the middle of the boulevard, in that coquettish corner of the Chaussée d'Antin, right in the pathway of the fashions, the whims of the hour, the flashing and changing vortex of all Paris, people could be interested in this drama of love taking place in the farmyard in the plain of Camargue, full of the odour of well-plenished granaries and lavender in flower. It was a splendid failure; clothed in the prettiest music possible, with costumes of silk and velvet in the centre of comic opera scenery." Then he goes on to tell us: "I came away discouraged and sickened, the silly laughter with which the emotional scenes were greeted still ringing in my ears; and without attempting to defend myself in the papers, where on all sides the attack was led against this play, wanting in surprises—this painting in three acts of manners and events of which I alone could appreciate the absolute fidelity. I resolved to write no more plays, and heaped one upon the other all the hostile notices as a rampart around my determination."

At this time Bizet seems to have come a good deal into contact with Jean Baptiste Faure. They met frequently at the Opéra. "You really must do something more for Bizet," said the baritone to Louis Gallet. "Put your heads together, you and Blau, and write something that shall be *bien pour moi*." "Lorenzaccio," perhaps the strongest of De Musset's dramatic efforts, first came up. But Faure was not at all in touch with it. The rôle of Brutus—fawning Judas that he is—revolted him. He had no fancy to distort as *menteur à triple étage*; so the subject was put by. Then came Bizet one morning with an old issue of *Le Journal pour tous* in his pocket. "Here is the very thing for us: 'Le Jeunesse du Cid' of Guilhem de Castro; not, mark you, the Cid of Corneille alone, but the inceptive Cid in all the glory of its pristine colour—the Cid, Don Rodrigue de Bivar, in the words of Sainte-Beuve 'the immortal flower of honour and of love.'" The *scène du mendiant* held Bizet completely. It was to him simple, touching, and great. It showed Don Rodrigue in a new light. Those—and there were many of them—who had already cast their choice upon this legend, had recognised—but recognised merely—in their hero, the son prepared to sacrifice his love for filial duty, and to yield his life for love. But they had not seen in him the Christian, the true and godly soul, the Good Samaritan that De Castro represents. The scene of Rodrigue with the leper, disdained and done away with by Corneille, with which De Castro too was so reproached, was full of attraction for Bizet. His whole interest centred round it. He was impatient and hungered to get at it; and "Carmen," on which he was already well at work, was even laid aside the while. Faure, too, had expressed a sound approval and a hearty interest, and this alone meant much. So Bizet once again was full of hope. There follows a long and detailed correspondence on the subject with Gallet, with which I have not space to deal; but it shows up splendidly the extreme nicety of the musician's dramatic sense.

In the summer of 1873 "Don Rodrigue" was really finished, and one evening Bizet called his friends to come and listen. Around the piano were Edouard Blau, Louis Gallet, and Jean Faure. Bizet had his score before him—to common gaze a skeleton thing enough, for of "accompaniment" there was but little. But to its creator it was well alive, and he sang—in the poorest possible voice, it is true—the whole thing through from beginning to end. Chorus, soprano, tenor, bass, yea, even the choicer "bits" for orchestra—all came alike to him; all were infused with life from the spirit that created them. It was long past midnight when he ceased, and then they sat and talked till dawn. All were enthusiastic, and in the opinion of Faure (given three years later) this score was more than the equal of "Carmen." His word is all we have for it, but it carries with it something of conviction. He was no bad judge of a work. Anyway, no sooner had he heard it than he set about securing its speedy production at the Opéra. And he succeeded in so

far that it was put down early on the list. But Fate had yet to be reckoned with. She was not thus to be baulked of her prey: she had dogged the footsteps of poor Bizet far too zealously for that; and on the 28th October (less than a week after he had put *finis* to his work), she stepped in. On that day the Opéra was burned down.

As for the score, it was laid aside, and of its ultimate lot we are in ignorance. Inquiry on the part of Gallet seems to have elicited nothing more definite than a courteous letter from M. Ludovic Halévy, to the effect that he was quite free to dispose of the book to another composer. “It was George's favourite,” wrote his brother-in-law, “and he had great hopes for it; but it was not to be.”

Perhaps of all his powers Bizet's greatest was that of recuperation. It would be wrong to say he did not know defeat; he knew it all too well, but he never let it get the better of him. He was never without his irons upon the fire, never without a project to fall back upon. And perhaps it is not too much to say that he had no life outside his art. This too may in truth be told of him: that in all the struggle and the scramble, in all his fight with fortune, it was the sweeter qualities of his nature that came uppermost. His strength of purpose stood on a sound basis—a basis of confidence in, though not arrogance of, his own power. Where he was most handicapped was in carrying on his artistic progress *coram populo*. Had it been as gradual as most men's—had it been but the acquiring of an ordinary experience—all might have been well; he would probably have been accorded his niche and would have occupied it. But he progressed by leaps and bounds, and even then his ideal kept steadily miles ahead of his achievement. It was for long a very will-o'-the-wisp for him. Now and again he caught it, and it is at such moments that we have him at his best; but he can be said only to have captured it completely—so far as we are in a position to tell—in “L'Arlésienne” and certain parts of “Carmen.” His faculty of self-criticism was developed in such an extraordinary degree as to baulk him. He loved this Don Rodrigue and thought it was his masterwork, and that too at the time when “Carmen” must have been well forward. We know then that the loss is not a small one.

It had not been alone the fate of the Opéra House that had stood in the way. That institution had in course taken up its quarters at the Salle Ventadour, and once installed there had proceeded with the *répertoire*. But Bizet's “Rodrigue,” although well backed by Fauré, was pushed aside for others. The three names that it bore were all too impotent; and when a new work was announced, it was «L'Esclave» of Membrée that was seen to grace the bills, and not “Don Rodrigue.”

Poor Bizet, disappointed and sore at heart, vanished to hide himself once more by his beloved Seine. This time it was to Bougival he went.

M. Massenet had recently produced his “Marie Madeleine” and, curiously enough, it had been successful. This seems to have spurred Bizet on to emulation. With his usual happy knack of hitting on a subject, he wrote off to Gallet, requesting him to do a book with Geneviève de Paris—the holy Geneviève of legendary lore—for heroine. And Gallet, accommodating creature that he was, forthwith proceeded to construct his tableaux. Together they went off to Lamoureux and read the synopsis to him. He approved it heartily, and Bizet got to work. “Carmen” was then finished and was undergoing the usual stage of adjournment *sine die*. Three times it had been put into rehearsal, only to be withdrawn for apparently no reason, and poor Bizet was wearying of opera and its ways. This sacred work was relief to him. But hardly had he settled down to it when up came “Carmen” once again, this time in good earnest. He was forced to leave «Geneviève» and come to Paris for rehearsals. It was much against his inclination that he did so, for his health was failing fast. For long he had suffered from an abscess which had made his life a burden to him. Nor had his terrible industry been without its effect upon his physique. He did not know it, but he had sacrificed to his work the very things he had worked for. He felt exhausted, enfeebled, shattered. Probably the excitement of rehearsing “Carmen” kept him up the while; but it had its after-effect, and the strain proved all the more disastrous. A profound melancholy, too, had come over him; and do what he would he could not beat it off. A young singer (some aspirant for lyric fame) came one day to sing to him. „Ich grölle nicht“ and „Aus der Heimath“ were chosen. «Quel chef d'œuvre,» said he, «mais quelle désolation, c'est à vous donner la nostalgie de la mort.» Then he sat down to the piano and played the «Marche Funèbre» of Chopin. That was the frame of mind he was in.

In his gayer moments he would often long for Italy. He had never forgotten the happy days passed there with Guiraud. “I dreamed last night” (he is writing to Guiraud) “that we were all at Naples, installed in a most lovely villa, and living under a government purely artistic. The Senate was made up by Beethoven, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Giorgione, *e tutti quanti*. The National Guard was no more. In place of it there was a huge orchestra of which Litolff was the conductor. All suffrage was denied to idiots, humbugs, schemers, and ignoramuses—that is to say, suffrage was cut down to the smallest proportions imaginable. Geneviève was a little too amiable for Goethe, but despite this trifling circumstance the awakening was terribly bitter.”

“Carmen” was produced at last, on the 3rd of March in that year (1875). The Habanera—of which, by the way, he wrote for Mme. Galli-Marié no less than thirteen versions before he came across, in an old book, the one we know—the prelude to the second act, the toreador song, and the quintett were encored. The rest fell absolutely flat.

The blow was a terrific one to Bizet. He had dreamed of such a different lot for “Carmen.” Arm in arm with Guiraud he left the theatre, and together they paced the streets of Paris until dawn. Small wonder he felt bitter; and in vain the kindly Guiraud did his best to comfort him. Had not “Don Juan,” he argued, been accorded a reception no whit better when it was produced in

Vienna? and had not poor Mozart said “I have written 'Don Juan' for myself and two of my friends”? But he found no consolation in the fact. The press, too, cut him to the quick. This “Carmen,” said they, was immoral, *banale*; it was all head and no heart; the composer had made up his mind to show how learned he was, with the result that he was only dull and obscure. Then again, the gipsy girl whose liaisons formed the subject of the story was at best an odious creature; the actress's gestures were the very incarnation of vice, there was something licentious even in the tones of her voice; the composer evidently belonged to the school of *civet sans lièvre*; there was no unity of style; it was not dramatic, and could never live; in a word, there was no health in it.

Even Du Locle—who of all men should have supported it—played him false. A minister of the Government wrote personally to the director for a box for his family. Du Locle replied with an invitation to the rehearsal, adding that he had rather that the minister came himself before he brought his daughters.

Prostrate with it all, poor Bizet returned to Bougival. When forced to give up «Geneviève,» he had written to Gallet: “I shall give the whole of May, June, and July to it.” And now May was already come, and he was in his bed. «Angine colossale,» were the words he sent to Guiraud, who was to have been with him the following Sunday. “Do not come as we arranged; imagine, if you can, a double pedal, A flat, E flat, straight through your head from left to right. This is how I am just now.”

He never wrote more than a few pages of «Geneviève.» He got worse and worse. But even so, the end came all too suddenly, and on the night of the 2nd of June he died—died as nearly as possible at the exact moment when Galli-Marié at the Opéra Comique was singing her song of fate in the card scene of the third act of his “Carmen.” The coincidence was true enough. That night it was with difficulty that she sung her song. Her nervousness, from some cause or another, was so great that it was with the utmost effort she pronounced the words: «La carte impitoyable; répétera la mort; encore, toujours la mort.» On finishing the scene, she fainted at the wings. Next morning came the news of Bizet's death. And some friends said—because it was not meet for them to see the body—that the poor fellow had killed himself. Small wonder if it were so!

Six Drawings

By Aubrey Beardsley

I. II. III.

The Comedy-Ballet of Marionnettes, as performed by the troupe of the Théâtre-Impossible, posed in three drawings

IV. Garçons de Café

V. The Slippers of Cinderella

For you must have all heard of the Princess Cinderella with her slim feet and shining slippers. She was beloved by Prince ——, who married her, but she died soon afterwards, poisoned (according to Dr. Gerschovius) by her elder sister Arabella, with powdered glass. It was ground I suspect from those very slippers she danced in at the famous ball. For the slippers of Cinderella have never been found since. They are not at Cluny.

Hector Sandus

VI. Portrait of Madame Réjane

Thirty Bob a Week

By John Davidson

I couldn't touch a stop and turn a screw,
And set the blooming world a-work for me,
Like such as cut their teeth—I hope, like you—
On the handle of a skeleton gold key.
I cut mine on leek, which I eat it every week:
I'm a clerk at thirty bob, as you can see.

But I don't allow it's luck and all a toss;
There's no such thing as being starred and crossed;
It's just the power of some to be a boss,
And the bally power of others to be bossed:
I face the music, sir; you bet I ain't a cur!
Strike me lucky if I don't believe I'm lost!

For like a mole I journey in the dark,
A-travelling along the underground
From my Pillar'd Halls and broad suburban Park
To come the daily dull official round;
And home again at night with my pipe all alight
A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound.

And it's often very cold and very wet;
And my missis stitches towels for a hunks;
And the Pillar'd Halls is half of it to let—
Three rooms about the size of travelling trunks.
And we cough, the wife and I, to dislocate a sigh,
When the noisy little kids are in their bunks.

But you'll never hear *her* do a growl, or whine,
For she's made of flint and roses very odd;
And I've got to cut my meaning rather fine
Or I'd blubber, for *I'm* made of greens and sod:
So p'rhaps we are in hell for all that I can tell,
And lost and damned and served up hot to God.

I ain't blaspheming, Mr. Silvertongue;
I'm saying things a bit beyond your art:
Of all the rummy starts you ever sprung
Thirty bob a week's the rummiest start!
With your science and your books and your the'ries about spooks,
Did you ever hear of looking in your heart?

I didn't mean your pocket, Mr.; no!
I mean that having children and a wife
With thirty bob on which to come and go
Isn't dancing to the tabor and the fife;
When it doesn't make you drink, by Heaven, it makes you think,
And notice curious items about life!

I step into my heart and there I meet
A god-almighty devil singing small,
Who would like to shout and whistle in the street,
And squelch the passers flat against the wall;
If the whole world was a cake he had the power to take,
He would take it, ask for more, and eat it all.

And I meet a sort of simpleton beside—
The kind that life is always giving beans;
With thirty bob a week to keep a bride
He fell in love and married in his teens;
At thirty bob he stuck, but he knows it isn't luck;
He knows the seas are deeper than tureens.

And the god-almighty devil and the fool
That meet me in the High Street on the strike,
When I walk about my heart a-gathering wool,
Are my good and evil angels if you like;
And both of them together in every kind of weather
Ride me like a double-seated “bike.”

That's rough a bit and needs its meaning curled;

But I have a high old hot un in my mind,
A most engrugious notion of the world
That leaves your lightning 'rithmetic behind:
I give it at a glance when I say "There ain't no chance,
Nor nothing of the lucky-lottery kind."

And it's this way that I make it out to be:
No fathers, mothers, countries, climates—none!—
Not Adam was responsible for me;
Nor society, nor systems, nary one!
A little sleeping seed, I woke—I did indeed—
A million years before the blooming sun.

I woke because I thought the time had come;
Beyond my will there was no other cause:
And everywhere I found myself at home
Because I chose to be the thing I was;
And in whatever shape, of mollusc, or of ape,
I always went according to the laws.

I was the love that chose my mother out;
I joined two lives and from the union burst;
My weakness and my strength without a doubt
Are mine alone for ever from the first.
It's just the very same with a difference in the name
As “Thy will be done.” You say it if you durst!

They say it daily up and down the land
As easy as you take a drink, it's true;
But the difficultest go to understand,
And the difficultest job a man can do,
Is to come it brave and meek with thirty bob a week,
And feel that that's the proper thing for you.

It's a naked child against a hungry wolf;
It's playing bowls upon a splitting wreck;
It's walking on a string across a gulf
With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck:
But the thing is daily done by many and many a one....
And we fall, face forward, fighting, on the deck.

A Responsibility

By Henry Harland

It has been an episode like a German sentence, with its predicate at the end. Trifling incidents occurred at haphazard, as it seemed, and I never guessed they were by way of making sense. Then, this morning, somewhat of the suddenest, came the verb and the full stop.

Yesterday I should have said there was nothing to tell; to-day there is too much. The announcement of his death has caused me to review our relations, with the result of discovering my own part to have been that of an accessory before the fact. I did not kill him (though, even there, I'm not sure I didn't lend a hand), but I might have saved his life. It is certain that he made me signals of distress—faint, shy, tentative, but unmistakable—and that I pretended not to understand: just barely dipped my colours, and kept my course. Oh, if I had dreamed that his distress was extreme—that he was on the point of foundering and going down! However, that doesn't exonerate me: I ought to have turned aside to find out. It was a case of criminal negligence. That he, poor man, probably never blamed me, only adds to the burden on my conscience. He had got past blaming people, I dare say, and doubtless merely lumped me with the rest—with the sum-total of things that made life unsupportable. Yet, for a moment, when we first met, his face showed a distinct glimmering of hope; so perhaps there was a distinct disappointment. He must have had so many disappointments, before it came to—what it came to; but it wouldn't have come to that if he had got hardened to them. Possibly they had lost their outlines, and merged into one dull general disappointment that was too hard to bear. I wonder whether the Priest and the Levite were smitten with remorse after they had passed on. Unfortunately, in this instance, no Good Samaritan followed.

The bottom of our long *table d'hôte* was held by a Frenchman, a Normand, a giant, but a pallid and rather flabby giant, whose name, if he had another than Monsieur, I never heard. He professed to be a painter, used to sketch birds and profiles on the back of his menu-card between the courses, wore shamelessly the multi-coloured rosette of a foreign order in his buttonhole, and talked with a good deal of physiognomy. I had the corner seat at his right, and was flanked in turn by Miss Etta J. Hicks, a bouncing young person from Chicago, beyond whom, like rabbits in a company of foxes, cowered Mr. and Mrs. Jordan P. Hicks, two broken-spirited American parents. At Monsieur's left, and facing me, sat Colonel Escott, very red and cheerful; then a young man who called the Colonel Cornel, and came from Dublin, proclaiming himself a barr'ster, and giving his name as Flarty, though on his card it was written Flaherty; and then Sir Richard Maistre. After him, a diminishing perspective of busy diners—for purposes of conversation, so far as we were concerned, inhabitants of the Fourth Dimension.

Of our immediate constellation Sir Richard Maistre was the only member on whom the eye was tempted to linger. The others were obvious—simple equations, soluble “in the head.” But he called for slate and pencil, offered materials for doubt and speculation, though it would not have been easy to tell wherein they lay. What displayed itself to a cursory inspection was quite unremarkable: simply a decent-looking young Englishman, of medium stature, with square-cut plain features, reddish-brown hair, grey eyes, and clothes and manners of the usual pattern. Yet, showing through this ordinary surface, there was something cryptic. For me, at any rate, it required a constant effort not to stare at him. I felt it from the beginning, and I felt it till the end: a teasing curiosity, a sort of magnetism that drew my eyes in his direction. I was always on my guard to resist it, and that was really the inception of my neglect of him. From I don't know what stupid motive of pride, I was anxious that he shouldn't discern the interest he had excited in me; so I paid less ostensible attention to him than to the others, who excited none at all. I tried to appear unconscious of him as a detached personality, to treat him as merely a part of the group as a whole. Then I improved such occasions as presented themselves to steal glances at him, to study him *à la dérobée*—groping after the quality, whatever it was, that made him a puzzle—seeking to formulate, to classify him.

Already, at the end of my first dinner, he had singled himself out and left an impression. I went into the smoking-room, and began to wonder, over a cup of coffee and a cigarette, who he was. I had not heard his voice; he hadn't talked much, and his few observations had been murmured into the ears of his next neighbours. All the same, he had left an impression, and I found myself wondering who he was, the young man with the square-cut features and the reddish-brown hair. I have said that his features were square-cut and plain, but they were small and carefully finished, and as far as possible from being common. And his grey eyes, though not conspicuous for size or beauty, had a character, an expression. They *said* something, something I couldn't perfectly translate, something shrewd, humorous, even perhaps a little caustic, and yet sad; not violently, not rebelliously sad (I should never have dreamed that it was a sadness which would drive him to desperate remedies), but rather resignedly, submissively sad, as if he had made up his mind to put the best face on a sorry business. This was carried out by a certain abruptness, a slight lack of suavity, in his movements, in his manner of turning his head, of using his hands. It hinted a degree of determination which, in the circumstances, seemed superfluous. He had unfolded his napkin and attacked his dinner with an air of resolution, like a man with a task before him, who mutters, “Well, it's got to be done, and I'll do it.” At a hazard, he was two- or three-and-thirty, but below his neck he looked older. He was dressed like everybody, but his costume had, somehow, an effect of soberness beyond his years. It was decidedly not smart, and smartness was the

dominant note at the Hôtel d'Angleterre.

I was still more or less vaguely ruminating him, in a corner of the smoking-room, on that first evening, when I became aware that he was standing near me. As I looked up, our eyes met, and for the fraction of a second fixed each other. It was barely the fraction of a second, but it was time enough for the transmission of a message. I knew as certainly as if he had said so that he wanted to speak, to break the ice, to scrape an acquaintance; I knew that he had approached me and was loitering in my neighbourhood for that specific purpose. I *don't* know, I have studied the psychology of the moment in vain to understand, why I felt a perverse impulse to put him off. I was interested in him, I was curious about him; and there he stood, testifying that the interest was reciprocal, ready to make the advances, only waiting for a glance or a motion of encouragement; and I deliberately secluded myself behind my coffee-cup and my cigarette smoke. I suppose it was the working of some obscure mannish vanity—of what in a woman would have defined itself as coyness and coquetry. If he wanted to speak—well, let him speak; I wouldn't help him. I could realise the processes of *his* mind even more clearly than those of my own—his desire, his hesitancy. He was too timid to leap the barriers; I must open a gate for him. He hovered near me for a minute longer, and then drifted away. I felt his disappointment, his spiritual shrug of the shoulders; and I perceived rather suddenly that I was disappointed myself. I must have been hoping all along that he would speak *quand même*, and now I was moved to run after him, to call him back. That, however, would imply a consciousness of guilt, an admission that my attitude had been intentional; so I kept my seat, making a mental rendezvous with him for the morrow.

Between my Irish *vis-à-vis* Flaherty and myself there existed no such strain. He presently sauntered up to me, and dropped into conversation as easily as if we had been old friends.

“Well, and are you here for your health or your entertainment?” he began. “But I don't need to ask that of a man who's drinking black coffee and smoking tobacco at this hour of the night. I'm the only invalid at our end of the table, and I'm no better than an amateur meself. It's a barrister's throat I have—I caught it waiting for briefs in me chambers at Doblin.”

We chatted together for a half-hour or so, and before we parted he had given me a good deal of general information—about the town, the natives, the visitors, the sands, the golf-links, the hunting, and, with the rest, about our neighbours at table.

“Did ye notice the pink-faced bald little man at me right? That's Cornel Escott, C.B., retired. He takes a sea-bath every morning, to live up to the letters; and faith, it's an act of heroism, no less, in weather the like of this. Three weeks have I been here, and but wan day of sunshine, and the mercury never above fifty. The other fellow, him at me left, is what you'd be slow to suspect by the look of him, I'll go bail; and that's a bar'net, Sir Richard Maistre, with a place in Hampshire, and ten thousand a year if he's a penny. The young lady beside yourself rejoices in the euphonious name of Hicks, and trains her Popper and Mommer behind her like slaves in a Roman triumph. They're Americans, if you must have the truth, though I oughtn't to tell it on them, for I'm an Irishman myself, and its not for the pot to be bearing tales of the kettle. However, their tongues bewray them; so I've violated no confidence.”

The knowledge that my young man was a baronet with a place in Hampshire somewhat disenchanted me. A baronet with a place in Hampshire left too little to the imagination. The description seemed to curtail his potentialities, to prescribe his orbit, to connote turnip-fields, house-parties, and a whole system of British commonplace. Yet, when, the next day at luncheon, I again had him before me in the flesh, my interest revived. Its lapse had been due to an association of ideas which I now recognised as unscientific. A baronet with twenty places in Hampshire would remain at the end of them all a human being; and no human being could be finished off in a formula of half a dozen words. Sir Richard Maistre, anyhow, couldn't be. He was enigmatic, and his effect upon me was enigmatic too. Why did I feel that tantalising inclination to stare at him, coupled with that reluctance frankly to engage in talk with him? Why did he attack his luncheon with that appearance of grim resolution? For a minute, after he had taken his seat, he eyed his knife, fork, and napkin, as a labourer might a load that he had to lift, measuring the difficulties he must cope with; then he gave his head a resolute nod, and set to work. To-day, as yesterday, he said very little, murmured an occasional remark into the ear of Flaherty, accompanying it usually with a sudden short smile: but he listened to everything, and did so with apparent appreciation.

Our proceedings were opened by Miss Hicks, who asked Colonel Escott, “Well, Colonel, have you had your bath this morning?”

The Colonel chuckled, and answered, “Oh, yes—yes, yes—couldn't forego my bath, you know—couldn't possibly forego my bath.”

“And what was the temperature of the water?” she continued.

“Fifty-two—fifty-two—three degrees warmer than the air—three degrees,” responded the Colonel, still chuckling, as if the whole affair had been extremely funny.

“And you, Mr. Flaherty, I suppose you've been to Bayonne?”

“No, I've broken me habit, and not left the hotel.”

Subsequent experience taught me that these were conventional modes by which the conversation

was launched every day, like the preliminary moves in chess. We had another ritual for dinner: Miss Hicks then inquired if the Colonel had taken his ride, and Flaherty played his game of golf. The next inevitable step was common to both meals. Colonel Escott would pour himself a glass of the *vin ordinaire*, a jug of which was set by every plate, and holding it up to the light, exclaim with simulated gusto, “Ah! Fine old wine! Remarkably full rich flavour!” At this pleasantry we would all gently laugh; and the word was free.

Sir Richard, as I have said, appeared to be an attentive and appreciative listener, not above smiling at our mildest sallies; but watching him out of the corner of an eye, I noticed that my own observations seemed to strike him with peculiar force—which led me to talk *at* him. Why not to him, with him? The interest was reciprocal; he would have liked a dialogue; he would have welcomed a chance to commence one; and I could at any instant have given him such a chance. I talked *at* him, it is true; but I talked *with* Flaherty or Miss Hicks, or *to* the company at large. Of his separate identity he had no reason to believe me conscious. From a mixture of motives, in which I'm not sure that a certain heathenish enjoyment of his embarrassment didn't count for something, I was determined that if he wanted to know me he must come the whole distance; I wouldn't meet him halfway. Of course I had no idea that it could be a matter of the faintest real importance to the man. I judged *his* feelings by my own; and though I was interested in him, I shall have conveyed an altogether exaggerated notion of my interest if you fancy it kept me awake at night. How was I to guess that his case was more serious—that he was not simply desirous of a little amusing talk, but starving, starving for a little human sympathy, a little brotherly love and comradeship?—that he was in an abnormally sensitive condition of mind, where mere negative unresponsiveness could hurt him like a slight or a rebuff?

In the course of the week I ran over to Pau, to pass a day with the Winchfields, who had a villa there. When I came back I brought with me all that they (who knew everybody) could tell about Sir Richard Maistre. He was intelligent and amiable, but the shyest of shy men. He avoided general society, frightened away perhaps by the British Mamma, and spent a good part of each year abroad, wandering rather listlessly from town to town. Though young and rich, he was neither fast nor ambitious: the Members' entrance to the House of Commons, the stage-doors of the music halls, were equally without glamour for him; and if he was a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant, he had become so through the tacit operation of his stake in the country. He had chambers in St. James's Street, was a member of the Travellers Club, and played the violin—for an amateur rather well. His brother, Mortimer Maistre, was in diplomacy—at Rio Janeiro or somewhere. His sister had married an Australian, and lived in Melbourne.

At the Hôtel d'Angleterre I found his shyness was mistaken for indifference. He was civil to everybody, but intimate with none. He attached himself to no party, paired off with no individuals. He sought nobody. On the other hand, the persons who went out of their way to seek him, came back, as they felt, repulsed. He had been polite but languid. These, however, were not the sort of persons he would be likely to care for. There prevailed a general conception of him as cold, unsociable. He certainly walked about a good deal alone—you met him on the sands, on the cliffs, in the stiff little streets, rambling aimlessly, seldom with a companion. But to me it was patent that he played the solitary from necessity, not from choice—from the necessity of his temperament. A companion was precisely that which above all things his heart coveted; only he didn't know how to set about annexing one. If he sought nobody, it was because he didn't know how. This was a part of what his eyes said; they bespoke his desire, his perplexity, his lack of nerve. Of the people who put themselves out to seek him, there was Miss Hicks; there were a family from Leeds, named Bunn, a father, mother, son, and two redoubtable daughters, who drank champagne with every meal, dressed in the height of fashion, said their say at the tops of their voices, and were understood to be auctioneers; a family from Bayswater named Krausskopf. I was among those whom he had marked as men he would like to fraternise with. As often as our paths crossed, his eyes told me that he longed to stop and speak, and continue the promenade abreast. I was under the control of a demon of mischief; I took a malicious pleasure in eluding and baffling him—in passing on with a nod. It had become a kind of game; I was curious to see whether he would ever develop sufficient hardihood to take the bull by the horns. After all, from a conventional point of view, my conduct was quite justifiable. I always meant to do better by him next time, and then I always deferred it to the next. But from a conventional point of view my conduct was quite unassailable. I said this to myself when I had momentary qualms of conscience. Now, rather late in the day, it strikes me that the conventional point of view should have been re-adjusted to the special case. I should have allowed for his personal equation.

My cousin Wilford came to Biarritz about this time, stopping for a week, on his way home from a tour in Spain. I couldn't find a room for him at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, so he put up at a rival hostelry over the way; but he dined with me on the evening of his arrival, a place being made for him between mine and Monsieur's. He hadn't been at the table five minutes before the rumour went abroad who he was—somebody had recognised him. Then those who were within reach of his voice listened with all their ears—Colonel Escott, Flaherty, Maistre, and Miss Hicks, of course, who even called him by name: “Oh, Mr. Wilford.” “Now, Mr. Wilford,” &c. After dinner, in the smoking-room, a cluster of people hung round us; men with whom I had no acquaintance came merrily up and asked to be introduced. Colonel Escott and Flaherty joined us. At the outskirts of the group I beheld Sir Richard Maistre. His eyes (without his realising it perhaps) begged me to invite him, to present him, and I affected not to understand! This is one of the little things I find hardest to forgive myself. My whole behaviour towards the young man is now a subject of self-reproach: if it had been different, who knows that the tragedy of yesterday would ever have happened? If I had answered his timid overtures, walked with him, talked with him,

cultivated his friendship, given him mine, established a kindly human relation with him, I can't help feeling that he might not have got to such a desperate pass, that I might have cheered him, helped him, saved him. I feel it especially when I think of Wilford. His eyes attested so much; he would have enjoyed meeting him so keenly. No doubt he was already fond of the man, had loved him through his books, like so many others. If I had introduced him? If we had taken him with us the next morning, on our excursion to Cambo? Included him occasionally in our smokes and parleys?

Wilford left for England without dining again at the Hôtel d'Angleterre. We were busy "doing" the country, and never chanced to be at Biarritz at the dinner-hour. During that week I scarcely saw Sir Richard Maistre.

Another little circumstance that rankles especially now would have been ridiculous, except for the way things have ended. It isn't easy to tell—it was so petty, and I am so ashamed. Colonel Escott had been abusing London, describing it as the least beautiful of the capitals of Europe, comparing it unfavourably to Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. I took up the cudgels in its defence, mentioned its atmosphere, its tone; Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg were lyric, London was epic; and so forth and so forth. Then, shifting from the æsthetic to the utilitarian, I argued that of all great towns it was the healthiest, its death-rate was lowest. Sir Richard Maistre had followed my dissertation attentively, and with a countenance that signified approval; and when, with my reference to the death-rate, I paused, he suddenly burned his ships. He looked me full in the eye, and said, "Thirty-seven, I believe?" His heightened colour, a nervous movement of the lip, betrayed the effort it had cost him; but at last he had *done* it—screwed his courage to the sticking-place, and spoken. And I—I can never forget it—I grow hot when I think of it—but I was possessed by a devil. His eyes hung on my face, awaiting my response, pleading for a cue. "Go on," they urged. "I have taken the first, the difficult step—make the next smoother for me." And I—I answered lackadaisically, with just a casual glance at him, "I don't know the figures," and absorbed myself in my viands.

Two or three days later his place was filled by a stranger, and Flaherty told me that he had left for the Riviera.

All this happened last March at Biarritz. I never saw him again till three weeks ago. It was one of those frightfully hot afternoons in July; I had come out of my club, and was walking up St. James's Street, towards Piccadilly; he was moving in an opposite sense; and thus we approached each other. He didn't see me, however, till we had drawn rather near to a conjunction: then he gave a little start of recognition, his eyes brightened, his pace slackened, his right hand prepared to advance itself—and I bowed slightly, and pursued my way! Don't ask why I did it. It is enough to confess it, without having to explain it. I glanced backwards, by and by, over my shoulder. He was standing where I had met him, half turned round, and looking after me. But when he saw that I was observing him, he hastily shifted about, and continued his descent of the street.

That was only three weeks ago. Only three weeks ago I still had it in my power to act. I am sure—I don't know why I am sure, but I *am* sure—that I could have deterred him. For all that one can gather from the brief note he left behind, it seems he had no special, definite motive; he had met with no losses, got into no scrape; he was simply tired and sick of life and of himself. "I have no friends," he wrote. "Nobody will care. People don't like me; people avoid me. I have wondered why; I have tried to watch myself, and discover; I have tried to be decent. I suppose it must be that I emit a repellent fluid; I suppose I am a 'bad sort.'" He had a morbid notion that people didn't like him, that people avoided him! Oh, to be sure, there were the Bunns and the Krausskopfs and their ilk, plentiful enough: but he understood what it was that attracted *them*. Other people, the people *he* could have liked, kept their distance—were civil, indeed, but reserved. He wanted bread, and they gave him a stone. It never struck him, I suppose, that they attributed the reserve to him. But I—I knew that his reserve was only an effect of his shyness; I knew that he wanted bread: and that knowledge constituted my moral responsibility. I didn't know that his need was extreme; but I have tried in vain to absolve myself with the reflection. I ought to have made inquiries. When I think of that afternoon in St. James's Street—only three weeks ago—I feel like an assassin. The vision of him, as he stopped and looked after me—I can't banish it. Why didn't some good spirit move me to turn back and overtake him?

It is so hard for the mind to reconcile itself to the irretrievable. I can't shake off a sense that there is something to be done. I can't realise that it is too late.

Song

By Dollie Radford

I could not through the burning day
      In hope prevail,
Beside my task I could not stay
      If love should fail.

Nor underneath the evening sky,
      When labours cease,
Fold both my tired hands and lie
      At last in peace.

Ah! what to me in death or life
      Could then avail?
I dare not ask for rest or strife
      If love should fail.

A Landscape

By Alfred Thornton

Passed

By Charlotte M. Mew

"Like souls that meeting pass,
And passing never meet again."

Let those who have missed a romantic view of London in its poorest quarters—and there will romance be found—wait for a sunset in early winter. They may turn North or South, towards Islington or Westminster, and encounter some fine pictures and more than one aspect of unique beauty. This hour of pink twilight has its monopoly of effects. Some of them may never be reached again.

On such an evening in mid-December, I put down my sewing and left tame glories of fire-light (discoverers of false charm) to welcome, as youth may, the contrast of keen air outdoors to the glow within.

My aim was the perfection of a latent appetite, for I had no mind to content myself with an apology for hunger, consequent on a warmly passive afternoon.

The splendid cold of fierce frost set my spirit dancing. The road rung hard underfoot, and through the lonely squares woke sharp echoes from behind. This stinging air assailed my cheeks with vigorous severity. It stirred my blood grandly, and brought thought back to me from the warm embers just forsaken, with an immeasurable sense of gain.

But after the first delirium of enchanting motion, destination became a question. The dim trees behind the dingy enclosures were beginning to be succeeded by rows of flaring gas jets, displaying shops of new aspect and evil smell. Then the heavy walls of a partially demolished prison reared themselves darkly against the pale sky.

By this landmark I recalled—alas that it should be possible—a church in the district, newly built by an infallible architect, which I had been directed to seek at leisure. I did so now. A row of cramped houses, with the unpardonable bow window, projecting squalor into prominence, came into view. Robbing these even of light, the portentous walls stood a silent curse before them. I think they were blasting the hopes of the sad dwellers beneath them—if hope they had—to despair. Through spattered panes faces of diseased and dirty children leered into the street. One room, as I passed, seemed full of them. The window was open; their wails and maddening requirements sent out the mother's cry. It was thrown back to her, mingled with her children's screams, from the pitiless prison walls.

These shelters struck my thought as travesties—perhaps they were not—of the grand place called home.

Leaving them I sought the essential of which they were bereft. What withheld from them, as poverty and sin could not, a title to the sacred name?

An answer came, but interpretation was delayed. Theirs was not the desolation of something lost, but of something that had never been. I thrust off speculation gladly here, and fronted Nature free.

Suddenly I emerged from the intolerable shadow of the brickwork, breathing easily once more. Before me lay a roomy space, nearly square, bounded by three-storey dwellings, and transformed, as if by quick mechanism, with colours of sunset. Red and golden spots wavered in the panes of the low scattered houses round the bewildering expanse. Overhead a faint crimson sky was hung with violet clouds, obscured by the smoke and nearing dusk.

In the centre, but towards the left, stood an old stone pump, and some few feet above it irregular lamps looked down. They were planted on a square of paving railed in by broken iron fences, whose paint, now discoloured, had once been white. Narrow streets cut in five directions from the open roadway. Their lines of light sank dimly into distance, mocking the stars' entrance into the fading sky. Everything was transfigured in the illuminated twilight. As I stood, the dying sun caught the rough edges of a girl's uncovered hair, and hung a faint nimbus round her poor desecrated face. The soft circle, as she glanced toward me, lent it the semblance of one of those mystically pictured faces of some mediæval saint.

A stillness stole on, and about the square dim figures hurried along, leaving me stationary in existence (I was thinking fancifully), when my mediæval saint demanded “who I was a-shoving of?” and dismissed me, not unkindly, on my way. Hawkers in a neighbouring alley were calling, and the monotonous ting-ting of the muffin-bell made an audible background to the picture. I left it, and then the glamour was already passing. In a little while darkness possessing it, the place would reassume its aspect of sordid gloom.

There is a street not far from there, bearing a name that quickens life within one, by the vision it summons of a most peaceful country, where the broad roads are but pathways through green meadows, and your footstep keeps the time to a gentle music of pure streams. There the scent of roses, and the first pushing buds of spring, mark the seasons, and the birds call out faithfully the time and manner of the day. Here Easter is heralded by the advent in some squalid mart of air-

balls on Good Friday; early summer and late may be known by observation of that unromantic yet authentic calendar in which alley-tors, tip-cat, whip- and peg-tops, hoops and suckers, in their courses mark the flight of time.

Perhaps attracted by the incongruity, I took this way. In such a thoroughfare it is remarkable that satisfied as are its public with transient substitutes for literature, they require permanent types (the term is so far misused it may hardly be further outraged) of Art. Pictures, so-called, are the sole departure from necessity and popular finery which the prominent wares display. The window exhibiting these aspirations was scarcely more inviting than the fishmonger's next door, but less odoriferous, and I stopped to see what the ill-reflecting lights would show. There was a typical selection. Prominently, a large chromo of a girl at prayer. Her eyes turned upwards, presumably to heaven, left the gazer in no state to dwell on the elaborately bared breasts below. These might rival, does wax-work attempt such beauties, any similar attraction of Marylebone's extensive show. This personification of pseudo-purity was sensually diverting, and consequently marketable.

My mind seized the ideal of such a picture, and turned from this prostitution of it sickly away. Hurriedly I proceeded, and did not stop again until I had passed the low gateway of the place I sought.

Its forbidding exterior was hidden in the deep twilight and invited no consideration. I entered and swung back the inner door. It was papered with memorial cards, recommending to mercy the unprotesting spirits of the dead. My prayers were requested for the “repose of the soul of the Architect of that church, who passed away in the True Faith—December,—1887.” Accepting the assertion, I counted him beyond them, and mentally entrusted mine to the priest for those who were still groping for it in the gloom.

Within the building, darkness again forbade examination. A few lamps hanging before the altar struggled with obscurity.

I tried to identify some ugly details with the great man's complacent eccentricity, and failing, turned toward the street again. Nearly an hour's walk lay between me and my home. This fact and the atmosphere of stuffy sanctity about the place, set me longing for space again, and woke a fine scorn for aught but air and sky. My appetite, too, was now an hour ahead of opportunity. I sent back a final glance into the darkness as my hand prepared to strike the door. There was no motion at the moment, and it was silent; but the magnetism of human presence reached me where I stood. I hesitated, and in a few moments found what sought me on a chair in the far corner, flung face downwards across the seat. The attitude arrested me. I went forward. The lines of the figure spoke unquestionable despair.

Does speech convey intensity of anguish? Its supreme expression is in form. Here was human agony set forth in meagre lines, voiceless, but articulate to the soul. At first the forcible portrayal of it assailed me with the importunate strength of beauty. Then the Thing stretched there in the obdurate darkness grew personal and banished delight. Neither sympathy nor its vulgar substitute, curiosity, induced my action as I drew near. I was eager indeed to be gone. I wanted to ignore the almost indistinguishable being. My will cried: Forsake it!—but I found myself powerless to obey. Perhaps it would have conquered had not the girl swiftly raised herself in quest of me. I stood still. Her eyes met mine. A wildly tossed spirit looked from those ill-lighted windows, beckoning me on. Mine pressed towards it, but whether my limbs actually moved I do not know, for the imperious summons robbed me of any consciousness save that of necessity to comply.

Did she reach me, or was our advance mutual? It cannot be told. I suppose we neither know. But we met, and her hand, grasping mine, imperatively dragged me into the cold and noisy street.

We went rapidly in and out of the flaring booths, hustling little staggering children in our unpitying speed, I listening dreamily to the concert of hoarse yells and haggling whines which struck against the silence of our flight. On and on she took me, breathless and without explanation. We said nothing. I had no care or impulse to ask our goal. The fierce pressure of my hand was not relaxed a breathing space; it would have borne me against resistance could I have offered any, but I was capable of none. The streets seemed to rush past us, peopled with despair.

Weirdly lighted faces sent blank negations to a spirit of question which finally began to stir in me. Here, I thought once vaguely, was the everlasting No!

We must have journeyed thus for more than half an hour and walked far. I did not detect it. In the eternity of supreme moments time is not. Thought, too, fears to be obtrusive and stands aside.

We gained a door at last, down some blind alley out of the deafening thoroughfare. She threw herself against it and pulled me up the unlighted stairs. They shook now and then with the violence of our ascent; with my free hand I tried to help myself up by the broad and greasy balustrade. There was little sound in the house. A light shone under the first door we passed, but all was quietness within.

At the very top, from the dense blackness of the passage, my guide thrust me suddenly into a dazzling room. My eyes rejected its array of brilliant light. On a small chest of drawers three candles were guttering, two more stood flaring in the high window ledge, and a lamp upon a table by the bed rendered these minor illuminations unnecessary by its diffusive glare. There were even some small Christmas candles dropping coloured grease down the wooden mantel-

piece, and I noticed a fire had been made, built entirely of wood. There were bits of an inlaid workbox or desk, and a chair-rung, lying half burnt in the grate. Some peremptory demand for light had been, these signs denoted, unscrupulously met. A woman lay upon the bed, half clothed, asleep. As the door slammed behind me the flames wavered and my companion released my hand. She stood beside me, shuddering violently, but without utterance.

I looked around. Everywhere proofs of recent energy were visible. The bright panes reflecting back the low burnt candles, the wretched but shining furniture, and some odd bits of painted china, set before the spluttering lights upon the drawers, bore witness to a provincial intolerance of grime. The boards were bare, and marks of extreme poverty distinguished the whole room. The destitution of her surroundings accorded ill with the girl's spotless person and well-tended hands, which were hanging tremulously down.

Subsequently I realised that these deserted beings must have first fronted the world from a sumptuous stage. The details in proof of it I need not cite. It must have been so.

My previous apathy gave place to an exaggerated observation. Even some pieces of a torn letter, dropped off the quilt, I noticed, were of fine texture, and inscribed by a man's hand. One fragment bore an elaborate device in colours. It may have been a club crest or coat-of-arms. I was trying to decide which, when the girl at length gave a cry of exhaustion or relief, at the same time falling into a similar attitude to that she had taken in the dim church. Her entire frame became shaken with tearless agony or terror. It was sickening to watch. She began partly to call or moan, begging me, since I was beside her, wildly, and then with heart-breaking weariness, “to stop, to stay.” She half rose and claimed me with distracted grace. All her movements were noticeably fine.

I pass no judgment on her features; suffering for the time assumed them, and they made no insistence of individual claim.

I tried to raise her, and kneeling, pulled her reluctantly towards me. The proximity was distasteful. An alien presence has ever repelled me. I should have pitied the girl keenly perhaps a few more feet away. She clung to me with ebbing force. Her heart throbbed painfully close to mine, and when I meet now in the dark streets others who have been robbed, as she has been, of their great possession, I have to remember that.

The magnetism of our meeting was already passing; and, reason asserting itself, I reviewed the incident dispassionately, as she lay like a broken piece of mechanism in my arms. Her dark hair had come unfastened and fell about my shoulder. A faint white streak of it stole through the brown. A gleam of moonlight strays thus through a dusky room. I remember noticing, as it was swept with her involuntary motions across my face, a faint fragrance which kept recurring like a subtle and seductive sprite, hiding itself with fairy cunning in the tangled maze.

The poor girl's mind was clearly travelling a devious way. Broken and incoherent exclamations told of a recently wrung promise, made to whom, or of what nature, it was not my business to conjecture or inquire.

I record the passage of a few minutes. At the first opportunity I sought the slumberer on the bed. She slept well: hers was a long rest; there might be no awakening from it, for she was dead. Schooled in one short hour to all surprises, the knowledge made me simply richer by a fact. Nothing about the sternly set face invited horror. It had been, and was yet, a strong and, if beauty be not confined to youth and colour, a beautiful face.

Perhaps this quiet sharer of the convulsively broken silence was thirty years old. Death had set a firmness about the finely controlled features that might have shown her younger. The actual years are of little matter; existence, as we reckon time, must have lasted long. It was not death, but life that had planted the look of disillusion there. And romance being over, all good-byes to youth are said. By the bedside, on a roughly constructed table, was a dearly bought bunch of violets. They were set in a blue bordered tea-cup, and hung over in wistful challenge of their own diviner hue. They were foreign, and their scent probably unnatural, but it stole very sweetly round the room. A book lay face downwards beside them—alas for parochial energies, not of a religious type—and the torn fragments of the destroyed letter had fallen on the black binding.

A passionate movement of the girl's breast against mine directed my glance elsewhere. She was shivering, and her arms about my neck were stiffly cold. The possibility that she was starving missed my mind. It would have found my heart. I wondered if she slept, and dared not stir, though I was by this time cramped and chilled. The vehemence of her agitation ended, she breathed gently, and slipped finally to the floor.

I began to face the need of action and recalled the chances of the night. When and how I might get home was a necessary question, and I listened vainly for a friendly step outside. None since we left it had climbed the last flight of stairs. I could hear a momentary vibration of men's voices in the room below. Was it possible to leave these suddenly discovered children of peace and tumult? Was it possible to stay?

This was Saturday, and two days later I was bound for Scotland; a practical recollection of empty trunks was not lost in my survey of the situation. Then how, if I decided not to forsake the poor child, now certainly sleeping in my arms, were my anxious friends to learn my whereabouts, and understand the eccentricity of the scheme? Indisputably, I determined, something must be done for the half-frantic wanderer who was pressing a tiring weight against me. And there should be

some kind hand to cover the cold limbs and close the wide eyes of the breathless sleeper, waiting a comrade's sanction to fitting rest.

Conclusion was hastening to impatient thought, when my eyes let fall a fatal glance upon the dead girl's face. I do not think it had changed its first aspect of dignified repose, and yet now it woke in me a sensation of cold dread. The dark eyes unwillingly open reached mine in an insistent stare. One hand lying out upon the coverlid, I could never again mistake for that of temporarily suspended life. My watch ticked loudly, but I dared not examine it, nor could I wrench my sight from the figure on the bed. For the first time the empty shell of being assailed my senses. I watched feverishly, knowing well the madness of the action, for a hint of breathing, almost stopping my own.

To-day, as memory summons it, I cannot dwell without reluctance on this hour of my realisation of the thing called Death.

A hundred fancies, clothed in mad intolerable terrors, possessed me, and had not my lips refused it outlet, I should have set free a cry, as the spent child beside me had doubtless longed to do, and failed, ere, desperate, she fled.

My gaze was chained; it could not get free. As the shapes of monsters of ever varying and increasing dreadfulness flit through one's dreams, the images of those I loved crept round me, with stark yet well-known features, their limbs borrowing death's rigid outline, as they mocked my recognition of them with soundless semblances of mirth. They began to wind their arms about me in fierce embraces of burning and supernatural life. Gradually the contact froze. They bound me in an icy prison. Their hold relaxed. These creatures of my heart were restless. The horribly familiar company began to dance at intervals in and out a ring of white gigantic bedsteads, set on end like tombstones, each of which framed a huge and fearful travesty of the sad set face that was all the while seeking vainly a pitiless stranger's care. They vanished. My heart went home. The dear place was desolate. No echo of its many voices on the threshold or stair. My footsteps made no sound as I went rapidly up to a well-known room. Here I besought the mirror for the reassurance of my own reflection. It denied me human portraiture and threw back cold glare. As I opened mechanically a treasured book, I noticed the leaves were blank, not even blurred by spot or line; and then I shivered—it was deadly cold. The fire that but an hour or two ago it seemed I had forsaken for the winter twilight, glowed with slow derision at my efforts to rekindle heat. My hands plunged savagely into its red embers, but I drew them out quickly, unscathed and clean. The things by which I had touched life were nothing. Here, as I called the dearest names, their echoes came back again with the sound of an unlearned language. I did not recognise, and yet I framed them. What was had never been!

My spirit summoned the being who claimed mine. He came, stretching out arms of deathless welcome. As he reached me my heart took flight. I called aloud to it, but my cries were lost in awful laughter that broke to my bewildered fancy from the hideously familiar shapes which had returned and now encircled the grand form of him I loved. But I had never known him. I beat my breast to wake there the wonted pain of tingling joy. I called past experience with unavailing importunity to bear witness the man was wildly dear to me. He was not. He left me with bent head a stranger, whom I would not if I could recall.

For one brief second, reason found me. I struggled to shake off the phantoms of despair. I tried to grasp while it yet lingered the teaching of this never-to-be-forgotten front of death. The homeless house with its indefensible bow window stood out from beneath the prison walls again. What had this to do with it? I questioned. And the answer it had evoked replied, “Not the desolation of something lost, but of something that had never been.”

The half-clad girl of the wretched picture-shop came into view with waxen hands and senseless symbolism. I had grown calmer, but her doll-like lips hissed out the same half-meaningless but pregnant words. Then the nights of a short life when I could pray, years back in magical childhood, sought me. They found me past them—without the power.

Truly the body had been for me the manifestation of the thing called soul. Here was my embodiment bereft. My face was stiff with drying tears. Sickly I longed to beg of an unknown God a miracle. Would He but touch the passive body and breathe into it the breath even of transitory life.

I craved but a fleeting proof of its ever possible existence. For to me it was not, would never be, and had never been.

The partially relinquished horror was renewing dominance. Speech of any incoherence or futility would have brought mental power of resistance. My mind was fast losing landmarks amid the continued quiet of the living and the awful stillness of the dead. There was no sound, even of savage guidance, I should not then have welcomed with glad response.

“The realm of Silence,” says one of the world's great teachers, “is large enough beyond the grave.”

I seemed to have passed life's portal, and my soul's small strength was beating back the noiseless gate. In my extremity, I cried, “O God! for man's most bloody warshout, or Thy whisper!” It was useless. Not one dweller in the crowded tenements broke his slumber or relaxed his labour in answer to the involuntary prayer.

And may the 'Day of Account of Words' take note of this! Then, says the old fable, shall the soul of the departed be weighed against an image of Truth. I tried to construct in imagination the form of the dumb deity who should bear down the balances for me. Soundlessness was turning fear to madness. I could neither quit nor longer bear company the grim Presence in that room. But the supreme moment was very near.

Long since, the four low candles had burned out, and now the lamp was struggling fitfully to keep alight. The flame could last but a few moments. I saw it, and did not face the possibility of darkness. The sleeping girl, I concluded rapidly, had used all available weapons of defiant light.

As yet, since my entrance, I had hardly stirred, steadily supporting the burden on my breast. Now, without remembrance of it, I started up to escape. The violent suddenness of the action woke my companion. She staggered blindly to her feet and confronted me as I gained the door.

Scarcely able to stand, and dashing the dimness from her eyes, she clutched a corner of the drawers behind her for support. Her head thrown back, and her dark hair hanging round it, crowned a grandly tragic form. This was no poor pleader, and I was unarmed for fight. She seized my throbbing arm and cried in a whisper, low and hoarse, but strongly audible:

“For God's sake, stay here with me.”

My lips moved vainly. I shook my head.

“For God in heaven's sake”—she repeated, swaying, and turning her burning, reddened eyes on mine—“don't leave me now.”

I stood irresolute, half stunned. Stepping back, she stooped and began piecing together the dismembered letter on the bed. A mute protest arrested her from a cold sister's face. She swept the action from her, crying, “No!” and bending forward suddenly, gripped me with fierce force.

“Here! Here!” she prayed, dragging me passionately back into the room.

The piteous need and wild entreaty—no, the vision of dire anguish—was breaking my purpose of flight. A fragrance that was to haunt me stole between us. The poor little violets put in their plea. I moved to stay. Then a smile—the splendour of it may never be reached again—touched her pale lips and broke through them, transforming, with divine radiance, her young and blurred and never-to-be-forgotten face. It wavered, or was it the last uncertain flicker of the lamp that made me fancy it? The exquisite moment was barely over when darkness came. Then light indeed forsook me. Almost ignorant of my own intention, I resisted the now trembling figure, indistinguishable in the gloom, but it still clung. I thrust it off me with unnatural vigour.

She fell heavily to the ground. Without a pause of thought I stumbled down the horrible unlighted stairs. A few steps before I reached the bottom my foot struck a splint off the thin edge of one of the rotten treads. I slipped, and heard a door above open and then shut. No other sound. At length I was at the door. It was ajar. I opened it and looked out. Since I passed through it first the place had become quite deserted. The inhabitants were, I suppose, all occupied elsewhere at such an hour on their holiday night. The lamps, if there were any, had not been lit. The outlook was dense blackness. Here too the hideous dark pursued me and silence held its sway. Even the children were screaming in more enticing haunts of gaudy squalor. Some, whose good angels perhaps had not forgotten them, had put themselves to sleep. Not many hours ago their shrieks were deafening. Were these too in conspiracy against me? I remembered vaguely hustling some of them with unmeant harshness in my hurried progress from the Church. Dumb the whole place seemed; and it was, but for the dim stars aloft, quite dark. I dared not venture across the threshold, bound by pitiable cowardice to the spot. Alas for the unconscious girl upstairs. A murmur from within the house might have sent me back to her. Certainly it would have sent me, rather than forth into the empty street. The faintest indication of humanity had recalled me. I waited the summons of a sound. It came.

But from the deserted, yet not so shamefully deserted, street. A man staggering home by aid of friendly railings, set up a drunken song. At the first note I rushed towards him, pushing past him in wild departure, and on till I reached the noisome and flaring thoroughfare, a haven where sweet safety smiled. Here I breathed joy, and sped away without memory of the two lifeless beings lying alone in that shrouded chamber of desolation, and with no instinct to return.

My sole impulse was flight; and the way, unmarked in the earlier evening, was unknown. It took me some minutes to find a cab; but the incongruous vehicle, rudely dispersing the haggling traders in the roadway, came at last, and carried me from the distorted crowd of faces and the claims of pity to peace.

I lay back shivering, and the wind crept through the rattling glass in front of me. I did not note the incalculable turnings that took me home.

My account of the night's adventure was abridged and unsensational. I was pressed neither for detail nor comment, but accorded a somewhat humorous welcome which bade me say farewell to dying horror, and even let me mount boldly to the once death-haunted room.

Upon its threshold I stood and looked in, half believing possible the greeting pictured there under the dead girl's influence, and I could not enter. Again I fled, this time to kindly light, and heard my brothers laughing noisily with a friend in the bright hall.

A waltz struck up in the room above as I reached them. I joined the impromptu dance, and whirled the remainder of that evening gladly away.

Physically wearied, I slept. My slumber had no break in it. I woke only to the exquisite joys of morning, and lay watching the early shadows creep into the room. Presently the sun rose. His first smile greeted me from the glass before my bed. I sprang up disdainful of that majestic reflection, and flung the window wide to meet him face to face. His splendour fell too on one who had trusted me, but I forgot it. Not many days later the same sunlight that turned my life to laughter shone on the saddest scene of mortal ending, and, for one I had forsaken, lit the ways of death. I never dreamed it might. For the next morning the tragedy of the past night was a distant one, no longer intolerable.

At twelve o'clock, conscience suggested a search. I acquiesced, but did not move. At half-past, it insisted on one, and I obeyed. I set forth with a determination of success and no clue to promise it. At four o'clock, I admitted the task hopeless and abandoned it. Duty could ask no more of me, I decided, not wholly dissatisfied that failure forbade more difficult demands. As I passed it on my way home, some dramatic instinct impelled me to re-enter the unsightly church.

I must almost have expected to see the same prostrate figure, for my eyes instantly sought the corner it had occupied. The winter twilight showed it empty. A service was about to begin. One little lad in violet skirt and goffered linen was struggling to light the benediction tapers, and a troop of school children pushed past me as I stood facing the altar and blocking their way. A grey-clad sister of mercy was arresting each tiny figure, bidding it pause beside me, and with two firm hands on either shoulder, compelling a ludicrous curtsey, and at the same time whispering the injunction to each hurried little personage,— “always make a reverence to the altar.” “Ada, come back!” and behold another unwilling bob! Perhaps the good woman saw her Master's face behind the tinsel trappings and flaring lights. But she forgot His words. The saying to these little ones that has rung through centuries commanded liberty and not allegiance. I stood aside till they had shuffled into seats, and finally kneeling stayed till the brief spectacle of the afternoon was over.

Towards its close I looked away from the mumbling priest, whose attention, divided between inconvenient millinery and the holiest mysteries, was distracting mine.

Two girls holding each other's hands came in and stood in deep shadow behind the farthest rows of high-backed chairs by the door. The younger rolled her head from side to side; her shifting eyes and ceaseless imbecile grimaces chilled my blood. The other, who stood praying, turned suddenly (the place but for the flaring altar lights was dark) and kissed the dreadful creature by her side. I shuddered, and yet her face wore no look of loathing nor of pity. The expression was a divine one of habitual love.

She wiped the idiot's lips and stroked the shaking hand in hers, to quiet the sad hysterical caresses she would not check. It was a page of gospel which the old man with his back to it might never read. A sublime and ghastly scene.

Up in the little gallery the grey-habited nuns were singing a long Latin hymn of many verses, with the refrain “Oh! Sacred Heart!” I buried my face till the last vibrating chord of the accompaniment was struck. The organist ventured a plagal cadence. It evoked no “amen.” I whispered one, and an accidentally touched note shrieked disapproval. I repeated it. Then I spit upon the bloodless cheek of duty, and renewed my quest. This time it was for the satisfaction of my own tingling soul.

I retook my unknown way. The streets were almost empty and thinly strewn with snow. It was still falling. I shrank from marring the spotless page that seemed outspread to challenge and exhibit the defiling print of man. The quiet of the muffled streets soothed me. The neighbourhood seemed lulled into unwonted rest.

Black little figures lurched out of the white alleys in twos and threes. But their childish utterances sounded less shrill than usual, and sooner died away.

Now in desperate earnest I spared neither myself nor the incredulous and dishevelled people whose aid I sought.

Fate deals honestly with all. She will not compromise though she may delay. Hunger and weariness at length sent me home, with an assortment of embellished negatives ringing in my failing ears.

* * * * *

I had almost forgotten my strange experience, when, some months afterwards, in late spring, the wraith of that winter meeting appeared to me. It was past six o'clock, and I had reached, ignorant of the ill-chosen hour, a notorious thoroughfare in the western part of this glorious and guilty city. The place presented to my unfamiliar eyes a remarkable sight. Brilliantly lit windows, exhibiting dazzling wares, threw into prominence the human mart.

This was thronged. I pressed into the crowd. Its steady and opposite progress neither repelled nor sanctioned my admittance. However, I had determined on a purchase, and was not to be baulked by the unforeseen. I made it, and stood for a moment at the shop-door preparing to break again through the rapidly thickening throng.

Up and down, decked in frigid allurement, paced the insatiate daughters of an everlasting king. What fair messengers, with streaming eyes and impotently craving arms, did they send afar off ere they thus “increased their perfumes and debased themselves even unto hell”? This was my question. I asked not who forsook them, speaking in farewell the “hideous English of their fate.”

I watched coldly, yet not inapprehensive or a certain grandeur in the scene. It was Virtue's very splendid Dance of Death.

A sickening confusion of odours assailed my senses; each essence a vile enticement, outraging Nature by a perversion of her own pure spell.

A timidly protesting fragrance stole strangely by. I started at its approach. It summoned a stinging memory. I stepped forward to escape it, but stopped, confronted by the being who had shared, by the flickering lamplight and in the presence of that silent witness, the poor little violet's prayer.

The man beside her was decorated with a bunch of sister flowers to those which had taken part against him, months ago, in vain. He could have borne no better badge of victory. He was looking at some extravagant trifle in the window next the entry I had just crossed. They spoke, comparing it with a silver case he turned over in his hand. In the centre I noticed a tiny enamelled shield. The detail seemed familiar, but beyond identity. They entered the shop. I stood motionless, challenging memory, till it produced from some dim corner of my brain a hoarded “No.”

The device now headed a poor strip of paper on a dead girl's bed. I saw a figure set by death, facing starvation, and with ruin in torn fragments in her hand. But what place in the scene had I? A brief discussion next me made swift answer.

They were once more beside me. The man was speaking: his companion raised her face; I recognised its outline,—its true aspect I shall not know. Four months since it wore the mask of sorrow; it was now but one of the pages of man's immortal book. I was conscious of the matchless motions which in the dim church had first attracted me.

She was clothed, save for a large scarf of vehemently brilliant crimson, entirely in dull vermilion. The two shades might serve as symbols of divine and earthly passion. Yet does one ask the martyr's colour, you name it 'Red' (and briefly thus her garment): no distinctive hue. The murderer and the prelate too may wear such robes of office. Both are empowered to bless and ban.

My mood was reckless. I held my hands out, craving mercy. It was my bitter lot to beg. My warring nature became unanimously suppliant, heedless of the debt this soul might owe me—of the throes to which I left it, and of the discreditable marks of mine it bore. Failure to exact regard I did not entertain. I waited, with exhaustless fortitude, the response to my appeal. Whence it came I know not. The man and woman met my gaze with a void incorporate stare. The two faces were merged into one avenging visage—so it seemed. I was excited. As they turned towards the carriage waiting them, I heard a laugh, mounting to a cry. It rang me to an outraged Temple. Sabbath bells peal sweeter calls, as once this might have done.

I knew my part then in the despoiled body, with its soul's tapers long blown out.

Wheels hastened to assail that sound, but it clanged all. Did it proceed from some defeated angel? or the woman's mouth? or mine? God knows!

Sat est scripsisse

By Austin Dobson

To E. G., with a Volume of Essays

When you and I have wandered beyond the reach of call,
And all our works immortal are scattered on the Stall,
It may be some new Reader, in that remoter age,
Will find this present volume, and listless turn the page.

For him I write these Verses. And “Sir” (I say to him),
"This little Book you see here—this masterpiece of Whim,
Of Wisdom, Learning, Fancy (if you will, please, attend),
Was written by its Author, who gave it to his Friend.

"For they had worked together, been Comrades at the Pen;
They had their points at issue, they differed now and then;
But both loved Song and Letters, and each had close at heart
The dreams, the aspirations, the 'dear delays' of Art.

"And much they talk'd of Metre, and more they talked of Style,
Of Form and 'lucid Order,' of labour of the File;
And he who wrote the writing, as sheet by sheet was penned,
(This all was long ago, Sir!) would read it to his Friend.

"They knew not, nor cared greatly, if they were spark or star,
They knew to move is somewhat, although the goal be far;
And larger light or lesser, this thing at least is clear,—
They served the Muses truly, their service was sincere.

"This tattered page you see, Sir, is all that now remains
(Yes, fourpence is the lowest!) of all those pleasant pains;
And as for him that read it, and as for him that wrote,—
No Golden Book enrolls them among its 'Names of Note.'

"And yet they had their office. Though they to-day are passed,
They marched in that procession where is no first or last;
Though cold is now their hoping, though they no more aspire,
They, too, had once their ardour:—they handed on the fire."

Three Stories

By V., O., C.S.

I—Honi soit qui mal y pense

By C. S.

"But I'm not very tall, am I?" said the little book-keeper, coming close to the counter so as to prevent me from seeing that she was standing on tiptoe.

“A *p'tite* woman,” said I, “goes straight to my heart.”

The book-keeper blushed and looked down, and began fingering a bunch of keys with one hand.

“How is the cold?” I asked. “You don't seem to cough so much to-day.”

“It always gets bad again at night,” she answered, still looking down and playing with her keys.

I reached over to them, and she moved her hand quickly away and clasped it tightly with the other.

I picked up the keys:—“Store-room, Cellar, Commercial Room, Office,” said I, reading off the names on the labels—“why, you seem to keep not only the books, but everything else as well.”

She turned away to measure out some whisky at the other window, and then came back and held out her hand for the keys.

“What a pretty ring,” I said; “I wonder I haven't noticed it before. You can't have had it on lately.”

She looked at me fearfully and again covered her hand.

“Please give me my keys.”

“Yes, if I may look at the ring.”

The little book-keeper turned away, and slipping quietly on to her chair, burst into tears.

I pushed open the door of the office and walked in.

“What is it?” I whispered, bending over her and gently smoothing her hair.

“I—I hate him!” she sobbed.

“Him?—Him?”

“Yes,—the—the ring man.”

I felt for the little hand among the folds of the inky table-cloth, and stooped and kissed her forehead. “Forgive me, dearest——”

“Go away,” she sobbed, “go away. I wish I had never seen you. It was all my fault: I left off wearing the ring on purpose, but he's coming here to-day——and—and we are so many at home—and have so little money——”

And as I went upstairs to pack I could see the little brown head bent low over the inky table-cloth.

II—A Purple Patch

By O.

I

It was nearly half-past four. Janet was sitting in the drawing-room reading a novel and waiting for tea. She was in one of those pleasing moods when the ordinary happy circumstances of life do not pass unnoticed as inevitable. She was pleased to be living at home with her father and sister, pleased that her father was a flourishing doctor, and that she could sit idle in the drawing-room, pleased at the pretty furniture, at the flowers which she had bought in the morning.

She seldom felt so. Generally these things did not enter her head as a joy in themselves; and this mood never came upon her when, according to elderly advice, it would have been useful. In no trouble, great or small, could she gain comfort from remembering that she lived comfortably; but sometimes without any reason, as now, she felt glad at her position.

When the parlour-maid came in and brought the lamp, Janet watched her movements pleasurably. She noticed all the ways of a maid in an orderly house: how she placed the lighted lamp on the table at her side, then went to the windows and let down the blinds and drew the curtains, then pulled a small table forward, spread a blue-edged cloth on it, and walked out quietly, pushing her cuffs up a little.

She was pleased too with her novel, Miss Braddon's *Asphodel*. For some time she had enjoyed reading superior books. She knew that *Asphodel* was bad, and saw its inferiority to the books which she had lately read; but that did not prevent her pleasure at being back with Miss Braddon.

The maid came in and set the glass-tray on the table which she had just covered, took a box of matches from her apron pocket, lit the wick of the silver spirit-stove and left the room. Janet watched the whole proceeding with pleasure, sitting still in the arm-chair. Three soft raps on the gong and Gertrude appeared. She made the tea, and they talked. When they had finished, Gertrude sat at her desk and began to write a letter, and still talking, Janet gradually let herself into her novel once more. There was plenty of the story left, she would read right on till dinner.

They had finished talking for some minutes when they heard a ring.

“Oh, Gerty, suppose this is a visitor!” Janet said, looking up from her book.

Gertrude listened. Janet prayed all the time that it might not be a visitor, and she gave a low groan as she heard heavy steps upon the stairs. Gertrude's desk was just opposite the door, and directly the maid opened it she saw that the visitor was an awkward young man who never had anything to say. She exchanged a glance with Janet, then Janet saw the maid who announced, “Mr. Huddleston.”

And then she saw Mr. Huddleston. She laid her book down open on the table behind her, and rose to shake hands with him.

Janet had one conversation with Mr. Huddleston—music: they were very slightly acquainted, and they never got beyond that subject. She smiled at the inevitableness of her question as she asked:

“Were you at the Saturday Afternoon Concert?”

When they had talked for ten minutes with some difficulty, Gertrude, who had finished her letter, left the room: she was engaged to be married, and was therefore free to do anything she liked. After a visit of half an hour Huddleston went.

Janet rang the bell, and felt a little guilty as she took up the open book directly her visitor had gone. She did not know quite why, but she was dissatisfied. However, in a moment or two she was deep in the excitement of *Asphodel*.

She read on for a couple of hours, and then she heard the carriage drive up to the door. She heard her father come into the house and go to his consulting-room, then walk upstairs to his bedroom, and she knew that in a few minutes he would be down in the drawing-room to talk for a quarter of an hour before dinner. When she heard him on the landing, she put away her book; Gertrude met him just at the door; they both came in together, and then they all three chatted. But instead of feeling in a contented mood, because she had read comfortably, as she had intended all the afternoon, Janet was dissatisfied, as if the afternoon had slipped by without being enjoyed, wasted over the exciting novel.

And towards the end of dinner her thoughts fell back on an old trouble which had been dully threatening her. Gertrude was her father's favourite; gay and pretty, she had never been difficult. Janet was more silent, could not amuse her father and make him laugh, and he was not fond of her. She would find still more difficulty when Gertrude was married, and she was left alone with him. His health was failing, and he was growing very cantankerous. She dreaded the prospect, and already the doctor was moaning to Gerty about her leaving, and she was making him laugh for the last time over the very cause of his dejection. Not that he would have retarded her marriage by a day; he was extremely proud of her engagement to the son of the great Lady

Beamish.

That thought had been an undercurrent of trouble ever since Gertrude's engagement, and she wondered how she could have forgotten it for a whole afternoon. Now she was as fully miserable as she had been content four hours before, and her trouble at the moment mingled with her unsatisfactory recollection of the afternoon, her annoyance at Mr. Huddleston's interruption, and the novel which she had taken up directly he had left the room.

II

A year after Gertrude's marriage Dr. Worgan gave up his work and decided at last to carry out a cherished plan. One of his oldest friends was going to Algiers with his wife and daughter. The doctor was a great favourite with them; he decided to sell his house in London, and join the party in their travels. The project had been discussed for a long time, and Janet foresaw an opportunity of going her own way. She was sure that her father did not want her. She had hinted at her wish to stay in England and work for herself; but she did not insist or trouble her father, and as he did not oppose her she imagined that the affair was understood. When the time for his departure drew close, Janet said something about her arrangements which raised a long discussion. Dr. Worgan expressed great astonishment at her resolution, and declared that she had not been open with him. Janet could not understand his sudden opposition; perhaps she had not been explicit enough; but surely they both knew what they were about, and it was obviously better that they should part.

They were in the drawing-room. Dr. Worgan felt aggrieved that the affair should be taken so completely out of his hands; he had been reproaching her, and arguing for some time. Janet's tone vexed him. She was calm, disinclined to argue, behaving as if the arrangement were quite decided: he would have been better pleased if she had cried or lost her temper.

“It's very easy to say that; but, after all, you're not independent. You say you want to get work as a governess; but that's only an excuse for not going away with me.”

“You never let me do anything for you.”

“I don't ask you to. I never demand anything of you. I'm not a tyrant; but that's no reason why you should want to desert me; you're the last person I have.”

Janet hated arguments and talk about affairs which were obviously settled. They had talked for almost an hour, they could neither of them gain anything from the conversation, and yet her father seemed to delight in prolonging it. She did not wish to defend her course. She would willingly have allowed her father to put her in the wrong, if only he had left her alone to do what both of them wanted.

“You want to pose as a kind of martyr, I suppose. Your father hasn't treated you well, he only loved your sister; you've a grievance against him.”

“No, indeed; you know it's not so.”

The impossibility of answering such charges, all the unnecessary fatigue, had brought her very near crying: she felt the lump in her throat, the aching in her breast. Be a governess? Why, she would willingly be a factory girl, working her life out for a few shillings a week, if only she could be left alone to be straightforward. The picture of the girls with shawl and basket leaving the factory came before her eyes. She really envied them, and pictured herself walking home to her lonely garret, forgotten and in peace.

“But that's how our relations and friends will look upon your conduct.”

“Oh no,” she answered, trying to smile and say something amusing after the manner of Gertrude; “they will only shake their heads at their daughters and say, 'There goes another rebel who isn't content to be beautiful, innocent, and protected.'”

But Janet's attempts to be amusing were not successful with her father.

“They won't at all. They'll say, 'At any rate her father is well off enough to give her enough to live upon, and not make her work as a governess.'”

“*We* know that's got nothing to do with it. If I were dependent, I should feel I'd less right to choose——”

“But you're mistaken; that's not honesty, but egoism, on your part.”

Janet had nothing to answer; there was a pause, as if her father wished her to argue the point. She thought, perhaps, she had better say something, else she would show too plainly that she saw he was in the wrong; but she said nothing, and he went on: “And what will people say at the idea of your being a governess? Practically a servant in a stranger's house, with a pretence of equality, but less pay than a good cook. What will all our friends say?”

Janet did not wish to say to herself in so many words that her father was a snob. If he had left her alone, she would have been satisfied with the unacknowledged feeling that he attached importance to certain things.

“Surely people of understanding know there's no harm in being a governess, and I'm quite willing

to be ignored by anyone who can't see that.”

These were the first words she spoke with any warmth.

“Selfishness again. It's not only your concern: what will your sister think and feel about it?”

“Gerty is sensible enough to think as I do; besides, she is very happy, and so has no right to dictate to other people about their affairs; indeed, she won't trouble about it—why should she? I'm not part of her.”

“You're unjust to Gertrude: your sister is too sweet and modest to wish to dictate to any one.”

“Exactly.” Janet could not help saying this one word, and yet she knew that it would irritate her father still more.

“And who would take you as a governess? You don't find it easy to live even with your own people, and I don't know what you can teach. Perhaps you will reproach me as Laura did her mother, and say it was my fault you didn't go to Girton?”

“Oh, I think I can manage. My music is not much, I know; but I think it's good enough to be useful.”

“Are you going to say that I was wrong in not encouraging you to train for a professional musician?”

“I hadn't the faintest notion of reproaching you for anything: it was only modesty.”

She knew that having passed the period when she might have cried, she was being fatigued into the flippant stage, and her father hated that above everything.

“Now you're beginning to sneer in your superior way,” Dr. Worgan said, walking up the room, “talking to me as if I were an idiot——”

He was interrupted by the maid who came in to ask Janet whether she could put out the light in the hall. Janet looked questioningly at her father, who had faced round when he heard the door open, and he said yes.

“And, Callant,” Janet cried after her, and then went on in a lower tone as she reappeared, “we shall want breakfast at eight to-morrow; Dr. Worgan is going out early.”

The door was shut once more. Her father seemed vexed at the interruption so welcome to her.

“Well, I never could persuade you in anything; but I resent the way in which you look on my advice as if it were selfish—I'm only anxious for your own welfare.”

* * * * *

In bed Janet lay awake thinking over the conversation. She had an instinctive dislike to judging any one, especially her father. Why couldn't people who understood each other remain satisfied with their tacit understanding, and each go his own way without pretence? She was sure her father did not really want her, he was only opposing her desertion to justify himself in his own eyes, trying to persuade himself that he did love her. If he had just let things take their natural course and made no objections against his better judgment, she would not have criticised him; she had never felt aggrieved at his preference for Gertrude: it so happened that she was not sympathetic to him, and they both knew it. Over and over again as she lay in bed, she argued out all these points with herself. If he had said, “You're a good girl, you're doing the right thing; I admire you, though we're not sympathetic,” his humanity would have given her deep pleasure, and they might have felt more loving towards each other than ever before. Perhaps that was too much to expect; but at any rate he might have left her alone. Anything rather than all this pretence, which forced her to criticise him and defend herself.

But perhaps she had not given him a chance? She knew that every movement and look of hers irritated him: if only she could have not been herself, he might have been generous. But then, as if to make up for this thought, she said aloud to herself:

“Generosity, logic, and an objection to unnecessary talking are manly qualities.” And then she repented for becoming bitter.

“But why must all the hateful things in life be defined and printed on one's mind in so many words? I could face difficulties quite well without being forced to set all the unpleasantnesses in life clearly out. And this makes me bitter.”

She was terribly afraid of becoming bitter. Bitterness was for the failures, and why should she own to being a failure; surely she was not aiming very high? She was oppressed by the horrible fear of becoming old-maidish and narrow. Perhaps she would change gradually without being able to prevent, without even noticing the change. Every now and then she spoke her thoughts aloud.

“I can't have taking ways: some people think I'm superior and crushing, father says I'm selfish;” and yet she could not think of any great pleasures which she had longed for and claimed. Gerty had never hidden her wishes or sacrificed anything to others, and she always got everything she fancied; yet she was not selfish.

Then the old utter dejection came over her as she thought of her life; if no one should love her, and she should grow old and fixed in desolation? This was no sorrow at an unfortunate circumstance, but a dejection so far-reaching that its existence seemed to her more real than her own; it must have existed in the world before she was born, it must have been since the beginning. The smaller clouds which had darkened her day were forced aside, and the whole heaven was black with this great hopelessness. If any sorrow had struck her, death, disgrace, crime, that would have been a laughing matter compared with this.

Perhaps life would be better when she was a governess; she would be doing something, moulding her own life, ill-treated with actual wrongs perhaps. In the darkness of her heaven there came a little patch of blue sky, the hopefulness which was always there behind the cloud, and she fell asleep, dreamily looking forward to a struggle, to real life with possibilities—dim pictures.

III

A month afterwards, on a bitterly cold February day, Janet was wandering miserably about the house. She was to start in a few days for Bristol, where she had got a place as governess to two little girls, the daughters of a widower, a house-master at the school. Her father had left the day before. Janet could not help crying as she sat desolately in her cold bedroom trying to concern herself with packing and the arrangements for her journey. She was to dine that evening with Lady Beamish, to meet Gerty and her husband and say good-bye. She did not want to go a bit, she would rather have stayed at home and been miserable by herself. She had, as usual, asked nothing of any of her friends; she felt extraordinarily alone, and she grew terrified when she asked herself what connected her with the world at all, how was she going to live and why? What hold had she on life? She might go on as a governess all her life and who would care? What reason had she to suppose that anything would justify her living? From afar the struggle had looked attractive, there was something fine and strong in it; that would be life indeed when she would have to depend entirely upon herself and work her way; but now that the time was close at hand, the struggle only looked very bitter and prosaic. In her imagination beforehand she had always looked on at herself admiringly as governess and been strengthened by the picture. Now she was acting to no gallery. Whatever strength and virtue there was in her dealing met no one's approval; and all she had before her in the immediate future was a horrible sense of loneliness, a dreaded visit, two more days to be occupied with details of packing, a cab to the station, the dull east wind, the journey, the leave-taking all the more exquisitely painful because she felt that no one cared. The sense of being neglected gave her physical pain all over her body until her finger-tips ached. How is it possible, she thought, that a human being in the world for only a few years can be so hopeless and alone?

In the cab on her way to Lady Beamish she began to think at once of the evening before her. She tried to comfort herself with the idea of seeing Gerty, sweet Gerty, who charmed every one, and what close friends they had been! But the thought of Lady Beamish disturbed and frightened her. Lady Beamish was a very handsome woman of sixty, with gorgeous black hair showing no thread of white. She had been a great beauty, and a beauty about whom no one could tell any stories; she had married a very brilliant and successful man, and seconded him most ably during his lifetime. Those who disliked her declared she was fickle, and set too much value on her social position. Janet had always fancied that she objected from the beginning to her second son's engagement to Gertrude; but there was no understanding her, and if Janet had been asked to point to some one who was radically unsimple, she would at once have thought of Lady Beamish. She had been told of many charming things which she had done, and she had heard her say the sweetest things; but then suddenly she was stiff and unforgiving. There was no doubt about her cleverness and insight; many of her actions showed complete disregard of convention, and yet, whenever Janet had seen her, she had always been lifted up on a safe height by her own high birth, her dead husband's distinctions, her imposing appearance, and hedged round by all the social duties which she performed so well. Janet saw that Lady Beamish's invitation was kind; but she was the last person with whom she would have chosen to spend that evening. But here she was at the door, there was no escape.

Lady Beamish was alone in the drawing-room. “I'm very sorry, I'm afraid I've brought you here on false pretences. I've just had a telegram from Gertrude to say that Charlie has a cold. I suppose she's afraid it may be influenza, and so she's staying at home to look after him. And Harry has gone to the play, so we shall be quite alone.” Janet's heart sank. Gerty had been the one consoling circumstance about that evening; besides, Lady Beamish would never have asked her if Gerty had not been coming. How would she manage with Lady Beamish all alone? She made up her mind to go as soon after dinner as she could.

They talked about Gertrude; that was a good subject for Janet, and she clung to it; she was delighted to hear Lady Beamish praise her warmly.

As they sat down to dinner Lady Beamish said:

“You're not looking well, Janet?”

“I'm rather tired,” she answered lightly; “I've been troubled lately, the weight of the world——but I'm quite well.”

Lady Beamish made no answer. Janet could not tell why she had felt an impulse to speak the truth, perhaps just because she was afraid of her, and gave up the task of feeling easy as

hopeless. They talked of Gertrude again. Dinner was quickly finished. Instead of going back into the drawing-room, Lady Beamish took her upstairs into her own room.

“I'm sorry you have troubles which are making you thin and pale. At your age life ought to be bright and full of romance: you ought to have no troubles at all. I heard that you weren't going to travel with your father, but begin work on your own account: it seems to me you're quite right, and I admire your courage.”

Janet was surprised that Lady Beamish should show so much interest.

“My courage somehow doesn't make me feel cheerful,” Janet answered, laughing, “and I can't see anything hopeful in the future to look forward to——” “Why am I saying all this to her?” she wondered.

“No? And the consciousness of doing right as an upholding power—that is generally a fallacy. I think you are certainly right there.”

Janet looked at Lady Beamish, astonished and comforted to hear these words from the lips of an old experienced woman.

“I *am* grateful to you for saying that!”

“It must be a hard wrench to begin a new kind of life.”

“It's not the work or even the change which I mind; if only there were some assurance in life, something certain and hopeful: I feel so miserably alone, acting on my own responsibility in the only way possible, and yet for no reason——”

“My poor girl——” and she stretched out her arms. Janet rose from her chair and took both her hands and sat down on the footstool at her feet. She looked up at her handsome face; it seemed divine to her lighted by that smile, and the wrinkles infinitely touching and beautiful. There was an intimate air about the room.

“You've decided to go away to Bristol?”

“I thought I'd be thorough: I might stay in London and get work; a friend of mine is editor of a lady's paper, and I suppose she could give me something to do; and there are other things I could do; but that doesn't seem to me thorough enough——”

The superiority of the older experienced women made the girl feel weak. She would have a joy in confessing herself.

“I suppose it was chiefly Gerty's marriage which set me thinking I'd better change. Until then I'd lived contentedly enough. I'm easily occupied, and I felt no necessity to work. But when I was left alone with father, I began gradually to feel as if I couldn't go on living so, as if I hadn't the right; nothing I ever did pleased him. And then I wondered what I was waiting for——”

She looked up at Lady Beamish and saw her fine features set attentively to her story; she could tell everything to such a face—all these things of which she had never spoken to anyone. She looked away again.

“Was I waiting to get married? That idea tortured me. Why should ideas come and trouble us when they're untrue and bear no likeness to our character?”

She turned her head once more to glance at the face above her.

“I looked into myself. Was it true of me that my only outlook in life was a man, that *that* was the only aim of my life? It wasn't necessary to answer the question, for it flashed into my mind with bitter truth that if I'd been playing that game, I'd been singularly unsuccessful, so I needn't trouble about the question——”

Astonished at herself, she moved her hand up, and Lady Beamish stretched out hers, and held the girl's hand upon her lap. Then, half ashamed of her frankness, she went on quickly and in a more ordinary tone:

“Oh, that and everything else—I was afraid of growing bitter, When my father threw up his work and decided to go to Algiers with his old friends, that seemed a good opportunity; I would do something for myself, you're justified if you work. It seemed hopeful then; but now the prospect is as hopeless and desolate as before.”

Janet saw the tears collecting in Lady Beamish's eyes, and her underlip beginning to quiver. Lady Beamish dared not kiss the girl for fear of breaking into tears: she stood up and went towards the fire, and trying to conquer her tears said: “Seeing you in trouble makes all my old wounds break out afresh.”

Janet gazed in wonder at her, feeling greatly comforted. Lady Beamish put her hand on the girl's head as she sat before her and said smiling: “It's strange how one sorrow brings up another, and if you cry you can't tell for what exactly you're crying. As I hear you talk of loneliness, I'm reminded of my own loneliness, so different from yours. As long as my own great friend was living, there was no possibility of loneliness; I was proud, I could have faced the whole world. But since he died, every year has made me feel the want of a sister or brother, some one of my own generation. I don't suppose you can understand what I mean. You say: 'You have sons, and many

friends who love and respect you'; that's true, and, indeed, without my sons I should not live; but they've all got past me, even Harry, the youngest. I can do nothing more for them, and as years go by I grow less able to do anything for anybody; my energy leaves me, and I sit still and see the world in front of me, see men and women whom I admire, whose conduct I commend inwardly, but that is all. My heart aches sometimes for a companion of my own age who would sit still with me, who understands my ideas, who has no new object in view, who has done life and has been left behind too——”

“Extremes meet,” she broke off. “I wish to comfort you, who are looking hopelessly forward, and all I can do is to show you an old woman's sorrow.”

“But wait,” she went on, sitting down, “let us be practical; you needn't go back to-night, I'll tell some one to fetch your things. And will you let me try and help you? I don't know whether I can; but may I try? Won't you stay a bit here with me? You would then have time to think over your plans; it would do no harm, at any rate. Or, if you would prefer living alone, would you let me help you? Sometimes it's easier to be indebted to strangers. Don't answer now, you know my offer is sincere, coming at this time; you can think it over.”

She left her place and met the servant at the door, to give her the order for the fetching of Janet's things. She came back and stood with her hands behind her, facing Janet, who looked up to her from her stool, adoring her as if she were a goddess.

“There's only one thing to do in life, to try and help those whom we can help; but it's very difficult to help you young people,” she said, drying her eyes; “you generally want something we cannot give you.”

“You comforted me more than I can say. I never dreamed of the possibility of such comfort as you're giving me.”

Still standing facing Janet, she suddenly began: “I knew a girl a long time ago; she was the most exquisite creature I've ever seen. She was lovely as only a Jewess can be lovely: by her side English beauties looked ridiculous, as if their features had been thrown together by mistake a few days ago; this girl's beauty was eternal, I don't know how else to describe her superiority. There was a harmony about her figure—not as we have pretty figures—but every movement seemed to be the expression of a magnificent nature. She had that strange look in her face which some Jews have, a something half humorous half pitiful about the eyebrows; it was so remarkable in a young girl, as if an endless experience of the world had been born in her—not that she was tired or *blasé*; she wasn't at all one of those young people who have seen the vanity of everything, she was full of enthusiasm, fascinatingly fresh; she was so capable and sensitive that nothing could be foreign or incomprehensible to her. I never saw anyone so unerring; I would have wagered the world that she could never be wrong in feeling. I never saw her misunderstand any one, except on purpose.”

Janet was rapt in attention, loving to hear this beauty's praises in the mouth of Lady Beamish. She kept her gaze fixed on the face, which now was turned towards her, now towards the fire.

"At the time I remember some man was writing in the paper about the inferiority of women, and as a proof he said quite truly that there were no women artists except actresses. He happened to mention one or two well-known living artists whom I knew personally; they weren't to be compared with this girl, and they would have been the first to say so themselves. She had no need to write her novels and symphonies; she lived them. One would have said a person most wonderfully fitted for life. Oh, I could go on praising her for ever; except once, I never fell so completely in love as I did with her. To see her dance and romp—I hadn't realised before how a great nature can show itself in everything a person does. It is a joy to think of her.

“One day she came to me, it was twenty years ago, I was a little over forty, she was just nineteen. She had fallen in love with a boy of her own age, and was in terrible difficulties with herself. I suppose it would have been more fitting if I'd given her advice; but I was so full of pity at the sight of this exquisite nature in torments that I could only try and comfort her and tell her above all things she mustn't be oppressed by any sense of her own wickedness; we all had difficulties of the same kind, and we couldn't expect to do more than just get along somehow as well as we could. I was angry with Fate that such a harmonious being had been made to jar with so heavy a strain. She had been free, and now she was to be confounded and brought to doubt. I don't think I can express it in words; but I feel as if I really understood why she killed herself a few days later. She had come among us, a wonder, ignoring the littlenesses of life, or else making them worthy by the spirit in which she treated them, and the first strain of this dragging ordinary affliction bewildered her. Whether a little more experience would have saved her, or whether it was a superior flash of insight which prompted her to end her life—at any rate it wasn't merely unreturned love which oppressed her.”

“And what was the man like?”

“He was quite a boy, and never knew she was in love with him; in fact I can't tell how far she did love him. The older I grow the more certain I feel that this actual love wasn't deep; but it was the sudden revelation of a whole mystery, a new set of difficulties, which confounded an understanding so far-reaching and superior. I remember her room distinctly; she was unlike most women in this respect, she had no desire to furnish her own room and be surrounded by pretty things of her own choice. She left the room just as it was when the family took the furnished house, with its very common ugly furniture, vile pictures on the walls, and things under glasses.

She carried so much beauty with her, she didn't think her room worth troubling about. I always imagine that her room has never been entered or changed since her death: nothing stirs there, except in the summer a band of small flies dance their mazy quadrille at the centre of the ceiling. I remember how she used to lie on the sofa and wonder at them with her half-laughing, half-pathetic eyes."

"And what did her people think!"

"Her family adored her: they were nice people, very ordinary——"

There was a knock at the door and Henry appeared, red-checked and smelling of the cold street. Janet rose from her stool to shake hands with him: his entrance was an unpleasant interruption; she thought that his mother too must feel something of the sort, although he was the one thing in the world she loved most.

"How was your play, Harry?"

"Oh, simply wonderful."

"Was the house pretty full?"

"Not very, though people were fairly enthusiastic; but there was a fool of a girl sitting in front of us, I could have kicked her, she would go all laughing."

"Perhaps she thought you were foolish for not laughing!"

"But such a sloppy-looking person had no right to laugh."

"Opinions differ about personal appearance."

"Well, at any rate she had a dirty dress on; the swan's-down round her cloak was perfectly black."

"Ah, now your attack becomes more telling!"

Lady Beamish had not changed her position. When Henry left, Janet feared she might want to stop their confidential talk; but she showed no signs of wishing to go to bed.

"I wish boys would remain boys, and not grow older; they never grow into such nice men, they don't fulfil their promise."

She sat down once more, and went on to tell Janet another story, a love story. When Janet, happy as she had not been for months, kissed her and said good-night, she told her how glad she was that no one else had been with her that evening.

Janet went to bed, feeling that the world was possible once more. Her mind was relieved of a great weight, she was wonderfully light-hearted, now that she rested weakly upon another's generosity, and was released from her egotistical hopelessness. She no longer had a great trouble which engrossed her thoughts, her mind was free to travel over the comforting circumstances of that evening: the intimate room, Lady Beamish's face with the tears gathering in her eyes, the confession she had made of her own loneliness, her offer of help which had made the world human again, her story and Henry's interruption, and the funny little argument between the mother and the son whom she adored; and after that, Lady Beamish had still stayed talking, and had dropped into telling of love as willingly as any school-girl, only everything came with such sweet force from the woman with all that experience of life. Every point in the evening with Lady Beamish had gone to give her a deep-felt happiness; hopes sprang up in her mind, and she soon fell asleep filled with wonder and pity, thinking of the lovely Jewess whom Lady Beamish had known and admired so long ago, when Janet herself was only five or six years old.

The older woman lay awake many hours thinking over her own life, and the sorrows of this poor girl.

* * * * *

Janet did not take Lady Beamish's offer, but went to Bristol, upheld by the idea that her friend respected her all the more for keeping to her plans. The first night at Bristol, in the room which was to be hers, she took out the old letter of invitation for that evening, and before she went to bed she kissed the signature "Clara Beamish"—the christian name seemed to bring them close together.

When she had overcome the strangeness of her surroundings, life was once more what it had always been; there was no particular struggle, no particular hopefulness. She was cheerful for no reason on Monday, less cheerful for no reason on Wednesday. The correspondence with Lady Beamish, which she had hoped would keep up their friendship, dropped almost immediately; the two letters she received from her were stiff, far off. Janet heard of her now and then, generally as performing some social duty. They met too a few times, but almost as strangers.

But Janet always remembered that she had gained the commendation of the wonderful woman, and that she approved of her; and she never forgot that evening, and the picture of Clara Beamish, exquisitely sympathetic, adorable. It stood out as a bright spot in life, nothing could change its value and reality.

III—Sancta Maria

By V.

The fire had grown black and smoky, and the room felt cold. It was about four o'clock on a dark day in November. Black snow-fraught clouds had covered the sky since the dawn. They seemed to be saving up their wrath for the storm to come. A woman sat close to the fire with a child in her arms. From time to time she shuddered involuntarily. It was miserably cold. In the corner of the room a man lay huddled up in a confusion of rags and covers. He moaned from time to time. Suddenly the fire leaped into a yellow flame, which lit up the room and revealed all its nakedness and filth. The floor was bare, and there were lumps of mud here and there on the boards, left by the tramp of heavy boots. There was a strip of paper that had come unfastened from the wall, and hung over in a large curve. It was black and foul, but here and there could be seen faintly a pattern of pink roses twined in and out of a trellis. There was no furniture in the room but the chair on which the woman sat. By the sick man's side was a white earthenware bowl, full of a mixture that gave out a strong pungent smell which pervaded the room. On the floor by the fireside was a black straw hat with a green feather and a rubbed velvet bow in it. The woman's face was white, and the small eyes were full of an intense despair. As the flame shot up feebly and flickered about she looked for something to keep alive the little bit of coal. She glanced at the heap in the corner which had become quiet, then, turning round, caught sight of the hat on the floor. She looked at it steadily for a minute between the flickers of the flame, then stooped down and picked it up. Carefully detaching the trimming from the hat, she laid it on the chair. Then she tore the bits of straw and lay them across each other over the little piece of coal. The fire blazed brightly for a few minutes after the straw had caught. It covered the room with a fierce light and the woman looked afraid that the sick man might be disturbed. But he was quiet as before. Almost mechanically she pulled a little piece of the burning straw from the fire and, shading it with her hand, stole softly to the other end of the room after depositing the child on the chair.

She looked for some minutes at the figure stretched before her. He lay with his face to the wall. He was a long thin man, and it seemed to her as she looked that his length was almost abnormal. Holding the light that was fast burning to the end away from her, she stooped down and laid her finger lightly on his forehead. The surface of his skin was cold as ice. She knew that he was dead. But she did not cry out. The eyes were filled with a look of bitter disappointment, and she dropped the bit of burning straw, and then, moving suddenly from her stooping posture, crushed out the little smouldering heap with her heel. She looked about the room for something; then repeating a prayer to herself hurriedly, hastened to the child who had woke up and was crying and kicking the bars of the wooden chair. There was something in the contrast between the stillness of the figure in the corner and the noise made by the child that made the woman shiver. She took up the child in her arms, comforted him, and sat down before the fire. She was thinking deeply. So poor! Scarcely enough to keep herself and the child till the end of the week, and then the figure in the corner! For some time she puzzled and puzzled. The burning straw had settled into a little glowing heap. She rose and went to a little box on the mantel-piece, and, opening it, counted the few coins in it. Then she seemed to reckon for a few moments, and a look of determination came into her face. She put the child down again and went to the other end of the room. She stood a moment over the prostrate figure, and then stooped down and took off an old rag of a shawl and a little child's coat which lay over the dead man's feet. She paused a moment. Again she stooped down and stripped the figure of all its coverings, until nothing was left but the dull white nightshirt that the man wore. She put the bundle which she had collected in a little heap on the other side of the room. Then she came back, and with an almost superhuman effort reared the figure into an upright position against the wall. She looked round for a moment, gathered up the little bundle, and stole softly from the room. A few hours later she came back. There was a gas lamp outside the window, and by the light of it she saw the child sitting at the feet of the figure, staring up at it stupidly.

* * * * *

Four days passed by, and still the figure stood against the wall. The woman had grown very white and haggard. She had only bought food enough for the child, and had scarce touched a morsel herself. It was Saturday. She was expecting a few pence for some matches which she had sold during the week. She was not allowed to take her money immediately, but had to hand it over to the owner of the matches, who had told her that if she had sold a certain quantity by the end of the week she should be paid a small percentage.

So she went out on this Saturday and managed to get rid of the requisite number, and carrying the money as usual to the owner, received a few pence commission. There was an eager look in her pale face as she hurried home and hastened to the box on the mantel-shelf. She emptied its contents into her hand, quickly counted up the total of her fortune, and then crept out again.

It was snowing heavily, but she did not mind. The soft flakes fell on her weary face, and she liked their warm touch. She hurried along until she came to a tiny grocer's shop. The red spot on her checks deepened as she asked the shopkeeper for twelve candles—“Tall ones, please,” she said in a whisper. She pushed the money on to the counter and ran away home with her parcel. Then she went up to the figure against the wall, and gently placed it on the ground, away from the wall.

She opened the parcel and carefully stood up the twelve candles in a little avenue, six each side of the dead man. With a feverous excitement in her eyes she pulled a match from her pocket and lit them. They burned steadily and brightly, casting a yellow light over the cold naked room, and over the blackened face of the dead man. The child that was rolling on the floor at the other end of the room uttered a coo of joy at the bright lights, and stretched out his tiny hands towards them. And the face of the mother was filled with a divine pleasure.

The articles of her faith had been fulfilled.

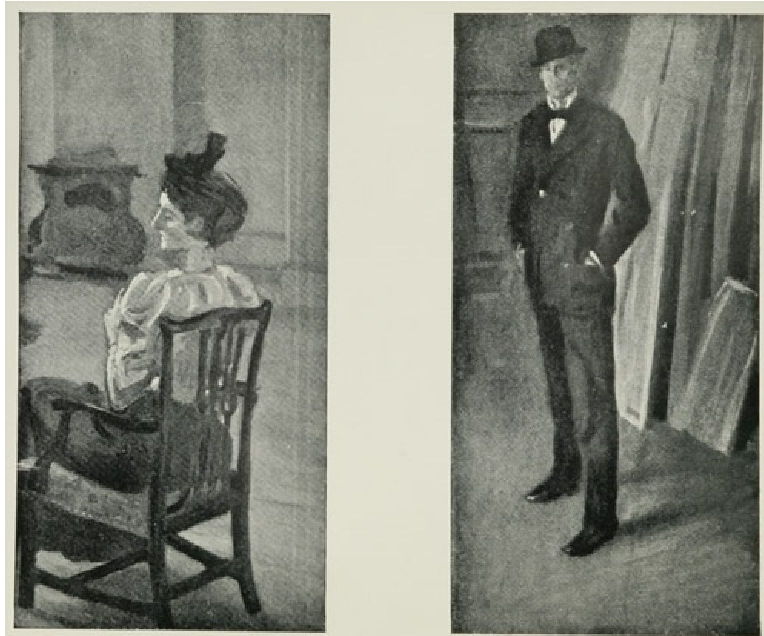
Three Pictures

By P. Wilson Steer

I. Portrait of Himself

II. A Lady

III. A Gentleman



In a Gallery

Portrait of a Lady (Unknown)

By Katharine de Mattos

Veiled eyes, yet quick to meet one glance
    Not his, not yours, but *mine*,
Lips that are fain to stir and breathe
    Dead joys (not love nor wine):
'Tis not in *you* the secret lurks
    That makes men pause and pass!

Did unseen magic flow from you
Long since to madden hearts,
And those who loathed remain to pray
And work their dolorous parts—
To seek your riddle, dread or sweet,
    And find it in the grave?

Till some one painted you one day,
Perchance to ease his soul,
And set you here to weave your spells
While time and silence roll;
And you were hungry for the hour
When one should understand?

Your jewelled fingers writhe and gleam
From out your sombre vest;
Am I the first of those who gaze,
Who may their meaning guess,
Yet dare not whisper lest the words
    Pale even painted cheeks?

The Yellow Book

A Criticism of Volume I

By Philip Gilbert Hamerton, LL.D.

I—The Literature

The Editor and Publishers of The Yellow Book, who seem to know the value of originality in all things, have conceived the entirely novel idea of publishing in the current number of their quarterly, a review in two parts of the number immediately preceding it, one part to deal with the literature, and another to criticise the illustrations.

I notice that on the cover of The Yellow Book the literary contributions are described simply as "Letterpress." This seems rather unfortunate, because "letterpress" is usually understood to mean an inferior kind of writing, which is merely an accompaniment to something else, such as engravings, or even maps. Now, in The Yellow Book the principle seems to be that one kind of contribution should *not* be made subordinate to another; the drawings and the writings are, in fact, independent. Certainly the writings are composed without the slightest pre-occupation concerning the work of the graphic artists, and the draughtsmen do not illustrate the inventions of the scribes. This independence of the two arts is favourable to excellence in both, besides making the business of the Editor much easier, and giving him more liberty of choice.

The literary contributions include poetry, fiction, short dramatic scenes, and one or two essays. The Editor evidently attaches much greater importance to creative than to critical literature, in which he is unquestionably right, provided only that the work which claims to be creative is inspired by a true genius for invention. The admission of poetry in more than usual quantity does not surprise us, when we reflect that The Yellow Book is issued by a publishing house which has done more than any other for the encouragement of modern verse. It is the custom to profess contempt for minor poets, and all versifiers of our time except Tennyson and Swinburne are classed as minor poets by critics who shrink from the effort of reading metrical compositions. The truth is that poetry and painting are much more nearly on a level in this respect than people are willing to admit. Many a painter and many a poet has delicate perceptions and a cultivated taste without the gigantic creative force that is necessary to greatness in his art.

Mr. Le Gallienne's "Tree-Worship" is full of the sylvan sense, the delight in that forest life which we can scarcely help believing to be conscious. It contains some perfect stanzas and some magnificent verses. As a stanza nothing can be more perfect than the fourth on page 58, and the fourth on the preceding page begins with a rarely powerful line. The only weak points in the poem are a few places in which even poetic truth has not been perfectly observed. For example, in the first line on page 58, the heart of the tree is spoken of as being remarkable for its softness, a new and unexpected characteristic in heart of oak. On the following page the tree is described as a green and welcome "coast" to the sea of air. No single tree has extent enough to be a coast of the air-ocean; at most it is but a tiny green islet therein. In the last stanza but one Mr. Le Gallienne speaks of "the roar of sap." This conveys the idea of a noisy torrent, whereas the marvel of sap is that it is steadily forced upwards through a mass of wood by a quietly powerful pressure. I dislike the fallacious theology of the last stanza as being neither scientific nor poetical. Mr. Benson's little poem, [Greek: Daimonizomenos], is lightly and cleverly versified, and tells the story of a change of temper, almost of nature, in very few words. The note of Mr. Watson's two sonnets is profoundly serious, even solemn, and the workmanship firm and strong; the reader may observe, in the second sonnet, the careful preparation for the last line and the force with which it strikes upon the ear. Surely there is nothing frivolous or fugitive in such poetry as this! I regret the publication of "Stella Maris" by Mr. Arthur Symons; the choice of the title is in itself offensive. It is taken from one of the most beautiful hymns to the Holy Virgin (Ave, maris stella!), and applied to a London street-walker, as a star in the dark sea of urban life. We know that the younger poets make art independent of morals, and certainly the two have no necessary connection; but why should poetic art be employed to celebrate common fornication? Rossetti's "Jenny" set the example, diffusely enough.

The two poems by Mr. Edmund Gosse, "Alere Flammam" and "A Dream of November," have each the great quality of perfect unity. The first is simpler and less fanciful than the second. Both in thought and execution it reminds me strongly of Matthew Arnold. Whether there has been any conscious imitation or not, "Alere Flammam" is pervaded by what is best in the classical spirit. Mr. John Davidson's two songs are sketches in town and country, impressionist sketches well done in a laconic and suggestive fashion. Mr. Davidson has a good right to maledict "Elkin Mathews & John Lane" for having revived the detestable old custom of printing catchwords at the lower corner of the page. The reader has just received the full impression of the London scene, when he is disturbed by the isolated word Foxes, which destroys the impression and puzzles him. London streets are not, surely, very favourable to foxes! He then turns the page and finds that the word is the first in the rural poem which follows. How Tennyson would have growled if the printer had put the name of some intrusive beast at the foot of one of his poems! Even in prose the custom is still intolerable; it makes one read the word twice over as thus (pp. 159, 60), "Why doesn't the wretched publisher publisher bring it out!"

We find some further poetry in Mr. Richard Garnett's translations from Luigi Tansillo. Not having

access just now to the original Italian, I cannot answer for their fidelity, but they are worth reading, even in English, and soundly versified.

It is high time to speak of the prose. The essays are “A Defence of Cosmetics,” by Mr. Max Beerbohm, and “Reticence in Literature,” by Mr. Arthur Waugh. I notice that a critic in the New York *Nation* says that the Whistlerian affectations of Mr. Beerbohm are particularly intolerable. I understood his essay to be merely a *jeu d'esprit*, and found that it amused me, though the tastes and opinions ingeniously expressed in it are precisely the opposite of my own. Mr. Beerbohm is (or pretends to be) entirely on the side of artifice against nature. The difficulty is to determine what *is* nature. The easiest and most “natural” manners of a perfect English lady are the result of art, and of a more advanced art than that indicated by more ceremonious manners. Mr. Beerbohm says that women in the time of Dickens appear to have been utterly natural in their conduct, “flighty, gushing, blushing, fainting, giggling, and shaking their curls.” Much of that conduct may have been as artificial as the curls themselves, and assumed only to attract attention. Ladies used to faint on the slightest pretext, not because it was natural but because it was the fashion; when it ceased to be the fashion they abandoned the practice. Mr. Waugh's essay on “Reticence in Literature” is written more seriously, and is not intended to amuse. He defends the principle of reticence, but the only sanction that he finds for it is a temporary authority imposed by the changing taste of the age. We are consequently never sure of any permanent law that will enforce any reticence whatever. A good proof of the extreme laxity of the present taste is that Mr. Waugh himself has been able to print at length three of the most grossly sensual stanzas in Mr. Swinburne's “Dolores.” Reticence, however, is not concerned only with sexual matters. There is, for instance, a flagrant want of reticence in the lower political press of France and America, and the same violent kind of writing, often going as far beyond truth as beyond decency, is beginning to be imitated in England. One rule holds good universally; all high art is reticent, *e.g.*, in Dante's admirable way of telling the story of Francesca through her own lips.

Mr. Henry James, in “The Death of the Lion,” shows his usual elegance of style, and a kind of humour which, though light enough on the surface, has its profound pathos. It is absolutely essential, in a short story, to be able to characterise people and things in a very few words. Mr. James has this talent, as for example in his description of the ducal seat at Bigwood: “very grand and frigid, all marble and precedence.” We know Bigwood, after that, as if we had been there and have no desire to go. So of the Princess: “She has been told everything in the world and has never perceived anything, and the *echoes of her education*,” etc., p. 42. The moral of the story is the vanity and shallowness of the world's professed admiration for men of letters, and the evil, to them, or going out of their way to suck the sugar-plums of praise. The next story, “Irremediable,” shows the consequences of marrying a vulgar and ignorant girl in the hope of improving her, the difficulty being that she declines to be improved. The situation is powerfully described, especially the last scene in the repulsive, disorderly little home. The most effective touch reveals Willoughby's constant vexation because his vulgar wife “never did any one mortal thing efficiently or well,” just the opposite of the constant pleasure that clever active women give us by their neat and rapid skill. “The Dedication,” by Mr. Fred Simpson, is a dramatic representation of the conflict between ambition and love—not that the love on the man's side is very earnest, or the conflict in his mind very painful, as ambition wins the day only too easily when Lucy is thrown over. “The Fool's Hour,” by Mr. Hobbes and Mr. George Moore, is a slight little drama founded on the idea that youth must amuse itself in its own way, and cannot be always tied to its mamma's apron-strings. It is rather French than English in the assumption that youth must of necessity resort to theatres and actresses. Of the two sketches by Mr. Harland, that on white mice is clever as a supposed reminiscence of early boyhood, but rather long for its subject, the other, “A Broken Looking-Glass,” is a powerful little picture of the dismal end of an old bachelor who confesses to himself that his life has been a failure, equally on the sides of ambition and enjoyment. One of my friends tells me that it is impossible for a bachelor to be happy, yet he may invest money in the Funds! In Mr. Crackanthorpe's “Modern Melodrama,” he describes for us the first sensations of a girl when she sees death in the near future. It is pathetic, tragical, life-like in language, with the defects of character and style that belong to a close representation of nature. “A Lost Masterpiece,” by George Egerton, is not so interesting as the author's “Keynotes,” though it shows the same qualities of style. The subject is too unfruitful, merely a literary disappointment, because a bright idea has been chased away. “A Sentimental Cellar,” by Mr. George Saintsbury, written in imitation of the essayists of the eighteenth century, associates the wines in a cellar with the loves and friendships of their owner. To others the vinous treasures would be “good wine and nothing more”; to their present owner they are “a casket of magic liquors,” a museum in which he lives over again “the vanished life of the past.” The true French bookless *bourgeois* often calls his cellar his *bibliothèque*, meaning that he values its lore as preferable to that of scholarship; but Mr. Saintsbury's Falernianus associates his wines with sentiment rather than with knowledge.

On the whole, the literature in the first number of The Yellow Book is adequately representative of the modern English literary mind, both in the observation of reality and in style. It is, as I say, really literature and not letterpress. I rather regret, for my own part, the general brevity of the pieces which restricts them to the limits of the sketch, especially as the stories cannot be continued after the too long interval of three months. As to this, the publishers know their own business best, and are probably aware that the attention of the general public, though easily attracted, is even more easily fatigued.

II—The Illustrations

On being asked to undertake the second part of this critical article, I accepted because one has so rarely an opportunity of saying anything about works of art to which the reader can quite easily refer. To review an exhibition of pictures in London or Paris is satisfactory only when the writer imagines himself to be addressing readers who have visited it, and are likely to visit it again. When an illustration appears in one of the art periodicals, it may be accompanied by a note that adds something to its interest, but no one expects such a note to be really critical. In the present instance, on the contrary, we are asked to say what we think, without reserve, and as we have had nothing to do with the choice of the contributors, and have not any interest in the sale of the periodical, there is no reason why we should not.

To begin with the cover. The publishers decided not to have any ornament beyond the decorative element in the figure design which is to be changed for every new number. What is permanent in the design remains, therefore, of an extreme simplicity and does not attract attention. The yellow colour adopted is glaring, and from the æsthetic point of view not so good as a quiet mixed tint might have been; however, it gives a title to the publication and associates itself so perfectly with the title that it has a sufficient *raison d'être*, whilst it contrasts most effectively with black. Though white is lighter than any yellow, it has not the same active and stimulating quality. The drawing of the masquers is merely one of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley's fancies and has no particular signification. We see a plump and merry lady laughing boisterously whilst she seems to be followed by a man who gazes intently upon the beauties of her shoulder. It is not to be classed amongst the finest of Mr. Beardsley's designs, but it shows some of his qualities, especially his extreme economy of means. So does the smaller drawing on the back or the volume, which is a fair example of his ready and various invention. See how the candle-flame is blown a little to one side, how the candle gutters on that side, and how the smoke is affected by the gust of air. Observe, too, the contrasts between the faces, not that they are attractive faces. There seems to be a peculiar tendency in Mr. Beardsley's mind to the representation of types without intellect and without morals. Some of the most dreadful faces in all art are to be found in the illustrations (full of exquisite ornamental invention) to Mr. Oscar Wilde's “Salome.” We have two unpleasant ones here in «l'Éducation Sentimentale.» There is distinctly a sort of corruption in Mr. Beardsley's art so far as its human element is concerned, but not at all in its artistic qualities, which show the perfection of discipline, of self-control, and of thoughtful deliberation at the very moment of invention. Certainly he is a man of genius, and perhaps, as he is still very young, we may hope that when he has expressed his present mood completely, he may turn his thoughts into another channel and see a better side of human life. There is, of course, nothing to be said against the lady who is touching the piano on the title-page of The Yellow Book, nor against the portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell opposite page 126, except that she reminds one of a giraffe. It is curious how the idea of extraordinary height is conveyed in this drawing without a single object for comparison. I notice in Mr. Beardsley's work a persistent tendency to elongation; for instance, in the keys of the piano on the title-page which in their perspective look fifteen inches long. He has a habit, too, of making faces small and head-dresses enormous. The rarity of beauty in his faces seems in contradiction with his exquisite sense of beauty in curving lines, and the singular grace as well as rich invention of his ornaments. He can, however, refuse himself the pleasure of such invention when he wants to produce a discouraging effect upon the mind. See, for instance, the oppressive plainness of the architecture in the background to the dismal “Night Piece.”

It is well known that the President of the Royal Academy, unlike most English painters, is in the habit of making studies. In his case these studies are uniformly in black and white chalk on brown paper. Two of them are reproduced in The Yellow Book, one being for drapery, and the other for the nude form moving in a joyous dance with a light indication of drapery that conceals nothing. The latter is a rapid sketch of an intention and is full of life both in attitude and execution, the other is still and statuesque. Sir Frederic is a model to all artists in one very rare virtue, that of submitting himself patiently, in his age, to the same discipline which strengthened him in youth.

I find a curious and remarkable drawing by Mr. Pennell of that strangely romantic place Le Puy en Velay, whose rocks are crowned with towers or colossal statues, whilst houses cluster at their feet. The subject is dealt with rather in the spirit of Dürer, but with a more supple and more modern kind of skill. It is topography, though probably with considerable artistic liberty. I notice one of Dürer's licences in tonic relations. The sky, though the sun is setting (or rising) is made darker than the hills against it, and darker even than the two remoter masses of rock which come between us and the distance. The trees, too, are shaded capriciously, some poplars in the middle distance being quite dark whilst nearer trees are left without shade or local colour. In a word, the tonality is simply arbitrary, and in this kind of drawing it matters very little. Mr. Pennell has given us a delightful bit of artistic topography showing the strange beauty of a place that he always loves and remembers.

Mr. Sickert contributed two drawings. “The Old Oxford Music Hall” has some very good qualities, especially the most important quality of all, that of making us feel as if we were there. The singer on the stage (whose attitude has been very closely observed) is strongly lighted by convergent rays. According to my recollection the rays themselves are much more visible in reality than they are here, but it is possible that the artist may have intentionally subdued their brightness in order to enhance that of the figure itself. The musicians and others are good, except that they are too small, if the singing girl (considering her distance) is to be taken as the standard of

comparison. The pen-sketch of “A Lady Reading” is not so satisfactory. I know, of course, that it is offered only as a very slight and rapid sketch, and that it is impossible, even for a Rembrandt, to draw accurately in a hurry, but there is a formlessness in some important parts of this sketch (the hands, for instance) which makes it almost without interest for me. It is essentially painter's pen work, and does not show any special mastery of pen and ink.

The very definite pen-drawing by Mr. Housman called “The Reflected Faun” is open to the objection that the reflections in the water are drawn with the same hardness as the birds and faun in the air. The plain truth is that the style adopted, which in its own way is as legitimate as any other, does not permit the artist to represent the natural appearance of water. This kind of pen-drawing is founded on early wood-engraving which filled the whole space with decorative work, even to the four corners.

Mr. Rothenstein is a modern of the moderns. His two slight portrait-sketches are natural and easy, and there is much life in the “Portrait of a Gentleman.” The “Portrait of a Lady,” by Mr. Furse, is of a much higher order. It has a noble gravity, and it shows a severity of taste not common in the portraiture of our time; it is essentially a distinguished work. Mr. Nettleship gives us an ideal portrait of Minos, not in his earthly life, as king of Crete, but in his infernal capacity as supreme judge of the dead. The face is certainly awful enough and implacable:

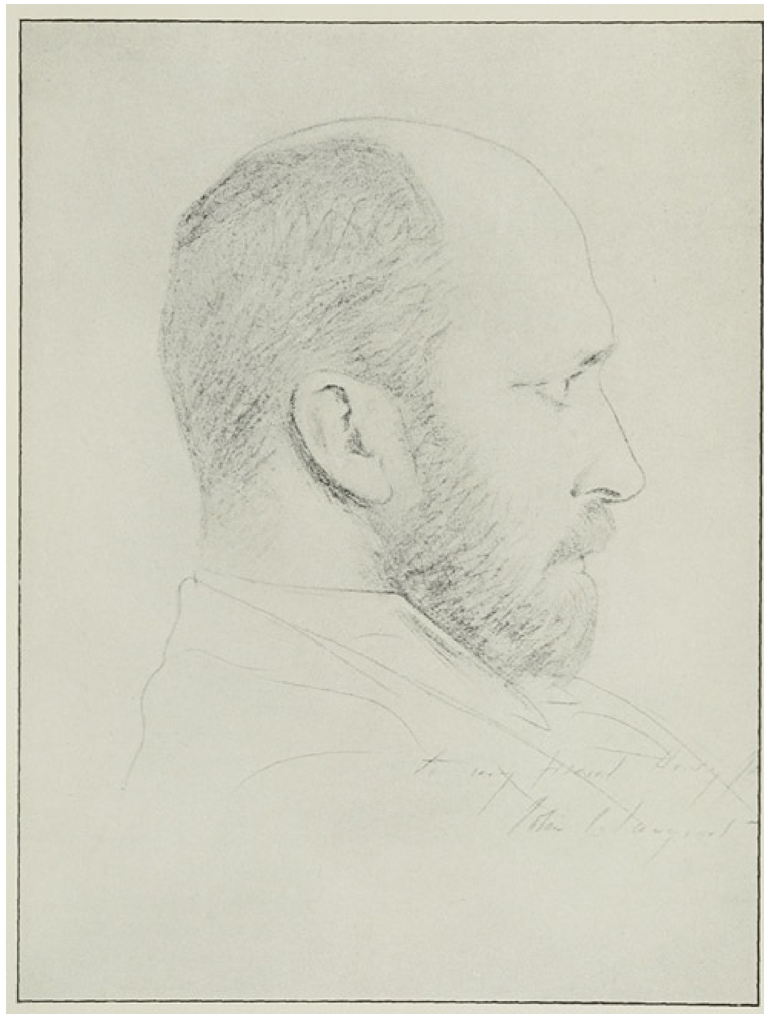
> Stavvi Minòs orribilmente, e ringhia:
> Esamina le colpe nell'entrata;
> Giudica e manda, secondo ch'avvinghia.

The book-plate designed by Mr. Beardsley for Dr. Propert has the usual qualities of the inventor. It seems to tell a tale of hopeless love. The other book-plate, by Mr. Anning Bell, is remarkable for its pretty and ingenious employment of heraldry which so easily becomes mechanical when the draughtsman is not an artist.

On the whole, these illustrations decidedly pre-suppose real artistic culture in the public. They do not condescend in any way to what might be guessed at as the popular taste. I notice that the Editor and Publishers have a tendency to look to young men of ability for assistance in their enterprise, though they accept the criticism of those who now belong to a preceding generation.

Portrait of Henry James

By John S. Sargent, A.R.A.



Dreams

By Ronald Campbell Macfie

"In the first dream that comes with the first sleep
I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart"

Unworthy! yea,
So high thou art above me
I hardly dare to love thee,
But kneel and lay
All homage and all worship at thy feet,
O lady sweet!

Yet dreams are strong:
Their wordless wish suffices
To win them Paradises
Of sun and song.
Delight our waking life can never know
The dreams bestow.

And in a dream,
Dupe of its bold beguiling,
I watch thy blue eyes smiling;
I see them gleam
With love the waking moments have forbidden,
And veiled and hidden.

O brave deceit!
In dreams thy glad eyes glisten,
In dreams I lie and listen
Thy bosom beat,
Hiving hot lips among thy temple-hair,
O lady fair!

And tho' I live,
Dreaming in such fair fashion,
I think, in thy compassion,
Thou wilt forgive,
Since I but *dream*, and since my heart will ache
When I awake.

Madame Réjane

By Dauphin Meunier

A fabulous being, in an everyday human form; a face, not beautiful, scarcely even pretty, which looks upon the world with an air at once ironical and sympathetic; a brow that grows broader or narrower according to the capricious invasions of her aureole of hair; an odd little nose, perked heavenward; two roguish eyes, now blue, now black; the rude accents of a street-girl, suddenly changing to the well-bred murmuring of a great lady; abrupt, abundant gestures, eloquently finishing half-spoken sentences; a supple neck—a slender, opulent figure—a dainty foot, that scarcely touches the earth and yet can fly amazingly near the ceiling; lips, nervous, sensuous, trembling, curling; a frock, simple or sumptuous, bought at a bargain or created by a Court-dressmaker, which expresses, moulds, completes, and sometimes almost unveils the marvellous creature it envelops; a gay, a grave demeanour; grace, wit, sweetness, tartness; frivolity and earnestness, tenderness and indifference; beauty without beauty, immorality without evil: a nothing capable of everything: such is Woman at Paris: such is the Parisienne: and Madame Réjane is the Parisienne, is all Parisiennes, incarnated.

What though our Parisienne be the daughter of a hall-porter, what though she be a maid-servant, a courtesan, or an arch-duchess, she goes everywhere, she is the equal of every one, she knows or divines everything. No need for her to learn good manners, nor bad ones: she's born with both. According to the time or place, she will talk to you of politics, of art, of literature—of dress, trade, cookery—of finance, of socialism, of luxury, of starvation—with the patness, the sure touch, the absolute sincerity, of one who has seen all, experienced all, understood all. She's as sentimental as a song, wily as a diplomate, gay as folly, or serious as a novel by Zola. What has she read? Where was she educated? Who cares? Her book of life is Paris; she knows her Paris by heart; and whoso knows Paris can dispense with further knowledge. She adores originality and novelty, but she can herself transmute the commonplace into the original, the old into the new. Whatever she touches forthwith reflects her own animation, her mobility, her elusive charm. Flowers have no loveliness until she has grouped them; colours are colourless unless they suit her complexion. Delicately fingering this or that silken fabric, she decrees which shall remain in the darkness of the shops, which shall become the fashion of the hour. She crowns the poet, sits to the painter, inspires the sculptor, lends her voice to the musician; and not one of these artists can pretend to talent, if it be her whim to deny it him. She awards fame and wealth, success and failure, according to her pleasure.

Madame Réjane—the Parisienne: they are interchangeable terms. Whatever rôle she plays absorbs the attention of all Paris. Hearken, then, good French Provincials, who would learn the language of the Boulevards in a single lesson; hearken, also, ye children of other lands who are eager for our pleasures, and curious about our tastes and manners; hearken all people, men and women, who care, for once in a way, to behold what of all Parisian things is most essentially Parisian:—Go and see Réjane. Don't go to the Opéra, where the music is German; nor to the Opéra-Comique, where it is Italian; nor yet to the Comédie-Française, where the sublime is made ridiculous, and the heroes and heroines of Racine take on the attitudes of bull-fighters and cigarette-makers; nor to the Odéon, nor to the Palais-Royal, nor here, nor there, nor elsewhere: go and see Réjane. Be she at London, Chicago, Brussels, St. Petersburg—Réjane is Paris. She carries the soul of Paris with her, wheresoever she listeth.

A Parisienne, she was born in Paris; an actress, she is the daughter of an actor, and the niece of Madame Aptal-Arnault, sometime *pensionnaire* of the Comédie-Française. Is it a sufficient pedigree? Her very name is suggestive; it seems to share in the odd turn of her wit, the sauciness of her face, the tang of her voice; for Réjane's real name is Réju. Doesn't it sound like a nick-name, especially invented for this child of the greenroom? “Réjane” calls up to us the fanciful actress—fanciful, but studious, conscientious, impassioned for her art; “Madame Réjane” has rather a grand air; but Réju makes such a funny face at her.

I picture to myself the little Réju, scarcely out of her cradle, but already cunningly mischievous, fired with an immense curiosity about the world behind the scenes, and dreaming of herself as leading lady. She hears of nothing, she talks of nothing, but the Theatre. And presently her inevitable calling, her manifest destiny, takes its first step towards realisation. She is admitted into the class of Regnier, the famous *sociétaire* of the Théâtre-Français. Thenceforth the pupil makes steady progress. In 1873, at the age of fifteen, she obtains an honourable mention for comedy at the Conservatoire; the following year she divides a second prize with Mademoiselle Samary. But what am I saying? Only a second prize? Let us see.

To-day, as then, though twenty years have passed, there is no possibility of success, no chance of getting an engagement, for a pupil on leaving the Conservatoire, unless a certain all-powerful critic, supreme judge, arbiter beyond appeal, sees fit to pronounce a decision confirming the verdict of the Examining Jury. This extraordinary man holds the future of each candidate in the palm of his fat and heavy hand. Fame and fortune are contained in his inkstand, and determined by his articles. He is both Pope and King. The Jury proposes, he disposes. The Jury reigns, he governs. He smiles or frowns, the Jury bows its head. The pupils tremble before their Masters; the Masters tremble before this monstrous Fetich,—for the Public thinks with him and by him, and sees only through his spectacles; and no star can shine till his short sight has discovered it.

This puissant astronomer is Monsieur Francisque Sarcey.

Against his opinion the newspapers can raise no voice, for he alone edits them all. He writes thirty articles a day, each of which is thirty times reprinted, thrice thirty times quoted from. He is, as it were, the Press in person. And presently the momentous hour arrived when the delicate and sprightly pupil of Regnier was to appear before this enormous and somnolent mass, and to thrill it with pleasure. For Monsieur Sarcey smiled upon and applauded Réjane's début at the Conservatoire. He consecrated to her as many as fifty lines of intelligent criticism; and I pray Heaven they may be remembered to his credit on the Day of Judgment. Here they are, in that twopenny-halfpenny style of his, so dear to the readers of *Le Temps*.

> "I own that, for my part, I should have willingly awarded to the latter (Mademoiselle Réjane) a first prize. It seems to me that she deserved it. But the Jury is frequently influenced by extrinsic and private motives, into which it is not permitted to pry. A first prize carries with it the right of entrance into the Comédie Française; and the Jury did not think Mademoiselle Réjane, with her little wide-awake face, suited to the vast frame of the House of Molière. That is well enough; but the second prize, which it awarded her, authorises the Director of the Odéon to receive her into his Company; and that perspective alone ought to have sufficed to dissuade the Jury from the course it took.... Every one knows that at present the Odéon is, for a beginner, a most indifferent school.... Instead of shoving its promising pupils into it by the shoulders, the Conservatoire should forbid them to approach it, lest they should be lost there. What will Mademoiselle Réjane do at the Odéon? Show her legs in *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV.*, which is to be revived at the opening of the season! A pretty state of things. She must either go to the Vaudeville or to the Gymnase. It is there that she will form herself; it is there that she will learn her trade, show what she is capable of, and prepare herself for the Comédie Française, if she is ever to enter it.... She recited a fragment from *Les Trois Sultanes*.... I was delighted by her choice. The *Trois Sultanes* is so little known nowadays.... What wit there is in her look, her smile! With her small eyes, shrewd and piercing, with her little face thrust forward, she has so knowing an air, one is inclined to smile at the mere sight of her. Does she perhaps show a little too much assurance? What of it? 'Tis the result of excessive timidity. But she laughs with such good grace, she has so fresh and true a voice, she articulates so clearly, she seems so happy to be alive and to have talent, that involuntarily one thinks of Chénier's line:
>
> *Sa bienvenue au jour lui rit dans tous les yeux.*
>
> ... I shall be surprised if she does not make her way."

Praised be Sarcey! That was better than a second prize for Réjane. The Oracle gave her the first, without dividing it. She got an immediate engagement; and in March, 1875, appeared on that stage where to-day she reigns supreme, the Vaudeville, to which she brought back the vaudeville that was no longer played there. She began by alienating the heart of Alphonse Daudet, who, while recognising her clever delivery, found fault with her unemotional gaiety; but, in compensation, another authoritative critic, Auguste Vitu, wrote, after the performance of *Pierre*: “Mademoiselle Réjane showed herself full of grace and feeling. She rendered Gabrielle's despair with a naturalness, a brilliancy, a spontaneity, which won a most striking success.”

Shall I follow her through each of her creations, from her début in *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, up to her supreme triumph in *Madame Sans-Gêne*? Shall I show her as the sly soubrette in *Fanny Lear*? as the woman in love, “whose ignorance divines all things,” in *Madame Lili*? as the comical Marquise de Menu-Castel in *Le Verglas*? Shall I tell of her first crowning success, when she played Gabrielle in *Pierre*? Shall I recall her stormy interpretation of Madame de Librac, in *Le Club*? and her dramatic conception of the part of Ida?—which quite reversed the previous judgments of her critics, wringing praise from her enemy Daudet, and censure from her faithful admirer Vitu. The natural order of things, however, was re-established by her performance of *Les Tapageurs*; again Daudet found her cold and lacking in tenderness; and Vitu again applauded.

Her successes at the Vaudeville extend from 1875 to 1882; and towards the end of that period, Réjane, always rising higher in her art, created Anita in *L'Auréole* and the Baronne d'Oria in *Odette*. Next, forgetting her own traditions, she appeared at the Théâtre des Panoramas, and at the Ambigu, where she gave a splendid interpretation of Madame Cézambre in Richepin's *La Giu*; and at Les Variétés as Adrienne in *Ma Camarade*. Now fickle, now constant to her first love, she alternated between the Variétés and the Vaudeville; took an engagement at the Odéon; assisted at the birth and death of the Grand-Théâtre; and just lately the Vaudeville has won her back once more.

Amidst these perambulations, Réjane played the diva in *Clara Soleil*. The following year she had to take two different parts in the same play, those of Gabrielle and Clicquette in *Les Demoiselles Clochart*. Gabrielle is a cold and positive character; Clicquette a gay and mischievous one. Réjane kept them perfectly distinct, and without the smallest apparent effort. In 1887, she telephoned in *Allô-Allô*, and represented so clearly, by means of clever mimicry, the absurd answers of the apparatus, that from the gallery to the stalls the theatre was one roar of laughter and applause; I fancy the salvoes and broadsides must still sometimes echo in her delicate ears.

Réjane's part in *M. de Morat* should not be forgotten; nor above all, the inimitable perfection of her play in *Décoré* (1888). Sarcey's exultation knew no bounds when, in 1890, she again appeared in this rôle. Time, that had metamorphosed the lissom critic of 1875 into a round and inert mass of solid flesh, cruel Father Time, gave back to Sarcey, for this occasion only, a flash of youthful fire, which stirred his wits to warmth and animation. He shouted out hardly articulate praise; he literally rolled in his stall with pleasure; his bald head blushed like an aurora borealis. “Look at her!” he cried, “see her malicious smiles, her feline graces, listen to her reserved and biting diction; she is the very essence of the Parisienne! What an ovation she received! How they

applauded her! and how she played!" From M. Sarcey the laugh spreads; it thaws the scepticism of M. Jules Lemaître, engulfs the timidity of the public, becomes unanimous and universal, and is no longer to be silenced.

In 1888, M. Edmond de Goncourt entrusted Réjane with the part of *Germinie Lacerteux*. On the first night, a furious battle against the author was waged in the house. Réjane secured the victory *sans peur et sans reproches*.

Everything in her inspires the certitude of success; her voice aims at the heart, her gestures knock at it. Réjane confides all to the hazard of the dice; her sudden attacks are of the most dare-devil nature; and no matter how risky, how dangerous, how extravagant the jump, she never loses her footing; her play is always correct, her handling sure, her coolness imperturbable. It was impossible to watch her precipitate herself down the staircase in *La Glu* without a tremble. And fifteen years before Yvette Guilbert, it was Réjane who first had the audacity to sing with a voice that was no voice, making wit and gesture more than cover the deficiency. In *Ma Cousine*, Réjane introduced on the boards of Les Variétés a bit of dancing such as one sees at the Elysée-Montmartre; she seized on and imitated the grotesque effrontery of Mademoiselle Grille-d'Egout, and her little arched foot flying upwards, brushed a kiss upon the forehead of her model; for Réjane the «grand écart» may be fatal, perhaps, but it is neither difficult nor terrifying.

Once more delighting us with *Marquise* in 1889; playing with such child-like grace the Candidate in *Brevet Supérieur* in 1891; immediately afterwards she took a part in *Amoureuse* at the Odéon. The subject is equivocal, the dialogue smutty. Réjane extenuated nothing; on the contrary, accentuated things, and yet knew always how to win her pardon.

Now, it so happened that in 1882, after having personified the Moulin-Rouge in *Les Variétés de Paris*, Réjane was married on the stage, in *La Nuit de Noces de P. L. M.*, to P. L. Moriseau. On the anniversary day, ten years later, her marriage took place in good earnest, before a real M. le Maire, and according to all legal formalities, with M. Porel, a sometime actor, an ex-director of the Odéon, then director of the Grand-Théâtre, and co-director to-day of the Vaudeville.... But to return to her art.

Just as the first dressmakers of Paris measure Réjane's fine figure for the costumes of her various rôles, so the best writers of the French Academy now make plays to her measure. They take the size of her temperament, the height of her talent, the breadth of her play; they consider her taste, they flatter her mood; they clothe her with the richest draperies she can covet. Their imagination, their fancy, their cleverness, are all put at her service. The leaders in this industry have hitherto been Messrs. Meilhac and Halévy, but now M. Victorien Sardou is ruining them. *Madame Sans-Gêne* is certainly, of all the rôles Réjane has played, that best suited to bring out her manifold resources. It is not merely that Réjane plays the washerwoman, become a great lady, without blemish or omission; she is Madame Sans-Gêne herself, with no overloading, nothing forced, nothing caricatured. It is portraiture; history.

Many a time has Réjane appeared in cap, cotton frock, and white apron; many a time in robes of state, glittering with diamonds; she has worn the buskin or the sock, demeaned herself like a gutter heroine, or dropped the stately curtsey of the high-born lady. But never, except in Madame Sans-Gêne, has she been able to bring all her rôles into one focus, exhibit her whole wardrobe, and yet remain one and the same person, compress into one evening the whole of her life.

The seekers after strange novelties, the fanatics for the mists of the far north, the vague, the irresolute, the restless, will not easily forget the Ibsenish mask worn by Réjane in Nora of *The Doll's House*; although most of us, loving Réjane for herself, probably prefer to this vacillating creation, the firm drawing, the clear design, the strong, yet supple lines of Madame Sans-Gêne.

Why has Réjane no engagement at the Comédie-Française? Whom does one go to applaud on this stage, called the first in France, and from which Réjane, Sarah Bernhardt, and Coquelin the elder, all are absent? I will explain the matter in two words.

The house of Molière, for many years now, has belonged to Molière no more. Were Molière to come to life again, neither he nor Réjane would go to eat their hearts out, with inaction and dulness, beneath the wings of M. Jules Claretie—although he is, of course, a very estimable gentleman. Were Réjane unmarried, Molière to-day would enter into partnership with her, because she is in herself the entire Comédie-Française. I have already said she is married to M. Porel, director of the Vaudeville, where she reigns as Queen. I am quite unable to see any reason why she should soon desert such a fortunate conjugal domicile.

Notwithstanding the dryness and the rapidity of this enumeration of Réjane's rôles, I hope to have given some general idea of the marvellous diversity and flexibility of her dramatic spirit and temperament; it seems to me that the most searching criticism of her various creations, would not greatly enhance the accuracy of the picture. This is why I make no attempt to describe her in some three or four parts of an entirely different character. Besides, I should have to draw on hearsay; and I desire to trust only to my own eyes, my own heart. Needless to say, I have not had the good luck to see Madame Réjane in each of her characterisations since her first appearance. Her youthful air has never changed; but I have only had the opportunity of admiring it during the last few years. I confidently maintain, however, that she could not have been more charming in 1875 than she is to-day, with the devil in her body, heaven in her eyes.

A Girl Resting

By Sydney Adamson

The Roman Road

By Kenneth Grahame

All the roads of our neighbourhood were cheerful and friendly, having each of them pleasant qualities of its own; but this one seemed different from the others in its masterful suggestion of a serious purpose, speeding you along with a strange uplifting of the heart. The others tempted chiefly with their treasures of hedge and ditch; the rapt surprise of the first lords-and-ladies, the rustle of a field-mouse, splash of a frog; while cool noses of brother-beasts were pushed at you through gate or gap. A loiterer you had need to be, did you choose one of them; so many were the tiny hands thrust out to detain you, from this side and that. But this other was of a sterner sort, and even in its shedding off of bank and hedgerow as it marched straight and full for the open downs, it seemed to declare its contempt for adventitious trappings to catch the shallow-pated. When the sense of injustice or disappointment was heavy on me, and things were very black within, as on this particular day, the road of character was my choice for that solitary ramble when I turned my back for an afternoon on a world that had unaccountably declared itself against me.

“The Knight's Road” we children had named it, from a sort of feeling that, if from any quarter at all, it would be down this track we might some day see Lancelot and his peers come pacing on their great war-horses; supposing that any of the stout band still survived, in nooks and unexplored places. Grown-up people sometimes spoke of it as the “Pilgrim's Way”; but I didn't know much about pilgrims—except Walter in the Horselburg story. Him I sometimes saw, breaking with haggard eyes out of yonder copse, and calling to the pilgrims as they hurried along on their desperate march to the Holy City, where peace and pardon were awaiting them. “All roads lead to Rome,” I had once heard somebody say; and I had taken the remark very seriously, of course, and puzzled over it many days. There must have been some mistake, I concluded at last; but of one road at least I intuitively felt it to be true. And my belief was clinched by something that fell from Miss Smedley during a history-lesson, about a strange road that ran right down the middle of England till it reached the coast, and then began again in France, just opposite, and so on undeviating, through city and vineyard, right from the misty Highlands to the Eternal City. Uncorroborated, any statement of Miss Smedley's usually fell on incredulous ears; but here, with the road itself in evidence, she seemed, once in a way, to have strayed into truth.

Rome! It was fascinating to think that it lay at the other end of this white ribbon that rolled itself off from my feet over the distant downs. I was not quite so uninstructed as to imagine I could reach it that afternoon; but some day, I thought, if things went on being as unpleasant as they were now—some day, when Aunt Eliza had gone on a visit—we would see.

I tried to imagine what it would be like when I got there. The Coliseum I knew, of course, from a woodcut in the history-book: so to begin with I plumped that down in the middle. The rest had to be patched up from the little grey market-town where twice a year we went to have our hair cut; hence, in the result, Vespasian's amphitheatre was approached by muddy little streets, wherein the Red Lion and the Blue Boar, with Somebody's Entire along their front, and “Commercial Room” on their windows; the doctor's house, of substantial red-brick; and the façade of the new Wesleyan chapel, which we thought very fine, were the chief architectural ornaments: while the Roman populace pottered about in smocks and corduroys, twisting the tails of Roman calves and inviting each other to beer in musical Wessex. From Rome I drifted on to other cities, dimly heard of—Damascus, Brighton, (Aunt Eliza's ideal), Athens, and Glasgow, whose glories the gardener sang; but there was a certain sameness in my conception of all of them: that Wesleyan chapel would keep cropping up everywhere. It was easier to go a-building among those dream-cities where no limitations were imposed, and one was sole architect, with a free hand. Down a delectable street of cloud-built palaces I was mentally pacing, when I happened upon the Artist.

He was seated at work by the roadside, at a point whence the cool large spaces of the downs, juniper-studded, swept grandly westwards. His attributes proclaimed him of the artist tribe: besides, he wore knickerbockers like myself. I knew I was not to bother him with questions, nor look over his shoulder and breathe in his ear—they didn't like it, this *genus irritabile*; but there was nothing about staring in my code of instructions, the point having somehow been overlooked: so, squatting down on the grass, I devoted myself to a passionate absorbing of every detail. At the end of five minutes there was not a button on him that I could not have passed an examination in; and the wearer himself of that home-spun suit was probably less familiar with its pattern and texture than I was. Once he looked up, nodded, half held out his tobacco pouch, mechanically as it were, then, returning it to his pocket, resumed his work, and I my mental photography.

After another five minutes or so had passed he remarked, without looking my way: “Fine afternoon we're having: going far to-day?”

“No, I'm not going any farther than this,” I replied: “I *was* thinking of going on to Rome: but I've put it off.”

“Pleasant place, Rome,” he murmured: “you'll like it.” It was some minutes later that he added: “But I wouldn't go just now, if I were you: too jolly hot.”

“*You* haven't been to Rome, have you?” I inquired.

“Rather,” he replied briefly: “I live there.”

This was too much, and my jaw dropped as I struggled to grasp the fact that I was sitting there talking to a fellow who lived in Rome. Speech was out of the question: besides I had other things to do. Ten solid minutes had I already spent in an examination of him as a mere stranger and artist; and now the whole thing had to be done over again, from the changed point of view. So I began afresh, at the crown of his soft hat, and worked down to his solid British shoes, this time investing everything with the new Roman halo; and at last I managed to get out: “But you don't really live there, do you?” never doubting the fact, but wanting to hear it repeated.

“Well,” he said, good-naturedly overlooking the slight rudeness of my query, “I live there as much as I live anywhere. About half the year sometimes. I've got a sort of a shanty there. You must come and see it some day.”

“But do you live anywhere else as well?” I went on, feeling the forbidden tide of questions surging up within me.

“O yes, all over the place,” was his vague reply. “And I've got a diggings somewhere off Piccadilly.”

“Where's that?” I inquired.

“Where's what?” said he. “Oh, Piccadilly! It's in London.”

“Have you a large garden?” I asked; “and how many pigs have you got?”

“I've no garden at all,” he replied sadly, “and they don't allow me to keep pigs, though I'd like to, awfully. It's very hard.”

“But what do you do all day, then,” I cried, “and where do you go and play, without any garden, or pigs, or things?”

“When I want to play,” he said gravely, “I have to go and play in the street; but it's poor fun, I grant you. There's a goat, though, not far off, and sometimes I talk to him when I'm feeling lonely; but he's very proud.”

“Goats *are* proud,” I admitted. “There's one lives near here, and if you say anything to him at all, he hits you in the wind with his head. You know what it feels like when a fellow hits you in the wind?”

“I do, well,” he replied, in a tone of proper melancholy, and painted on.

“And have you been to any other places,” I began again presently, “besides Rome and Piccy-what's-his-name?”

“Heaps,” he said. “I'm a sort of Ulysses—seen men and cities, you know. In fact, about the only place I never got to was the Fortunate Island.”

I began to like this man. He answered your questions briefly and to the point, and never tried to be funny. I felt I could be confidential with him.

“Wouldn't you like,” I inquired, “to find a city without any people in it at all?”

He looked puzzled. “I'm afraid I don't quite understand,” said he.

“I mean,” I went on eagerly, “a city where you walk in at the gates, and the shops are all full of beautiful things, and the houses furnished as grand as can be, and there isn't anybody there whatever! And you go into the shops, and take anything you want—chocolates and magic-lanterns and injirubber balls—and there's nothing to pay; and you choose your own house and live there and do just as you like, and never go to bed unless you want to!”

The artist laid down his brush. “That *would* be a nice city,” he said. “Better than Rome. You can't do that sort of thing in Rome—or in Piccadilly either. But I fear it's one of the places I've never been to.”

“And you'd ask your friends,” I went on, warming to my subject; “only those who you really like, of course; and they'd each have a house to themselves—there'd be lots of houses, and no relations at all, unless they promised they'd be pleasant, and if they weren't they'd have to go.”

“So you wouldn't have any relations?” said the artist. “Well, perhaps you're right. We have tastes in common, I see.”

“I'd have Harold,” I said reflectively, “and Charlotte. They'd like it awfully. The others are getting too old. Oh! and Martha—I'd have Martha to cook and wash up and do things. You'd like Martha. She's ever so much nicer than Aunt Eliza. She's my idea of a real lady.”

“Then I'm sure I should like her,” he replied heartily, “and when I come to—what do you call this city of yours? Nephelo—something, did you say!”

“I—I don't know,” I replied timidly. “I'm afraid it hasn't got a name—yet.”

The artist gazed out over the downs. “'The poet says dear city of Cecrops;'” he said softly to himself, “'and wilt not thou say, dear city of Zeus?' That's from Marcus Aurelius,” he went on, turning again to his work. “You don't know him, I suppose; you will some day.”

“Who's he?” I inquired.

“Oh, just another fellow who lived in Rome,” he replied, dabbing away.

“O dear!” I cried, disconsolately. “What a lot of people seem to live at Rome, and I've never even been there! But I think I'd like *my* city best.”

“And so would I,” he replied with unction. “But Marcus Aurelius wouldn't, you know.”

“Then we won't invite him,” I said: “will we?”

“*I* won't if you won't,” said he. And that point being settled, we were silent for a while.

“Do you know,” he said presently, “I've met one or two fellows from time to time, who have been to a city like yours—perhaps it was the same one. They won't talk much about it—only broken hints, now and then; but they've been there sure enough. They don't seem to care about anything in particular—and everything's the same to them, rough or smooth; and sooner or later they slip off and disappear; and you never see them again. Gone back, I suppose.”

“Of course,” said I. “Don't see what they ever came away for; *I* wouldn't. To be told you've broken things when you haven't, and stopped having tea with the servants in the kitchen, and not allowed to have a dog to sleep with you. But *I've* known people, too, who've gone there.”

The artist stared, but without incivility.

“Well, there's Lancelot,” I went on. “The book says he died, but it never seemed to read right, somehow. He just went away, like Arthur. And Crusoe, when he got tired of wearing clothes and being respectable. And all the nice men in the stories who don't marry the Princess, 'cos only one man ever gets married in a book, you know. They'll be there!”

“And the men who fail,” he said, “who try like the rest, and toil, and eat their hearts out, and somehow miss—or break down or get bowled over in the mêlée—and get no Princess, nor even a second-class kingdom—some of them'll be there, I hope?”

“Yes, if you like,” I replied, not quite understanding him; “if they're friends of yours, we'll ask 'em, of course.”

“What a time we shall have!” said the artist reflectively; “and how shocked old Marcus Aurelius will be!”

The shadows had lengthened uncannily, a tide of golden haze began to flood the grey-green surface of the downs, and the artist put his traps together, preparatory to a move. I felt very low: we would have to part, it seemed, just as we were getting on so well together. Then he stood up, and he was very straight and tall, and the sunset was in his hair and beard as he stood there, high over me. He took my hand like an equal. “I've enjoyed our conversation very much,” he said. “That was an interesting subject you started, and we haven't half exhausted it. We shall meet again, I hope?”

“Of course we shall,” I replied, surprised that there should be any doubt about it.

“In Rome perhaps?” said he.

“Yes, in Rome,” I answered; “or Piccy-the-other-place, or somewhere.”

“Or else,” said he, “in that other city—when we've found the way there. And I'll look out for you, and you'll sing out as soon as you see me. And we'll go down the street arm-in-arm, and into all the shops, and then I'll choose my house, and you'll choose your house, and we'll live there like princes and good fellows.”

“Oh, but you'll stay in my house, won't you?” I cried; “I wouldn't ask everybody; but I'll ask *you*.”

He affected to consider a moment; then “Right!” he said: “I believe you mean it, and I *will* come and stay with you. I won't go to anybody else, if they ask me ever so much. And I'll stay quite a long time, too, and I won't be any trouble.”

Upon this compact we parted, and I went down-heartedly from the man who understood me, back to the house where I never could do anything right. How was it that everything seemed natural and sensible to him, which these uncles, vicars, and other grown-up men took for the merest tomfoolery? Well, he would explain this, and many another thing, when we met again. The Knight's Road! How it always brought consolation! Was he possibly one of those vanished knights I had been looking for so long? Perhaps he would be in armour next time—why not? He would look well in armour, I thought. And I would take care to get there first, and see the sunlight flash and play on his helmet and shield, as he rode up the High Street of the Golden City.

Meantime, there only remained the finding it,—an easy matter.

Three Pictures

By Walter Sickert

I. The Old Bedford Music Hall
II. Portrait of Aubrey Beardsley
III. Ada Lundberg

Sickert

Betrothed

By Norman Gale

She is mine in the day,
She is mine in the dusk;
She is virgin as dawn,
And as fragrant as musk.

And the wood on the hill
Is the home where we meet—
O, the coming of eve,
It is marvellous sweet!

To my satisfied heart
She has flown like a dove;
All her kisses are taught
By the wisdom of love.

And whatever my grief
There is healing, and rest,
On the pear-blossom slope
Of her beautiful breast.

Thy Heart's Desire

By Netta Syrett

I

The tents were pitched in a little plain surrounded by hills. Right and left there were stretches of tender vivid green where the young corn was springing; further still, on either hand, the plain was yellow with mustard-flower; but in the immediate foreground it was bare and stony. A few thorny bushes pushed their straggling way through the dry soil, ineffectively as far as the grace of the landscape was concerned, for they merely served to emphasise the barren aridness of the land that stretched before the tents, sloping gradually to the distant hills.

The hills were uninteresting enough in themselves; they had no grandeur of outline, no picturesqueness even, though at morning and evening the sun, like a great magician, clothed them with beauty at a touch.

They had begun to change, to soften, to blush rose-red in the evening light, when a woman came to the entrance of the largest of the tents and looked towards them. She leant against the support on one side of the canvas flap, and putting back her head, rested that too against it, while her eyes wandered over the plain and over the distant hills.

She was bareheaded, for the covering of the tent projected a few feet to form an awning overhead. The gentle breeze which had risen with sundown, stirred the soft brown tendrils of hair on her temples, and fluttered her pink cotton gown a little. She stood very still, with her arms hanging and her hands clasped loosely in front of her. There was about her whole attitude an air of studied quiet which in some vague fashion the slight clasp of her hands accentuated. Her face, with its tightly, almost rigidly closed lips, would have been quite in keeping with the impression of conscious calm which her entire presence suggested, had it not been that when she raised her eyes a strange contradiction to this idea was afforded. They were large grey eyes, unusually bright and rather startling in effect, for they seemed the only live thing about her. Gleaming from her still set face, there was something almost alarming in their brilliancy. They softened with a sudden glow of pleasure as they rested on the translucent green of the wheat fields under the broad generous sunlight, and then wandered to where the pure vivid yellow of the mustard-flower spread in waves to the base of the hills, now mystically veiled in radiance. She stood motionless watching their melting elusive changes from palpitating rose to the transparent purple of amethyst. The stillness of evening was broken by the monotonous, not unmusical creaking of a Persian wheel at some little distance to the left of the tent. The well stood in a little grove of trees: between their branches she could see, when she turned her head, the coloured *saris* of the village women, where they stood in groups chattering as they drew the water, and the little naked brown babies that toddled beside them or sprawled on the hard ground beneath the trees. From the village of flat-roofed mud-houses under the low hill at the back of the tents, other women were crossing the plain towards the well, their terra-cotta water-jars poised easily on their heads, casting long shadows on the sun-baked ground as they came.

Presently, in the distance, from the direction of the sunlit hills opposite, a little group of men came into sight. Far off, the mustard-coloured jackets and the red turbans of the orderlies made vivid splashes of colour on the dull plain. As they came nearer, the guns slung across their shoulders, the cases of mathematical instruments, the hammers and other heavy baggage they carried for the Sahib, became visible. A little in front, at walking pace, rode the Sahib himself, making notes as he came in a book he held before him. The girl at the tent-entrance watched the advance of the little company indifferently, it seemed; except for a slight tightening of the muscles about her mouth, her face remained unchanged. While he was still some little distance away, the man with the note-book raised his head and smiled awkwardly as he saw her standing there. Awkwardness, perhaps, best describes the whole man. He was badly put together, loose-jointed, ungainly. The fact that he was tall profited him nothing, for it merely emphasised the extreme ungracefulness of his figure. His long pale face was made paler by a shock of coarse, tow-coloured hair; his eyes even looked colourless, though they were certainly the least uninteresting feature of his face, for they were not devoid of expression. He had a way of slouching when he moved that singularly intensified the general uncouthness of his appearance. “Are you very tired?” asked his wife gently when he had dismounted close to the tent. The question would have been an unnecessary one had it been put to her instead of to her husband, for her voice had that peculiar flat toneless sound for which extreme weariness is answerable.

“Well, no, my dear, not very,” he replied, drawling out the words with an exasperating air of delivering a final verdict, after deep reflection on the subject.

The girl glanced once more at the fading colours on the hills. “Come in and rest,” she said, moving aside a little to let him pass.

She stood lingering a moment after he had entered the tent, as though unwilling to leave the outer air; and before she turned to follow him she drew a deep breath, and her hand went for one swift second to her throat as though she felt stifled.

* * * * *

Later on that evening she sat in her tent sewing by the light of the lamp that stood on her little table.

Opposite to her, her husband stretched his ungainly length in a deck-chair, and turned over a pile of official notes. Every now and then her eyes wandered from the gay silks of the table-cover she was embroidering to the canvas walls which bounded the narrow space into which their few household goods were crowded. Outside there was a deep hush. The silence of the vast empty plain seemed to work its way slowly, steadily in, towards the little patch of light set in its midst. The girl felt it in every nerve; it was as though some soft-footed, noiseless, shapeless creature, whose presence she only dimly divined, was approaching nearer—*nearer*. The heavy outer stillness was in some way made more terrifying by the rustle of the papers her husband was reading, by the creaking of his chair as he moved, and by the little fidgeting grunts and half exclamations which from time to time broke from him. His wife's hand shook at every unintelligible mutter from him, and the slight habitual contraction between her eyes deepened.

All at once she threw her work down on to the table. "For Heaven's sake——*please*, John, *talk*!" she cried. Her eyes, for the moment's space in which they met the startled ones of her husband, had a wild hunted look, but it was gone almost before his slow brain had time to note that it had been there—and was vaguely disturbing. She laughed a little, unsteadily.

"Did I startle you? I'm sorry. I——" she laughed again. "I believe I'm a little nervous. When one is all day alone——" She paused without finishing the sentence. The man's face changed suddenly. A wave of tenderness swept over it, and at the same time an expression of half-incredulous delight shone in his pale eyes.

"Poor little girl, are you really lonely?" he said. Even the real feeling in his tone failed to rob his voice of its peculiarly irritating grating quality. He rose awkwardly and moved to his wife's side.

Involuntarily she shrank a little, and the hand which he had stretched out to touch her hair sank to his side. She recovered herself immediately and turned her face up to his, though she did not raise her eyes; but he did not kiss her. Instead, he stood in an embarrassed fashion a moment by her side, and then went back to his seat.

There was silence again for some time. The man lay back in his chair, gazing at his big clumsy shoes, as though he hoped for some inspiration from that quarter, while his wife worked with nervous haste.

"Don't let me keep you from reading, John," she said, and her voice had regained its usual gentle tone.

"No, my dear; I'm just thinking of something to say to you, but I don't seem——"

She smiled a little. In spite of herself, her lip curled faintly. "Don't worry about it—it was stupid of me to expect it. I mean——" she added hastily, immediately repenting the sarcasm. She glanced furtively at him, but his face was quite unmoved. Evidently he had not noticed it, and she smiled faintly again.

"Oh, Kathie, I knew there was *something* I'd forgotten to tell you, my dear; there's a man coming down here. I don't know whether——"

She looked up sharply. "A man coming *here*? What for?" she interrupted breathlessly.

"Sent to help me about this oil-boring business, my dear."

He had lighted his pipe, and was smoking placidly, taking long whiffs between his words.

"Well?" impatiently questioned his wife, fixing her bright eyes on his face.

"Well—that's all, my dear."

She checked an exclamation. "But don't you know anything about him—his name? where he comes from? what he is like?" She was leaning forward against the table, her needle with a long end of yellow silk drawn halfway through her work, held in her upraised hand, her whole attitude one of quivering excitement and expectancy.

The man took his pipe from his mouth deliberately, with a look of slow wonder.

"Why Kathie, you seem quite anxious. I didn't know you'd be so interested, my dear. Well,"—another long pull at his pipe—"his name's Brook—*Brookfield*, I think." He paused again. "This pipe don't draw well a bit; there's something wrong with it, I shouldn't wonder," he added, taking it out and examining the bowl as though struck with the brilliance of the idea.

The woman opposite put down her work and clenched her hands under the table.

"Go on, John," she said presently in a tense vibrating voice—"his name is Brookfield. Well, where does he come from?"

"Straight from home, my dear, I believe." He fumbled in his pocket, and after some time extricated a pencil with which he began to poke the tobacco in the bowl in an ineffectual aimless fashion, becoming completely engrossed in the occupation apparently. There was another long pause. The woman went on working, or feigning to work, for her hands were trembling a good deal.

After some moments she raised her head again. “John, will you mind attending to me one moment, and answering these questions as quickly as you can?” The emphasis on the last word was so faint as to be almost as imperceptible as the touch of exasperated contempt which she could not absolutely banish from her tone.

Her husband, looking up, met her clear bright gaze and reddened like a schoolboy.

“Whereabouts '*from home*' does he come?” she asked in a studiedly gentle fashion.

“Well, from London, I think,” he replied, almost briskly for him, though he stammered and tripped over the words. “He's a University chap; I used to hear he was clever—I don't know about that, I'm sure; he used to chaff me, I remember, but——”

“Chaff *you*? You have met him then?”

“Yes, my dear”—he was fast relapsing into his slow drawl again—“that is, I went to school with him, but it's a long time ago. Brookfield—yes, that must be his name.”

She waited a moment, then “When is he coming?” she inquired abruptly.

“Let me see—to-day's——”

“*Monday*,” the word came swiftly between her set teeth.

“Ah, yes,—Monday—well,” reflectively, “*next* Monday, my dear.”

Mrs. Drayton rose, and began to pace softly the narrow passage between the table and the tent-wall, her hands clasped loosely behind her.

“How long have you known this?” she said, stopping abruptly. “Oh, John, you *needn't* consider; it's quite a simple question. To-day? Yesterday?”

Her foot moved restlessly on the ground as she waited.

“I think it was the day before yesterday,” he replied.

“Then why in Heaven's name didn't you tell me before?” she broke out fiercely.

“My dear, it slipped my memory. If I'd thought you would be interested——”

“Interested?” She laughed shortly. “It *is* rather interesting to hear that after six months of this”—she made a quick comprehensive gesture with her hand—“one will have some one to speak to—some one. It is the hand of Providence; it comes just in time to save me from——” She checked herself abruptly.

He sat staring up at her stupidly, without a word.

“It's all right, John,” she said, with a quick change of tone, gathering up her work quietly as she spoke. “I'm not mad—yet. You—you must get used to these little outbreaks,” she added after a moment, smiling faintly, “and to do me justice, I don't *often* trouble you with them, do I? I'm just a little tired, or it's the heat or—something. No—don't touch me,” she cried, shrinking back, for he had risen slowly and was coming towards her.

She had lost command over her voice, and the shrill note of horror in it was unmistakable. The man heard it, and shrank in his turn.

“I'm so sorry, John,” she murmured, raising her great bright eyes to his face. They had not lost their goaded expression, though they were full of tears. “I'm awfully sorry, but I'm just nervous and stupid, and I can't bear *any one* to touch me when I'm nervous.”

II

“Here's Broomhurst, my dear! I made a mistake in his name after all, I find. I told you *Brookfield*, I believe, didn't I? Well, it isn't Brookfield, he says; it's Broomhurst.”

Mrs. Drayton had walked some little distance across the plain to meet and welcome the expected guest. She stood quietly waiting while her husband stammered over his incoherent sentences, and then put out her hand.

“We are very glad to see you,” she said with a quick glance at the newcomer's face as she spoke.

As they walked together towards the tent, after the first greetings, she felt his keen eyes upon her before he turned to her husband.

“I'm afraid Mrs. Drayton finds the climate trying?” he asked. “Perhaps she ought not to have come so far in this heat?”

“Kathie is often pale. You *do* look white to-day, my dear,” he observed, turning anxiously towards his wife.

“Do I?” she replied. The unsteadiness of her tone was hardly appreciable, but it was not lost on Broomhurst's quick ears. “Oh, I don't think so. I *feel* very well.”

“I'll come and see if they've fixed you up all right,” said Drayton, following his companion

towards the new tent that had been pitched at some little distance from the large one.

“We shall see you at dinner then?” Mrs. Drayton observed in reply to Broomhurst's smile as they parted.

She entered the tent slowly, and moving up to the table, already laid for dinner, began to rearrange the things upon it in a purposeless mechanical fashion.

After a moment she sank down upon a seat opposite the open entrance, and put her hand to her head.

“What is the matter with me?” she thought wearily. “All the week I've been looking forward to seeing this man—*any* man, *any one* to take off the edge of this.” She shuddered. Even in thought she hesitated to analyse the feeling that possessed her. “Well, he's here, and I think I feel *worse*.” Her eyes travelled towards the hills she had been used to watch at this hour, and rested on them with a vague unseeing gaze.

“Tired, Kathie? A penny for your thoughts, my dear,” said her husband, coming in presently to find her still sitting there.

“I'm thinking what a curious world this is, and what an ironical vein of humour the gods who look after it must possess,” she replied with a mirthless laugh, rising as she spoke.

John looked puzzled.

“Funny my having known Broomhurst before, you mean?” he said doubtfully.

* * * * *

“I was fishing down at Lynmouth this time last year,” Broomhurst said at dinner. “You know Lynmouth, Mrs. Drayton? Do you never imagine you hear the gurgling of the stream? I am tantalised already by the sound of it rushing through the beautiful green gloom of those woods—*aren't* they lovely? And *I* haven't been in this burnt-up spot as many hours as you've had months of it.”

She smiled a little.

“You must learn to possess your soul in patience,” she said, and glanced inconsequently from Broomhurst to her husband, and then dropped her eyes and was silent a moment.

John was obviously, and a little audibly, enjoying his dinner. He sat with his chair pushed close to the table, and his elbows awkwardly raised, swallowing his soup in gulps. He grasped his spoon tightly in his bony hand so that its swollen joints stood out larger and uglier than ever, his wife thought.

Her eyes wandered to Broomhurst's hands. They were well shaped, and though not small, there was a look of refinement about them; he had a way of touching things delicately, a little lingeringly, she noticed. There was an air of distinction about his clear-cut, clean-shaven face, possibly intensified by contrast with Drayton's blurred features; and it was, perhaps, also by contrast with the grey cuffs that showed beneath John's ill-cut drab suit that the linen Broomhurst wore seemed to her particularly spotless.

Broomhurst's thoughts, for his part, were a good deal occupied with his hostess.

She was pretty, he thought, or perhaps it was that, with the wide dry lonely plain as a setting, her fragile delicacy of appearance was invested with a certain flower-like charm.

“The silence here seems rather strange, rather appalling at first, when one is fresh from a town,” he pursued, after a moment's pause, “but I suppose you're used to it; eh, Drayton? How do *you* find life here, Mrs. Drayton?” he asked a little curiously, turning to her as he spoke.

She hesitated a second. “Oh, much the same as I should find it anywhere else, I expect,” she replied; “after all, one carries the possibilities of a happy life about with one—don't you think so? The Garden of Eden wouldn't necessarily make my life any happier, or less happy, than a howling wilderness like this. It depends on oneself entirely.”

“Given the right Adam and Eve, the desert blossoms like the rose, in fact,” Broomhurst answered lightly, with a smiling glance inclusive of husband and wife; “you two don't feel as though you'd been driven out of Paradise evidently.”

Drayton raised his eyes from his plate with a smile of total incomprehension.

“Great Heavens! What an Adam to select!” thought Broomhurst involuntarily, as Mrs. Drayton rose rather suddenly from the table.

“I'll come and help with that packing-case,” John said, rising, in his turn, lumberingly from his place; “then we can have a smoke—eh? Kathie don't mind, if we sit near the entrance.”

The two men went out together, Broomhurst holding the lantern, for the moon had not yet risen. Mrs. Drayton followed them to the doorway, and, pushing the looped-up hanging further aside, stepped out into the cool darkness.

Her heart was beating quickly, and there was a great lump in her throat that frightened her as

though she were choking.

“And I am his *wife*—I *belong* to him!” she cried, almost aloud.

She pressed both her hands tightly against her breast, and set her teeth, fighting to keep down the rising flood that threatened to sweep away her composure. “Oh, what a fool I am! What an hysterical fool of a woman I am!” she whispered below her breath. She began to walk slowly up and down outside the tent, in the space illumined by the lamplight, as though striving to make her outwardly quiet movements react upon the inward tumult. In a little while she had conquered; she quietly entered the tent, drew a low chair to the entrance, and took up a book, just as footsteps became audible. A moment afterwards Broomhurst emerged from the darkness into the circle of light outside, and Mrs. Drayton raised her eyes from the pages she was turning to greet him with a smile.

“Are your things all right?”

“Oh yes, more or less, thank you. I was a little concerned about a case of books, but it isn't much damaged fortunately. Perhaps I've some you would care to look at?”

“The books will be a godsend,” she returned with a sudden brightening of the eyes; “I was getting *desperate*—for books.”

“What are you reading now?” he asked, glancing at the volume that lay in her lap.

“It's a Browning. I carry it about a good deal. I think I like to have it with me, but I don't seem to read it much.”

“Are you waiting for a suitable optimistic moment?” Broomhurst inquired smiling.

“Yes, now you mention it, I think that must be why I am waiting,” she replied slowly.

“And it doesn't come—even in the Garden of Eden? Surely the serpent, pessimism, hasn't been insolent enough to draw you into conversation with him?” he said lightly.

“There has been no one to converse with at all—when John is away, I mean. I think I should have liked a little chat with the serpent immensely by way of a change,” she replied in the same tone.

“Ah, yes,” Broomhurst said with sudden seriousness, “it must be unbearably dull for you alone here, with Drayton away all day.”

Mrs. Drayton's hand shook a little as she fluttered a page of her open book.

“I should think it quite natural you would be irritated beyond endurance to hear that all's right with the world, for instance, when you were sighing for the long day to pass,” he continued.

“I don't mind the day so much—it's the evenings.” She abruptly checked the swift words and flushed painfully. “I mean—I've grown stupidly nervous, I think—even when John is here. Oh, you have no idea of the awful *silence* of this place at night,” she added, rising hurriedly from her low seat, and moving closer to the doorway. “It is so close, isn't it?” she said, almost apologetically. There was silence for quite a minute.

Broomhurst's quick eyes noted the silent momentary clenching of the hands that hung at her side as she stood leaning against the support at the entrance.

“But how stupid of me to give you such a bad impression of the camp—the first evening, too,” Mrs. Drayton exclaimed presently, and her companion mentally commended the admirable composure of her voice.

“Probably you will never notice that it is lonely at all,” she continued, “John likes it here. He is immensely interested in his work, you know. I hope *you* are too. If you are interested it is all quite right. I think the climate tries me a little. I never used to be stupid—and nervous. Ah, here's John; he's been round to the kitchen-tent, I suppose.”

“Been looking after that fellow cleanin' my gun, my dear,” John explained, shambling towards the deck-chair.

Later, Broomhurst stood at his own tent-door. He looked up at the star-sown sky, and the heavy silence seemed to press upon him like an actual, physical burden.

He took his cigar from between his lips presently and looked at the glowing end reflectively before throwing it away.

“Considering that she has been alone with him here for six months, she has herself very well in hand—*very* well in hand,” he repeated.

III

It was Sunday morning. John Drayton sat just inside the tent, presumably enjoying his pipe before the heat of the day. His eyes furtively followed his wife as she moved about near him, sometimes passing close to his chair in search of something she had mislaid. There was colour in her cheeks; her eyes, though preoccupied, were bright; there was a lightness and buoyancy in her step which she set to a little dancing air she was humming under her breath.

After a moment or two the song ceased, she began to move slowly, sedately; and as if chilled by a raw breath of air, the light faded from her eyes, which she presently turned towards her husband.

“Why do you look at me?” she asked suddenly.

“I don't know, my dear,” he began, slowly and laboriously as was his wont. “I was thinkin' how nice you looked—jest now—much better you know—but somehow”—he was taking long whiffs at his pipe, as usual, between each word, while she stood patiently waiting for him to finish—“somehow, you alter so, my dear—you're quite pale again all of a minute.”

She stood listening to him, noticing against her will the more than suspicion of cockney accent and the thick drawl with which the words were uttered.

His eyes sought her face piteously. She noticed that too, and stood before him torn by conflicting emotions, pity and disgust struggling in a hand-to-hand fight within her.

“Mr. Broomhurst and I are going down by the well to sit; it's cooler there. Won't you come?” she said at last gently.

He did not reply for a moment, then he turned his head aside sharply for him.

“No, my dear, thank you; I'm comfortable enough here,” he returned huskily.

She stood over him, hesitating a second, then moved abruptly to the table, from which she took a book.

He had risen from his seat by the time she turned to go out, and he intercepted her timorously.

“Kathie, give me a kiss before you go,” he whispered hoarsely. “I—I don't often bother you.”

She drew her breath in deeply as he put his arms clumsily about her, but she stood still, and he kissed her on the forehead, and touched the little wavy curls that strayed across it gently with his big trembling fingers.

When he released her she moved at once impetuously to the open doorway. On the threshold she hesitated, paused a moment irresolutely, and then turned back.

“Shall I——Does your pipe want filling, John?” she asked softly.

“No, thank you, my dear.”

“Would you like me to stay, read to you, or anything?”

He looked up at her wistfully. “N-no, thank you, I'm not much of a reader, you know, my dear—somehow.”

She hated herself for knowing that there would be a “my dear,” probably a “somehow” in his reply, and despised herself for the sense of irritated impatience she felt by anticipation, even before the words were uttered.

There was a moment's hesitating silence, broken by the sound of quick firm footsteps without. Broomhurst paused at the entrance, and looked into the tent.

“Aren't you coming, Drayton?” he asked, looking first at Drayton's wife and then swiftly putting in his name with a scarcely perceptible pause. “Too lazy? But you, Mrs. Drayton?”

“Yes, I'm coming,” she said.

They left the tent together, and walked some few steps in silence.

Broomhurst shot a quick glance at his companion's face.

“Anything wrong?” he asked presently.

Though the words were ordinary enough, the voice in which they were spoken was in some subtle fashion a different voice from that in which he had talked to her nearly two months ago, though it would have required a keen sense of nice shades in sound to have detected the change.

Mrs. Drayton's sense of niceties in sound was particularly keen, but she answered quietly, “Nothing, thank you.”

They did not speak again till the trees round the stone-well were reached.

Broomhurst arranged their seats comfortably beside it.

“Are we going to read or talk?” he asked, looking up at her from his lower place.

“Well, we generally talk most when we arrange to read, so shall we agree to talk to-day for a change, by way of getting some reading done?” she rejoined, smiling. “*You* begin.”

Broomhurst seemed in no hurry to avail himself of the permission, he was apparently engrossed in watching the flecks of sunshine on Mrs. Drayton's white dress. The whirring of insects, and the creaking of a Persian wheel somewhere in the neighbourhood, filtered through the hot silence.

Mrs. Drayton laughed after a few minutes; there was a touch of embarrassment in the sound.

“The new plan doesn't answer. Suppose you read as usual, and let me interrupt, also as usual, after the first two lines.”

He opened the book obediently, but turned the pages at random.

She watched him for a moment, and then bent a little forward towards him.

“It is my turn now,” she said suddenly. “Is anything wrong?”

He raised his head, and their eyes met. There was a pause. “I will be more honest than you,” he returned. “Yes, there is.”

“What?”

“I've had orders to move on.”

She drew back, and her lips whitened, though she kept them steady.

“When do you go?”

“On Wednesday.”

There was silence again; the man still kept his eyes on her face.

The whirring of the insects and the creaking of the wheel had suddenly grown so strangely loud and insistent, that it was in a half-dazed fashion she at length heard her name—“*Kathleen*!”

“Kathleen!” he whispered again hoarsely.

She looked him full in the face, and once more their eyes met in a long grave gaze.

The man's face flushed, and he half rose from his seat with an impetuous movement, but Kathleen stopped him with a glance.

“Will you go and fetch my work? I left it in the tent,” she said, speaking very clearly and distinctly; “and then will you go on reading? I will find the place while you are gone.”

She took the book from his hand, and he rose and stood before her.

There was a mute appeal in his silence, and she raised her head slowly.

Her face was white to the lips, but she looked at him unflinchingly; and without a word he turned and left her.

IV

Mrs. Drayton was resting in the tent on Tuesday afternoon. With the help of cushions and some low chairs she had improvised a couch, on which she lay quietly with her eyes closed. There was a tenseness, however, in her attitude which indicated that sleep was far from her.

Her features seemed to have sharpened during the last few days, and there were hollows in her cheeks. She had been very still for a long time, but all at once with a sudden movement she turned her head and buried her face in the cushions with a groan. Slipping from her place she fell on her knees beside the couch, and put both hands before her mouth to force back the cry that she felt struggling to her lips.

For some moments the wild effort she was making for outward calm, which even when she was alone was her first instinct, strained every nerve and blotted out sight and hearing, and it was not till the sound was very near that she was conscious of the ring of horse's hoofs on the plain.

She raised her head sharply with a thrill of fear, still kneeling, and listened.

There was no mistake. The horseman was riding in hot haste, for the thud of the hoofs followed one another swiftly.

As Mrs. Drayton listened her white face grew whiter, and she began to tremble. Putting out shaking hands, she raised herself by the arms of the folding-chair and stood upright.

Nearer and nearer came the thunder of the approaching sound, mingled with startled exclamations and the noise of trampling feet from the direction of the kitchen tent.

Slowly, mechanically almost, she dragged herself to the entrance, and stood clinging to the canvas there. By the time she had reached it, Broomhurst had flung himself from the saddle, and had thrown the reins to one of the men.

Mrs. Drayton stared at him with wide bright eyes as he hastened towards her.

“I thought you—you are not——” she began, and then her teeth began to chatter. “I am so cold!” she said, in a little weak voice.

Broomhurst took her hand, and led her over the threshold back into the tent.

“Don't be so frightened,” he implored; “I came to tell you first. I thought it wouldn't frighten you so much as——Your—Drayton is—very ill. They are bringing him. I——”

He paused. She gazed at him a moment with parted lips, then she broke into a horrible discordant laugh, and stood clinging to the back of a chair.

Broomhurst started back.

“Do you understand what I mean?” he whispered. “Kathleen, for God's sake—*don't*—he is *dead*.”

He looked over his shoulder as he spoke, her shrill laughter ringing in his ears. The white glare and dazzle of the plain stretched before him, framed by the entrance to the tent; far off, against the horizon, there were moving black specks, which he knew to be the returning servants with their still burden.

They were bringing John Drayton home.

V

One afternoon, some months later, Broomhurst climbed the steep lane leading to the cliffs of a little English village by the sea. He had already been to the inn, and had been shown by the proprietress the house where Mrs. Drayton lodged.

“The lady was out, but the gentleman would likely find her if he went to the cliffs—down by the bay, or thereabouts,” her landlady explained, and, obeying her directions, Broomhurst presently emerged from the shady woodland path on to the hillside overhanging the sea.

He glanced eagerly round him, and then with a sudden quickening of the heart, walked on over the springy heather to where she sat. She turned when the rustling his footsteps made through the bracken was near enough to arrest her attention, and looked up at him as he came. Then she rose slowly and stood waiting for him. He came up to her without a word and seized both her hands, devouring her face with his eyes. Something he saw there repelled him. Slowly he let her hands fall, still looking at her silently. “You are not glad to see me, and I have counted the hours,” he said at last in a dull toneless voice.

Her lips quivered. “Don't be angry with me—I can't help it—I'm not glad or sorry for anything now,” she answered, and her voice matched his for greyness.

They sat down together on a long flat stone half embedded in a wiry clump of whortleberries. Behind them the lonely hillsides rose, brilliant with yellow bracken and the purple of heather. Before them stretched the wide sea. It was a soft grey day. Streaks of pale sunlight trembled at moments far out on the water. The tide was rising in the little bay above which they sat, and Broomhurst watched the lazy foam-edged waves slipping over the uncovered rocks towards the shore, then sliding back as though for very weariness they despaired of reaching it. The muffled pulsing sound of the sea filled the silence. Broomhurst thought suddenly of hot Eastern sunshine, of the whirr of insect wings on the still air, and the creaking of a wheel in the distance. He turned and looked at his companion.

“I have come thousands of miles to see you,” he said; “aren't you going to speak to me now I am here?”

“Why did you come? I told you not to come,” she answered, falteringly. “I——” she paused.

“And I replied that I should follow you—if you remember,” he answered, still quietly. “I came because I would not listen to what you said then, at that awful time. You didn't know *yourself* what you said. No wonder! I have given you some months, and now I have come.”

There was silence between them. Broomhurst saw that she was crying; her tears fell fast on to her hands, that were clasped in her lap. Her face, he noticed, was thin and drawn.

Very gently he put his arm round her shoulder and drew her nearer to him. She made no resistance—it seemed that she did not notice the movement; and his arm dropped at his side.

“You asked me why I had come? You think it possible that three months can change one, very thoroughly, then?” he said in a cold voice.

“I not only think it possible, I have proved it,” she replied wearily.

He turned round and faced her.

“You *did* love me, Kathleen!” he asserted; “you never said so in words, but I know it,” he added fiercely.

“Yes, I did.”

“And——You mean that you don't now?”

Her voice was very tired. “Yes—I can't help it,” she answered, “it has gone—utterly.”

The grey sea slowly lapped the rocks. Overhead the sharp scream of a gull cut through the stillness. It was broken again, a moment afterwards, by a short hard laugh from the man.

“Don't!” she whispered, and laid a hand swiftly on his arm. “Do you think it isn't worse for me? I wish to God I *did* love you,” she cried passionately. “Perhaps it would make me forget that to all intents and purposes I am a murderess.”

Broomhurst met her wide despairing eyes with an amazement which yielded to sudden pitying comprehension.

"So that is it, my darling? You are worrying about *that*? You who were as loyal, as——"

She stopped him with a frantic gesture.

"Don't! *don't*!" she wailed. "If you only knew; let me try to tell you—will you?" she urged pitifully. "It may be better if I tell someone—if I don't keep it all to myself, and think, and *think*."

She clasped her hands tight, with the old gesture he remembered when she was struggling for self-control, and waited a moment.

Presently she began to speak in a low hurried tone: "It began before you came. I know now what the feeling was that I was afraid to acknowledge to myself. I used to try and smother it, I used to repeat things to myself all day—poems, stupid rhymes—*anything* to keep my thoughts quite underneath—but I—*hated* John before you came! We had been married nearly a year then. I never loved him. Of course you are going to say: 'Why did you marry him?'" She looked drearily over the placid sea. "Why *did* I marry him? I don't know; for the reason that hundreds of ignorant inexperienced girls marry, I suppose. My home wasn't a happy one. I was miserable, and oh, —*restless*. I wonder if men know what it feels like to be restless? Sometimes I think they can't even guess. John wanted me very badly—nobody wanted me at home particularly. There didn't seem to be any point in my life. Do you understand?... Of course being alone with him in that little camp in that silent plain"—she shuddered—"made things worse. My nerves went all to pieces. Everything he said—his voice—his accent—his walk—the way he ate—irritated me so that I longed to rush out sometimes and shriek—and go *mad*. Does it sound ridiculous to you to be driven mad by such trifles? I only know I used to get up from the table sometimes and walk up and down outside, with both hands over my mouth to keep myself quiet. And all the time I *hated* myself—how I hated myself! I never had a word from him that wasn't gentle and tender. I believe he loved the ground I walked on. Oh, it is *awful* to be loved like that, when you——" She drew in her breath with a sob. "I—I—it made me sick for him to come near me—to touch me." She stopped a moment.

Broomhurst gently laid his hand on her quivering one. "Poor little girl!" he murmured.

"Then *you* came," she said, "and before long I had another feeling to fight against. At first I thought it couldn't be true that I loved you—it would die down. I think I was *frightened* at the feeling; I didn't know it hurt so to love anyone."

Broomhurst stirred a little. "Go on," he said tersely.

"But it didn't die," she continued in a trembling whisper, "and the other *awful* feeling grew stronger and stronger—hatred; no, that is not the word—*loathing* for—for—John. I fought against it. Yes," she cried feverishly, clasping and unclasping her hands, "Heaven knows I fought it with all my strength, and reasoned with myself, and—oh, I did *everything*, but——" Her quick-falling tears made speech difficult.

"Kathleen!" Broomhurst urged desperately, "you couldn't help it, you poor child. You say yourself you struggled against your feelings—you were always gentle. Perhaps he didn't know."

"But he did—he *did*," she wailed, "it is just that. I hurt him a hundred times a day; he never said so, but I knew it; and yet I *couldn't* be kind to him—except in words—and he understood. And after you came it was worse in one way, for he knew. I *felt* he knew that I loved you. His eyes used to follow me like a dog's, and I was stabbed with remorse, and I tried to be good to him, but I couldn't."

"But—he didn't suspect—he trusted you," began Broomhurst. "He had every reason. No woman was ever so loyal, so——"

"Hush," she almost screamed. "Loyal! it was the least I could do—to stop you, I mean—when you ——After all, I knew it without your telling me. I had deliberately married him without loving him. It was my own fault. I felt it. Even if I couldn't prevent his knowing that I hated him, I could prevent *that*. It was my punishment. I deserved it for *daring* to marry without love. But I didn't spare John one pang, after all," she added bitterly. "He knew what I felt towards him—I don't think he cared about anything else. You say I mustn't reproach myself? When I went back to the tent that morning—when you—when I stopped you from saying you loved me, he was sitting at the table with his head buried in his hands; he was crying—bitterly: I saw him—it is terrible to see a man cry—and I stole away gently, but he saw me. I was torn to pieces, but I *couldn't* go to him. I knew he would kiss me, and I shuddered to think of it. It seemed more than ever not to be borne that he should do that—when I knew *you* loved me."

"Kathleen," cried her lover again, "don't dwell on it all so terribly——don't——"

"How can I forget?" she answered despairingly, "and then"—she lowered her voice—"oh, I can't tell you—all the time, at the back of my mind somewhere, there was a burning wish that he might *die*. I used to lie awake at night, and do what I would to stifle it, that thought used to *scorch* me, I wished it so intensely. Do you believe that by willing one can bring such things to pass?" she asked, looking at Broomhurst with feverishly bright eyes. "No?—well, I don't know—I tried to smother it. I *really* tried, but it was there, whatever other thoughts I heaped on the top. Then, when I heard the horse galloping across the plain that morning, I had a sick fear that it was you. I

knew something had happened, and my first thought when I saw you alive and well, and knew that it was *John*, was, *that it was too good to be true*. I believe I laughed like a maniac, didn't I?... Not to blame? Why, if it hadn't been for me he wouldn't have died. The men say they saw him sitting with his head uncovered in the burning sun, his face buried in his hands—just as I had seen him the day before. He didn't trouble to be careful—he was too wretched."

She paused, and Broomhurst rose and began to pace the little hillside path at the edge of which they were seated.

Presently he came back to her.

"Kathleen, let me take care of you," he implored, stooping towards her. "We have only ourselves to consider in this matter. Will you come to me at once?"

She shook her head sadly.

Broomhurst set his teeth, and the lines round his mouth deepened. He threw himself down beside her on the heather.

"Dear," he urged still gently, though his voice showed he was controlling himself with an effort. "You are morbid about this. You have been alone too much—you are ill. Let me take care of you: I *can*, Kathleen—and I love you. Nothing but morbid fancy makes you imagine you are in any way responsible for—Drayton's death. You can't bring him back to life, and——"

"No," she sighed drearily, "and if I could, nothing would be altered. Though I am mad with self-reproach, I feel *that*—it was all so inevitable. If he were alive and well before me this instant my feeling towards him wouldn't have changed. If he spoke to me, he would say 'My dear'—and I should *loathe* him. Oh, I know! It is *that* that makes it so awful."

"But if you acknowledge it," Broomhurst struck in eagerly, "will you wreck both of our lives for the sake of vain regrets? Kathleen, you never will."

He waited breathlessly for her answer.

"I won't wreck both our lives by marrying again without love on my side," she replied firmly.

"I will take the risk," he said. "You *have* loved me—you will love me again. You are crushed and dazed now with brooding over this—this trouble, but——"

"But I will not allow you to take the risk," Kathleen answered. "What sort of woman should I be to be willing again to live with a man I don't love? I have come to know that there are things one owes to *oneself*. Self-respect is one of them. I don't know how it has come to be so, but all my old feeling for you has *gone*. It is as though it had burnt itself out. I will not offer grey ashes to any man."

Broomhurst looking up at her pale, set face, knew that her words were final, and turned his own aside with a groan.

"Ah!" cried Kathleen with a little break in her voice, "*don't.* Go away and be happy and strong, and all that I loved in you. I am so sorry—so sorry to hurt you. I——" her voice faltered miserably. "I—I only bring trouble to people."

There was a long pause.

"Did you never think that there is a terrible vein of irony running through the ordering of this world?" she said presently. "It is a mistake to think our prayers are not answered—they are. In due time we get our heart's desire—when we have ceased to care for it."

"I haven't yet got mine," Broomhurst answered doggedly, "and I shall never cease to care for it."

She smiled a little with infinite sadness.

"Listen, Kathleen," he said. They had both risen and he stood before her, looking down at her. "I will go now, but in a year's time I shall come back. I will not give you up. You shall love me yet."

"Perhaps—I don't think so," she answered wearily.

Broomhurst looked at her trembling lips a moment in silence, then he stooped and kissed both her hands instead.

"I will wait till you tell me you love me," he said.

She stood watching him out of sight. He did not look back, and she turned with swimming eyes to the grey sea and the transient gleams of sunlight that swept like tender smiles across its face.

An Idyll

By W. Brown MacDougal

Reticence in Literature

Some Roundabout Remarks

By Hubert Crackanthorpe

During the past fifty years, as everyone knows, the art of fiction has been expanding in a manner exceedingly remarkable, till it has grown to be the predominant branch of imaginative literature. But the other day we were assured that poetry only thrives in limited and exquisite editions; that the drama, here in England at least, has practically ceased to be literature at all. Each epoch instinctively chooses that literary vehicle which is best adapted for the expression of its particular temper: just as the drama flourished in the robust age of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson; just as that outburst of lyrical poetry, at the beginning of the century in France, coincided with a period of extreme emotional exaltation; so the novel, facile and flexible in its conventions, with its endless opportunities for accurate delineation of reality, becomes supreme in a time of democracy and of science—to note but these two salient characteristics.

And, if we pursue this light of thought, we find that, on all sides, the novel is being approached in one especial spirit, that it would seem to be striving, for the moment at any rate, to perfect itself within certain definite limitations. To employ a hackneyed, and often quite unintelligent, catchword—the novel is becoming realistic.

Throughout the history of literature, the jealous worship of beauty—which we term idealism—and the jealous worship of truth—which we term realism—have alternately prevailed. Indeed, it is within the compass of these alternations that lies the whole fundamental diversity of literary temper.

Still, the classification is a clumsy one, for no hard and fast line can be drawn between the one spirit and the other. The so-called idealist must take as his point of departure the facts of Nature; the so-called realist must be sensitive to some one or other of the forms of beauty, if each would achieve the fineness of great art. And the pendulum of production is continually swinging, from degenerate idealism to degenerate realism, from effete vapidity to slavish sordidity.

Either term, then, can only be employed in a purely limited and relative sense. Completely idealistic art—art that has no point of contact with the facts of the universe, as we know them—is, of course, an impossible absurdity; similarly, a complete reproduction of Nature by means of words is an absurd impossibility. Neither emphasization nor abstraction can be dispensed with: the one, eliminating the details of no import; the other, exaggerating those which the artist has selected. And, even were such a thing possible, it would not be Art. The invention of a highly perfected system of coloured photography, for instance, or a skilful recording by means of the phonograph of scenes in real life, would not subtract one whit from the value of the painter's or the playwright's interpretation. Art is not invested with the futile function of perpetually striving after imitation or reproduction of Nature; she endeavours to produce, through the adaptation of a restricted number of natural facts, an harmonious and satisfactory whole. Indeed, in this very process of adaptation and blending together, lies the main and greater task of the artist. And the novel, the short story, even the impression of a mere incident, convey each of them, the imprint of the temper in which their creator has achieved this process of adaptation and blending together of his material. They are inevitably stamped with the hall-mark of his personality. A work of art can never be more than a corner of Nature, seen through the temperament of a single man. Thus, all literature is, must be, essentially subjective; for style is but the power of individual expression. The disparity which separates literature from the reporter's transcript is ineradicable. There is a quality of ultimate suggestiveness to be achieved; for the business of art is, not to explain or to describe, but to suggest. That attitude of objectivity, or of impersonality towards his subject, consciously or unconsciously, assumed by the artist, and which nowadays provokes so considerable an admiration, can be attained only in a limited degree. Every piece of imaginative work must be a kind of autobiography of its creator—significant, if not of the actual facts of his existence, at least of the inner working of his soul. We are each of us conscious, not of the whole world, but of our own world; not of naked reality, but of that aspect of reality which our peculiar temperament enables us to appropriate. Thus, every narrative of an external circumstance is never anything else than the transcript of the impression produced upon ourselves by that circumstance, and, invariably, a degree of individual interpretation is insinuated into every picture, real or imaginary, however objective it may be. So then, the disparity between the so-called idealist and the so-called realist is a matter, not of æsthetic philosophy, but of individual temperament. Each is at work, according to the especial bent of his genius, within precisely the same limits. Realism, as a creed, is as ridiculous as any other literary creed.

Now, it would have been exceedingly curious if this recent specialisation of the art of fiction, this passion for draining from the life, as it were, born, in due season, of the general spirit of the latter half of the nineteenth century, had not provoked a considerable amount of opposition—opposition of just that kind which every new evolution in art inevitably encounters. Between the vanguard and the main body there is perpetual friction.

But time flits quickly in this hurried age of ours, and the opposition to the renascence of fiction as a conscientious interpretation of life is not what it was; its opponents are not the men they were. It is not so long since a publisher was sent to prison for issuing English translations of celebrated specimens of French realism; yet, only the other day, we vied with each other in doing honour to the chief figure-head of that tendency across the Channel, and there was heard but the belated protest of a few worthy individuals, inadequately equipped with the jaunty courage of ignorance, or the insufferable confidence of second-hand knowledge.

And during the past year things have been moving very rapidly. The position of the literary artist towards Nature, his great inspirer, has become more definite, more secure. A sound, organised opinion of men of letters is being acquired; and in the little bouts with the *bourgeois*—if I may be pardoned the use of that wearisome word—no one has to fight single-handed. Heroism is at a discount; Mrs. Grundy is becoming mythological; a crowd of unsuspected supporters collect from all sides, and the deadly conflict of which we had been warned becomes but an interesting skirmish. Books are published, stories are printed, in old-established reviews, which would never have been tolerated a few years ago. On all sides, deference to the tendency of the time is spreading. The truth must be admitted: the roar of unthinking prejudice is dying away.

All this is exceedingly comforting: and yet, perhaps, it is not a matter for absolute congratulation. For, if the enemy are not dying as gamely as we had expected, if they are, as I am afraid, losing heart, and in danger of sinking into a condition of passive indifference, it should be to us a matter of not inconsiderable apprehension. If this new evolution in the art of fiction—this general return of the literary artist towards Nature, on the brink of which we are to-day hesitating—is to achieve any definite, ultimate fineness of expression, it will benefit enormously by the continued presence of a healthy, vigorous, if not wholly intelligent, body of opponents. Directly or indirectly, they will knock a lot of nonsense out of us, will these opponents;—why should we be ashamed to admit it? They will enable us to find our level, they will spur us on to bring out the best—and only the best—that is within us.

Take, for instance, the gentleman who objects to realistic fiction on moral grounds. If he does not stand the most conspicuous to-day, at least he was pre-eminent the day before yesterday. He is a hard case, and it is on his especial behalf that I would appeal. For he has been dislodged from the hill top, he has become a target for all manner of unkind chaff, from the ribald youth of Fleet Street and Chelsea. He has been labelled a Philistine: he has been twitted with his middle-age; he has been reported to have compromised himself with that indecent old person, Mrs. Grundy. It is confidently asserted that he comes from Putney, or from Sheffield, and that, when he is not busy abolishing the art of English literature, he is employed in safeguarding the interests of the grocery or tallow-chandler's trade. Strange and cruel tales of him have been printed in the monthly reviews; how, but for him, certain well-known popular writers would have written masterpieces; how, like the ogre in the fairy tale, he consumes every morning at breakfast a hundred pot-boiled young geniuses. For the most part they have been excellently well told, these tales of this moral ogre of ours; but why start to shatter brutally their dainty charm by a soulless process of investigation? No, let us be shamed rather into a more charitable spirit, into making generous amends, into rehabilitating the greatness of our moral ogre.

He is the backbone of our nation; the guardian of our mediocrity; the very foil of our intelligence. Once, you fancied that you could argue with him, that you could dispute his dictum. Ah! how we cherished that day-dream of our extreme youth. But it was not to be. He is still immense; for he is unassailable; he is flawless, for he is complete within himself; his lucidity is yet unimpaired; his impartiality is yet supreme. Who amongst us could judge with a like impartiality the productions of Scandinavia and Charpentier, Walt Whitman, and the Independent Theatre? Let us remember that he has never professed to understand Art, and the deep debt of gratitude that every artist in the land should consequently owe to him; let us remember that he is above us, for he belongs to the great middle classes; let us remember that he commands votes, that he is candidate for the County Council; let us remember that he is delightful, because he is intelligible.

Yes, he is intelligible; and of how many of us can that be said? His is no complex programme, no subtly exacting demand. A plain moral lesson is all that he asks, and his voice is as of one crying in the ever fertile wilderness of Smith and of Mudie.

And he is right, after all—if he only knew it. The business of art is to create for us fine interests, to make of our human nature a more complete thing: and thus, all great art is moral in the wider and the truer sense of the word. It is precisely on this point of the meaning of the word “moral” that we and our ogre part company. To him, morality is concerned only with the established relations between the sexes and with fair dealing between man and man: to him the subtle, indirect morality of Art is incomprehensible.

Theoretically, Art is non-moral. She is not interested in any ethical code of any age or any nation, except in so far as the breach or observance of that code may furnish her with material on which to work. But, unfortunately, in this complex world of ours, we cannot satisfactorily pursue one interest—no, not even the interest of Art, at the expense of all others—let us look that fact in the face, doggedly, whatever pangs it may cost us—pleading magnanimously for the survival of our moral ogre, for there will be danger to our cause when his voice is no more heard.

If imitation be the sincerest form of flattery, then our moral ogre must indeed have experienced a proud moment, when a follower came to him from the camp of the lovers of Art, and the artistic objector to realistic fiction started on his timid career. I use the word timid in no disparaging sense, but because our artistic objector, had he ventured a little farther from the vicinity of the

coat-tails of his powerful protector, might have secured a more adequate recognition of his performances. For he is by no means devoid of adroitness. He can patter to us glibly of the "gospel of ugliness"; of the "cheerlessness of modern literature"; he can even juggle with that honourable property-piece, the maxim of Art for Art's sake. But there have been moments when even this feat has proved ineffective, and some one has started scoffing at his pretended "delight in pure rhythm or music of the phrase," and flippantly assured him that he is talking nonsense, and that style is a mere matter of psychological suggestion. You fancy our performer nonplussed, or at least boldly bracing himself to brazen the matter out. No, he passes dexterously to his curtain effect—a fervid denunciation of express trains, evening newspapers, Parisian novels, or the first number of THE YELLOW BOOK. Verily, he is a versatile person.

Sometimes, to listen to him you would imagine that pessimism and regular meals were incompatible; that the world is only ameliorated by those whom it completely satisfies, that good predominates over evil, that the problem of our destiny had been solved long ago. You begin to doubt whether any good thing can come out of this miserable, inadequate age of ours, unless it be a doctored survival of the vocabulary of a past century. The language of the coster and cadger resound in our midst, and, though Velasquez tried to paint like Whistler, Rudyard Kipling cannot write like Pope. And a weird word has been invented to explain the whole business. Decadence, decadence: you are all decadent nowadays. Ibsen, Degas, and the New English Art Club; Zola, Oscar Wilde, and the Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Mr. Richard Le Gallienne is hoist with his own petard; even the British playwright has not escaped the taint. Ah, what a hideous spectacle. All whirling along towards one common end. And the elegant voice of the artistic objector floating behind: "*Après vous le déluge*." A wholesale abusing of the tendencies of the age has ever proved, for the superior mind, an inexhaustible source of relief. Few things breed such inward comfort as the contemplation of one's own pessimism—few things produce such discomfort as the remembrance of our neighbour's optimism.

And yet, pessimists though we may be dubbed, some of us, on this point at least, how can we compete with the hopelessness enjoyed by our artistic objector, when the spectacle of his despondency makes us insufferably replete with hope and confidence, so that while he is loftily bewailing or prettily denouncing the completeness of our degradation, we continue to delight in the evil of our ways? Oh, if we could only be sure that he would persevere in reprimanding this persistent study of the pitiable aspects of life, how our hearts would go out towards him? For the man who said that joy is essentially, regrettably inartistic, admitted in the same breath that misery lends itself to artistic treatment twice as easily as joy, and resumed the whole question in a single phrase. Let our artistic objector but weary the world sufficiently with his despair concerning the permanence of the cheerlessness of modern realism, and some day a man will arise who will give us a study of human happiness, as fine, as vital as anything we owe to Guy de Maupassant or to Ibsen. That man will have accomplished the infinitely difficult, and in admiration and in awe shall we bow down our heads before him.

In one radical respect the art of fiction is not in the same position as the other arts. They—music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and the drama—possess a magnificent fabric of accumulated tradition. The great traditions of the art of fiction have yet to be made. Ours is a young art, struggling desperately to reach expression, with no great past to guide it. Thus, it should be a matter for wonder, not that we stumble into certain pitfalls, but that we do not fall headlong into a hundred more.

But, if we have no great past, we have the present and the future—the one abundant in facilities, the other abundant in possibilities. Young men of to-day have enormous chances: we are working under exceedingly favourable conditions. Possibly we stand on the threshold of a very great period. I know, of course, that the literary artist is shamefully ill-paid, and that the man who merely caters for the public taste, amasses a rapid and respectable fortune. But how is it that such an arrangement seems other than entirely equitable? The essential conditions of the two cases are entirely distinct. The one man is free to give untrammelled expression to his own soul, free to fan to the full the flame that burns in his heart: the other is a seller of wares, a unit in national commerce. To the one is allotted liberty and a living wage; to the other, captivity and a consolation in Consols. Let us whine, then, no more concerning the prejudice and the persecution of the Philistine, when even that misanthrope, Mr. Robert Buchanan, admits that there is no power in England to prevent a man writing exactly as he pleases. Before long the battle for literary freedom will be won. A new public has been created—appreciative, eager and determined; a public which, as Mr. Gosse puts it, in one of those admirable essays of his, "has eaten of the apple of knowledge, and will not be satisfied with mere marionnettes. Whatever comes next," Mr. Gosse continues, "we cannot return, in serious novels, to the inanities and impossibilities of the old well-made plot, to the children changed at nurse, to the madonna-heroine and the god-like hero, to the impossible virtues and melodramatic vices. In future, even those who sneer at realism and misrepresent it most wilfully, will be obliged to put their productions more in accordance with veritable experience. There will still be novel-writers who address the gallery, and who will keep up the gaudy old convention, and the clumsy *Family Herald* evolution, but they will no longer be distinguished men of genius. They will no longer sign themselves George Sand or Charles Dickens."

Fiction has taken her place amongst the arts. The theory that writing resembles the blacking of boots, the more boots you black, the better you do it, is busy evaporating. The excessive admiration for the mere idea of a book or a story is dwindling; so is the comparative indifference to slovenly treatment. True is it that the society lady, dazzled by the brilliancy of her own

conversation, and the serious-minded spinster, bitten by some sociological theory, still decide in the old jaunty spirit, that fiction is the obvious medium through which to astonish or improve the world. Let us beware of the despotism of the intelligent amateur, and cease our toying with that quaint and winsome bogey of ours, the British Philistine, whilst the intelligent amateur, the deadliest of Art's enemies, is creeping up in our midst.

For the familiarity of the man in the street with the material employed by the artist in fiction, will ever militate against the acquisition of a sound, fine, and genuine standard of workmanship. Unlike the musician, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, the artist in fiction enjoys no monopoly in his medium. The word and the phrase are, of necessity, the common property of everybody; the ordinary use of them demands no special training. Hence the popular mind, while willingly acknowledging that there are technical difficulties to be surmounted in the creation of the sonata, the landscape, the statue, the building, in the case of the short story, or of the longer novel, declines to believe even in their existence, persuaded that in order to produce good fiction, an ingenious idea, or “plot,” as it is termed, is the one thing needed. The rest is a mere matter of handwriting.

The truth is, and, despite Mr. Waugh, we are near recognition of it, that nowadays there is but scanty merit in the mere selection of any particular subject, however ingenious or daring it may appear at first sight; that a man is not an artist, simply because he writes about heredity or the *demi-monde*, that to call a spade a spade requires no extraordinary literary gift, and that the essential is contained in the frank, fearless acceptance by every man of his entire artistic temperament, with its qualities and its flaws.

Two Drawings

By E. J. Sullivan

I. The Old Man's Garden

II. The Quick and the Dead

SULLIVAN

E J SULLIVAN

My Study

By Alfred Hayes

Let others strive for wealth or praise
    Who care to win;
I count myself full blest, if He,
Who made my study fair to see,
Grant me but length of quiet days
    To muse therein.

Its walls, with peach and cherry clad,
    From yonder wold
Unbosomed, seem as if thereon
September sunbeams ever shone;
They make the air look warm and glad
    When winds are cold.

Around its door a clematis
    Her arms doth tie;
Through leafy lattices I view
Its endless corridors of blue
Curtained with clouds; its ceiling is
    The marbled sky.

A verdant carpet smoothly laid
    Doth oft invite
My silent steps; thereon the sun
With silver thread of dew hath spun
Devices rare—the warp of shade,
    The weft of light.

Here dwell my chosen books, whose leaves
    With healing breath
The ache of discontent assuage,
And speak from each illumined page
The patience that my soul reprieves
    From inward death;

Some perish with a season's wind,
    And some endure;
One robes itself in snow, and one
In raiment of the rising sun
Bordered with gold; in all I find
    God's signature.

As on my grassy couch I lie,
    From hedge and tree
Musicians pipe; or if the heat
Subdue the birds, one crooneth sweet
Whose labour is a lullaby—
    The slumbrous bee.

The sun my work doth overlook
    With searching light;
The serious moon, the flickering star,
My midnight lamp and candle are;
A soul unhardened is the book
    Wherein I write.

There labouring, my heart is eased
    Of every care;
Yet often wonderstruck I stand,
With earnest gaze but idle hand,
Abashed—for God Himself is pleased
    To labour there.

Ashamed my faultful task to spell,
    I watch how grows
The Master's perfect colour-scheme
Of sunset, or His simpler dream
Of moonlight, or that miracle
    We name a rose.

Dear Earth, one thought alone doth grieve—
The tender dread
Of parting from thee; as a child,
Who painted while his father smiled,
Then watched him paint, is loth to leave
And go to bed.

A Reminiscence of “The Transgressor”

By Francis Forster

A Letter to the Editor

From Max Beerbohm

Dear Sir,—When The Yellow Book appeared I was in Oxford. So literary a little town is Oxford that its undergraduates see a newspaper nearly as seldom as the Venetians see a horse, and until yesterday, when coming to London, I found in the album of a friend certain newspaper cuttings, I had not known how great was the wrath of the pressmen.

What in the whole volume seems to have provoked the most ungovernable fury is, I am sorry to say, an essay about Cosmetics that I myself wrote. Of this it was impossible for anyone to speak calmly. The mob lost its head, and, so far as anyone in literature can be lynched, I was. In speaking of me, one paper dropped the usual prefix of "Mr." as though I were a well-known criminal, and referred to me shortly as "Beerbohm"; a second allowed me the "Mr." but urged that "a short Act of Parliament should be passed to make this kind of thing illegal"; a third suggested, rather tamely, that I should read one of Mr. William Watson's sonnets. More than one comic paper had a very serious poem about me, and a known adherent to the humour which, forest-like, is called new, declared my essay to be "the rankest and most nauseous thing in all literature." It was a bomb thrown by a cowardly decadent, another outrage by one of that desperate and dangerous band of madmen who must be mercilessly stamped out by a comity of editors. May I, Sir, in justice to myself and to you, who were gravely censured for harbouring me, step forward, and assure the affrighted mob that it is the victim of a hoax? May I also assure it that I had no notion that it would be taken in? Indeed, it seems incredible to me that any one on the face of the earth could fail to see that my essay, so grotesque in subject, in opinion so flippant, in style so wildly affected, was meant for a burlesque upon the "precious" school of writers. If I had only signed myself D. Cadent or Parrar Docks, or appended a note to say that the MS. had been picked up not a hundred miles from Tite Street, all the pressmen would have said that I had given them a very delicate bit of satire. But I did not. And *hinc*, as they themselves love to say, *illæ lacrimæ*.

After all, I think it is a sound rule that a writer should not kick his critics. I simply wish to make them a friendly philosophical suggestion. It seems to be thought that criticism holds in the artistic world much the same place as, in the moral world, is held by punishment—"the vengeance taken by the majority upon such as exceed the limits of conduct imposed by that majority." As in the case of punishment, then, we must consider the effect produced by criticism upon its object, how far is it reformatory? Personally, I cannot conceive how any artist can be hurt by remarks dropped from a garret into a gutter. Yet it is incontestable that many an illustrious artist has so been hurt. And these very remarks, so far from making him change or temper his method, have rather made that method intenser, have driven him to retire further within his own soul, by showing him how little he may hope for from the world but insult and ingratitude.

In fact, the police-constable mode of criticism is a failure. True that, here and there, much beautiful work of the kind has been done. In the old, old Quarterlies is many a slashing review, that, however absurd it be as criticism, we can hardly wish unwritten. In the *National Observer*, before its reformation, were countless fine examples of the cavilling method. The paper was rowdy, venomous and insincere. There was libel in every line of it. It roared with the lambs and bleated with the lions. It was a disgrace to journalism and a glory to literature. I think of it often with tears and desiderium. But the men who wrote these things stand upon a very different plane to the men employed as critics by the press of Great Britain. These must be judged, not by their workmanship, which is naught, but by the spirit that animates them and the consequence of their efforts. If only they could learn that it is for the critic to seek after beauty and to try to interpret it to others, if only they would give over their eternal fault-finding and not presume to interfere with the artist at his work, then with an equally small amount of ability our pressmen might do nearly as much good as they have hitherto done harm. Why should they regard writers with such enmity? The average pressman, reviewing a book of stories or of poems by an unknown writer, seems not to think "where are the beauties of this work that I may praise them, and by my praise quicken the sense of beauty in others?" He steadily applies himself to the ignoble task of plucking out and gloating over its defects. It is a pity that critics should show so little sympathy with writers, and curious when we consider that most of them tried to be writers themselves, once. Every new school that has come into the world, every new writer who has brought with him a new mode, they have rudely persecuted. The dulness of Ibsen, the obscurity of Meredith, the horrors of Zola—all these are household words. It is not until the pack has yelled itself hoarse that the level voice of justice is heard in praise. To pretend that no generation is capable of gauging the greatness of its own artists is the merest bauble-tit. Were it not for the accursed abuse of their function by the great body of critics, no poet need "live uncrown'd, apart." Many and irreparable are the wrongs that our critics have done. At length let them repent with ashes upon their heads. Where they see not beauty, let them be silent, reverently feeling that it may yet be there, and train their dull senses in quest of it.

Now is a good time for such penance. There are signs that our English literature has reached that point, when, like the literatures of all the nations that have been, it must fall at length into the hands of the decadents. The qualities that I tried in my essay to travesty—paradox and

marivaudage, lassitude, a love of horror and all unusual things, a love of argot and archaism and the mysteries of style—are not all these displayed, some by one, some by another of les jeunes écrivains? Who knows but that Artifice is in truth at our gates and that soon she may pass through our streets? Already the windows of Grub Street are crowded with watchful, evil faces. They are ready, the men of Grub Street, to pelt her, as they have pelted all that came before her. Let them come down while there is still time, and hang their houses with colours, and strew the road with flowers. Will they not, for once, do homage to a new queen? By the time this letter appears, it *may* be too late!

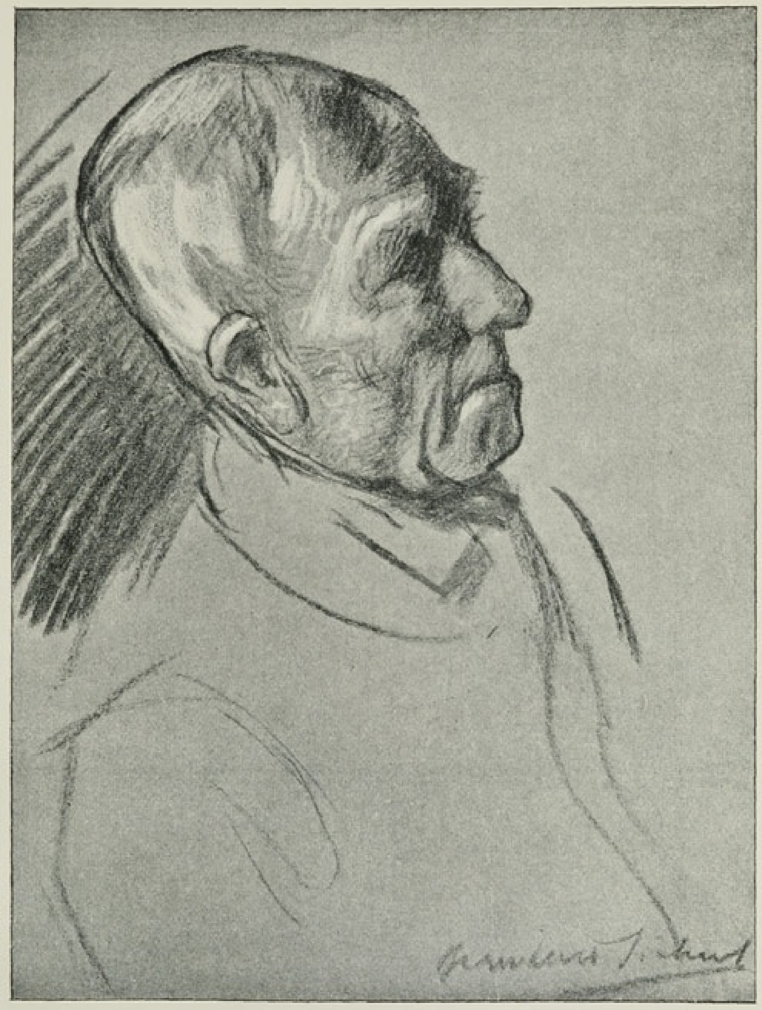
Meanwhile, Sir, I am, your obedient servant,

MAX BEERBOHM.

Oxford, May '94.

A Study

By Bernhard Sickert



EPIGRAM

TO A LADY RECOVERED FROM A DANGEROUS SICKNESS

Life plucks thee back as by the golden hair—

Life, who had feigned to let thee go but now.

Wealthy is Death already, and can spare

Ev'n such a prey as thou.

WILLIAM WATSON

The Coxon Fund

By Henry James

I

"They've got him for life!" I said to myself that evening on my way back to the station; but later, alone in the compartment (from Wimbledon to Waterloo, before the glory of the District Railway), I amended this declaration in the light of the sense that my friends would probably after all not enjoy a monopoly of Mr. Saltram. I won't pretend to have taken his vast measure on that first occasion; but I think I had achieved a glimpse of what the privilege of his acquaintance might mean for many persons in the way of charges accepted. He had been a great experience, and it was this perhaps that had put me into a frame for divining that we should all have the honour, sooner or later, of dealing with him as a whole. Whatever impression I then received of the amount of this total, I had a full enough vision of the patience of the Mulvilles. He was staying with them for the winter; Adelaide dropped it in a tone which drew the sting from the temporary. These excellent people might indeed have been content to give the circle of hospitality a diameter of six months; but if they didn't say that he was staying for the summer as well it was only because this was more than they ventured to hope. I remember that at dinner that evening he wore slippers, new and predominantly purple, of some queer carpet-stuff; but the Mulvilles were still in the stage of supposing that he might be snatched from them by higher bidders. At a later time they grew, poor dears, to fear no snatching; but theirs was a fidelity which needed no help from competition to make them proud. Wonderful indeed as, when all was said, you inevitably pronounced Frank Saltram, it was not to be overlooked that the Kent Mulvilles were in their way still more extraordinary; as striking an instance as could easily be encountered of the familiar truth that remarkable men find remarkable conveniences.

They had sent for me from Wimbledon to come out and dine, and there had been an implication in Adelaide's note (judged by her notes alone she might have been thought silly), that it was a case in which something momentous was to be determined or done. I had never known them not to be in a state about somebody, and I daresay I tried to be droll on this point in accepting their invitation. On finding myself in the presence of their latest revelation I had not at first felt irreverence droop—and, thank heaven, I have never been absolutely deprived of that alternative in Mr. Saltram's company. I saw, however (I hasten to declare it), that compared to this specimen their other phœnixes had been birds of inconsiderable feather, and I afterwards took credit to myself for not having even in primal bewilderments made a mistake about the essence of the man. He had an incomparable gift; I never was blind to it—it dazzles me at present. It dazzles me perhaps even more in remembrance than in fact, for I'm not unaware that for a subject so magnificent the imagination goes to some expense, inserting a jewel here and there or giving a twist to a plume. How the art of portraiture would rejoice in this figure if the art of portraiture had only the canvas! Nature, however, had really rounded it, and if memory, hovering about it, sometimes holds her breath, this is because the voice that comes back was really golden.

Though the great man was an inmate and didn't dress he kept dinner on this occasion waiting long, and the first words he uttered on coming into the room were a triumphant announcement to Mulville that he had found out something. Not catching the allusion and gaping doubtless a little at his face, I privately asked Adelaide what he had found out. I shall never forget the look she gave me as she replied: “Everything!” She really believed it. At that moment, at any rate, he had found out that the mercy of the Mulvilles was infinite. He had previously of course discovered, as I had myself for that matter, that their dinners were soignés. Let me not indeed, in saying this, neglect to declare that I shall falsify my counterfeit if I seem to hint that there was in his nature any ounce of calculation. He took whatever came, but he never plotted for it, and no man who was so much of an absorbent can ever have been so little of a parasite. He had a system of the universe, but he had no system of sponging—that was quite hand to mouth. He had fine, gross, easy senses, but it was not his good-natured appetite that wrought confusion. If he had loved us for our dinners we could have paid with our dinners, and it would have been a great economy of finer matter. I make free in these connections with the plural possessive because, if I was never able to do what the Mulvilles did, and people with still bigger houses and simpler charities, I met, first and last, every demand of reflection, of emotion—particularly perhaps those of gratitude and of resentment. No one, I think, paid the tribute of giving him up so often, and if it's rendering honour to borrow wisdom I have a right to talk of my sacrifices. He yielded lessons as the sea yields fish—I lived for a while on this diet. Sometimes it almost appeared to me that his massive, monstrous failure—if failure after all it was—had been intended for my private recreation. He fairly pampered my curiosity; but the history of that experience would take me too far. This is not the large canvas I just now spoke of, and I would not have approached him with my present hand had it been a question of all the features. Frank Saltram's features, for artistic purposes, are verily the anecdotes that are to be gathered. Their name is legion, and this is only one, of which the interest is that it concerns even more closely several other persons. Such episodes, as one looks back, are the little dramas that made up the innumerable facets of the big drama—which is yet to be reported.

II

It is furthermore remarkable that though the two stories are distinct—my own, as it were, and this other, they equally began, in a manner, the first night of my acquaintance with Frank Saltram, the night I came back from Wimbledon so agitated with a new sense of life that, in London, for the very thrill of it, I could only walk home. Walking and swinging my stick, I overtook, at Buckingham Gate, George Gravener, and George Gravener's story may be said to have begun with my making him, as our paths lay together, come home with me for a talk. I duly remember, let me parenthesise, that it was still more that or another person, and also that several years were to elapse before it was to extend to a second chapter. I had much to say to him, none the less, about my visit to the Mulvilles, whom he more indifferently knew, and I was at any rate so amusing that for long afterwards he never encountered me without asking for news of the old man of the sea. I hadn't said Mr. Saltram was old, and it was to be seen that he was of an age to outweather George Gravener. I had at that time a lodging in Ebury Street, and Gravener was staying at his brother's empty house in Eaton Square. At Cambridge, five years before, even in our devastating set, his intellectual power had seemed to me almost awful. Some one had once asked me privately, with blanched cheeks, what it was then that after all such a mind as that left standing. “It leaves itself!” I could recollect devoutly replying. I could smile at present at this reminiscence, for even before we got to Ebury Street I was struck with the fact that, save in the sense of being well set up on his legs, George Gravener had actually ceased to tower. The universe he laid low had somehow bloomed again—the usual eminences were visible. I wondered whether he had lost his humour, or only, dreadful thought, had never had any—not even when I had fancied him most Aristophanesque. What was the need of appealing to laughter, however, I could enviously inquire, where you might appeal so confidently to measurement? Mr. Saltram's queer figure, his thick nose and hanging lip were fresh to me: in the light of my old friend's fine cold symmetry they presented mere success in amusing as the refuge of conscious ugliness. Already, at hungry twenty-six, Gravener looked as blank and parliamentary as if he were fifty and popular. In my scrap of a residence (he had a wordling's eye for its futile conveniences, but never a comrade's joke), I sounded Frank Saltram in his ears; a circumstance I mention in order to note that even then I was surprised at his impatience of my enlivenment. As he had never before heard of the personage, it took indeed the form of impatience of the preposterous Mulvilles, his relation to whom, like mine, had had its origin in an early, a childish intimacy with the young Adelaide, the fruit of multiplied ties in the previous generation. When she married Kent Mulville, who was older than Gravener and I, and much more amiable, I gained a friend, but Gravener practically lost one. We were affected in different ways by the form taken by what he called their deplorable social action—the form (the term was also his) of nasty second-rate gush. I may have held in my *for intérieur* that the good people at Wimbledon were beautiful fools, but when he sniffed at them I couldn't help taking the opposite line, for I already felt that even should we happen to agree it would always be for reasons that differed. It came home to me that he was admirably British as, without so much as a sociable sneer at my bookbinder, he turned away from the serried rows of my little French library.

“Of course I've never seen the fellow, but it's clear enough he's a humbug.”

“Clear *enough* is just what it isn't,” I replied: “if it only were!” That ejaculation on my part must have been the beginning of what was to be later a long ache for final frivolous rest. Gravener was profound enough to remark after a moment that in the first place he couldn't be anything but a Dissenter, and when I answered that the very note of his fascination was his extraordinary speculative breadth he retorted that there was no cad like your cultivated cad and that I might depend upon discovering (since I had had the levity not already to have inquired), that my shining light proceeded, a generation back, from a Methodist cheesemonger. I confess I was struck with his insistence, and I said, after reflection: “It may be—I admit it may be; but why on earth are you so sure?”—asking the question mainly to lay him the trap of saying that it was because the poor man didn't dress for dinner. He took an instant to dodge my trap and come blandly out the other side.

“Because the Kent Mulvilles have invented him. They've an infallible hand for frauds. All their geese are swans. They were born to be duped, they like it, they cry for it, they don't know anything from anything, and they disgust one (luckily perhaps!) with Christian charity.” His intensity was doubtless an accident, but it might have been a strange foreknowledge. I forget what protest I dropped; it was at any rate something which led him to go on after a moment: “I only ask one thing—it's perfectly simple. Is a man, in a given case, a real gentleman?”

“A real gentleman, my dear fellow—that's so soon said!”

“Not so soon when he isn't! If they've got hold of one this time he must be a great rascal!”

“I might feel injured,” I answered, “if I didn't reflect that they don't rave about *me*.”

“Don't be too sure! I'll grant that he's a gentleman,” Gravener presently added, “if you'll admit that he's a scamp.”

“I don't know which to admire most, your logic or your benevolence.”

My friend coloured at this, but he didn't change the subject. “Where did they pick him up?”

“I think they were struck with something he had published.”

“I can fancy the dreary thing!”

“I believe they found out he had all sorts of worries and difficulties.”

“That, of course, was not to be endured, and they jumped at the privilege of paying his debts!” I replied that I knew nothing about his debts, and I reminded my visitor that though the dear Mulvilles were angels they were neither idiots nor millionaires. What they mainly aimed at was re-uniting Mr. Saltram to his wife. “I was expecting to hear that he has basely abandoned her,” Gravener went on, at this, “and I'm too glad you don't disappoint me.”

I tried to recall exactly what Mrs. Mulville had told me. “He didn't leave her—no. It's she who has left him.”

“Left him to *us*?” Gravener asked. “The monster—many thanks! I decline to take him.”

“You'll hear more about him in spite of yourself. I can't, no, I really can't, resist the impression that he's a big man.” I was already learning—to my shame perhaps be it said—just the tone that my old friend least liked.

“It's doubtless only a trifle,” he returned, “but you haven't happened to mention what his reputation's to rest on.”

“Why, on what I began by boring you with—his extraordinary mind.”

“As exhibited in his writings?”

“Possibly in his writings, but certainly in his talk, which is far and away the richest I ever listened to.”

“And what is it all about?”

“My dear fellow, don't ask me! About everything!” I pursued, reminding myself of poor Adelaide. “About his idea of things,” I then more charitably added. “You must have heard him to know what I mean—it's unlike anything that ever *was* heard.” I coloured, I admit, I overcharged a little, for such a picture was an anticipation of Saltram's later development and still more of my fuller acquaintance with him. However, I really expressed, a little lyrically perhaps, my actual imagination of him when I proceeded to declare that, in a cloud of tradition, of legend, he might very well go down to posterity as the greatest of all great talkers. Before we parted George Gravener demanded why such a row should be made about a chatterbox the more and why he should be pampered and pensioned. The greater the windbag the greater the calamity. Out of proportion to all other movements on earth had come to be this wagging of the tongue. We were drenched with talk—our wretched age was dying of it. I differed from him here sincerely, only going so far as to concede, and gladly, that we were drenched with sound. It was not, however, the mere speakers who were killing us—it was the mere stammerers. Fine talk was as rare as it was refreshing—the gift of the gods themselves, the one starry spangle on the ragged cloak of humanity. How many men were there who rose to this privilege, of how many masters of conversation could he boast the acquaintance? Dying of talk?—why, we were dying of the lack of it! Bad writing wasn't talk, as many people seemed to think, and even good wasn't always to be compared to it. From the best talk, indeed, the best writing had something to learn. I fancifully added that we too should peradventure be gilded by the legend, should be pointed at for having listened, for having actually heard. Gravener, who had looked at his watch and discovered it was midnight, found to all this a response beautifully characteristic of him.

“There is one little sovereign circumstance,” he remarked, “which is common to the best talk and the worst.” He looked at this moment as if he meant so much that I thought he could only mean once more that neither of them mattered if a man wasn't a real gentleman. Perhaps it was what he did mean; he deprived me, however, of the exultation of being right by putting the truth in a slightly different way. “The only thing that really counts for one's estimate of a person is his conduct.” He had his watch still in his hand, and I reproached him with unfair play in having ascertained beforehand that it was now the hour at which I always gave in. My pleasantry so far failed to mollify him as that he presently added that to the rule he had just enunciated there was absolutely no exception.

“None whatever?”

“None whatever.”

“Trust me then to try to be good at any price!” I laughed as I went with him to the door. “I declare I will be, if I have to be horrible!”

III

If that first night was one of the liveliest, or at any rate was the freshest, of my exaltation, there was another, four years later, that was one of my great discomposures. Repetition, I well knew by this time, was the secret of Saltram's power to alienate, and of course one would never have seen him at his finest if one hadn't seen him in his remorses. They set in mainly at this season and were magnificent, orchestral. I was perfectly aware that one of these great sweeps was now gathering; but none the less, in our arduous attempt to set him on his feet as a lecturer, it was impossible not to feel that two failures were a large order, as we said, for a short course of five. This was the second time, and it was past nine o'clock; the audience, a muster unprecedented and really encouraging, had fortunately the attitude of blandness that might have been looked for in persons whom the promise (if I am not mistaken) of an Analysis of Primary Ideas had drawn to the neighbourhood of Upper Baker Street. There was in those days in that region a petty lecture-

hall to be secured on terms as moderate as the funds left at our disposal by the irrepressible question of the maintenance of five small Saltrams (I include the mother) and one large one. By the time the Saltrams, of different sizes, were all maintained, we had pretty well poured out the oil that might have lubricated the machinery for enabling the most original of men to appear to maintain them.

It was I, the other time, who had been forced into the breach, standing up there, for an odious lamplit moment to explain to half-a-dozen thin benches, where the earnest brows were virtuously void of guesses, that we couldn't put so much as a finger on Mr. Saltram. There was nothing to plead but that our scouts had been out from the early hours and that we were afraid that on one of his walks abroad—he took one, for meditation, whenever he was to address such a company—some accident had disabled or delayed him. The meditative walks were a fiction, for he never, that anyone could discover, prepared anything but a magnificent prospectus; so that his circulars and programmes, of which I possess an almost complete collection, are as the solemn ghosts of generations never born. I put the case, as it seemed to me, at the best; but I admit I had been angry, and Kent Mulville was shocked at my want of attenuation. This time therefore I left the excuses to his more practised patience, only relieving myself in response to a direct appeal from a young lady next whom, in the hall, I found myself sitting. My position was an accident, but if it had been calculated the reason would scarcely have eluded an observer of the fact that no one else in the room had an appearance so charming. I think indeed she was the only person there who looked at her ease, who had come a little in the spirit of adventure. She seemed to carry amusement in her handsome young head, and her presence quite gave me the sense of a sudden extension of Saltram's sphere of influence. He was doing better than we hoped and he had chosen this occasion, of all occasions, to succumb to heaven knew which of his infirmities. The young lady produced an impression of auburn hair and black velvet, and had on her other hand a companion of obscurer type, presumably a waiting-maid. She herself might perhaps have been a foreign countess, and before she spoke to me I had beguiled our sorry interval by thinking that she brought vaguely back the first page of some novel of Madame Sand. It didn't make her more fathomable to perceive in a few minutes that she could only be an American; it simply engendered depressing reflections as to the possible check to contributions from Boston. She asked me if, as a person apparently more initiated, I would recommend further waiting, and I replied that if she considered I was on my honour I would privately deprecate it. Perhaps she didn't; at any rate something passed between us that led us to talk until she became aware that we were almost the only people left. I presently discovered that she knew Mrs. Saltram, and this explained in a manner the miracle. The brotherhood of the friends of the husband were as nothing to the brotherhood, or perhaps I should say the sisterhood, of the friends of the wife. Like the Kent Mulvilles I belonged to both fraternities, and even better than they I think I had sounded the dark abyss of Mrs. Saltram's wrongs. She bored me to extinction, and I knew but too well how she had bored her husband; but she had her partisans, the most inveterate of whom were indeed the handful of poor Saltram's backers. They did her liberal justice, whereas her peculiar comforters had nothing but hatred for our philosopher. I am bound to say it was we, however—we of both camps, as it were—who had always done most for her.

I thought my young lady looked rich—I scarcely knew why; and I hoped she had put her hand in her pocket. But I soon discovered that she was not a partisan—she was only a generous, irresponsible inquirer. She had come to England to see her aunt, and it was at her aunt's she had met the dreary lady we had all so much on our minds. I saw she would help to pass the time when she observed that it was a pity this lady wasn't intrinsically more interesting. That was refreshing, for it was an article of faith in Mrs. Saltram's circle—at least among those who scorned to know her horrid husband—that she was attractive on her merits. She was really a very common person, as Saltram himself would have been if he hadn't been a prodigy. The question of vulgarity had no application to him, but it was a measure that his wife kept challenging you to apply to *her*. I hasten to add that the consequences of your doing so were no sufficient reason for his having left her to starve. “He doesn't seem to have much force of character,” said my young lady; at which I laughed out so loud that my departing friends looked back at me over their shoulders as if I were making a joke of their discomfiture. My joke probably cost Saltram a subscription or two, but it helped me on with my interlocutress. “She says he drinks like a fish,” she sociably continued, “and yet she admits that his mind is wonderfully clear.” It was amusing to converse with a pretty girl who could talk of the clearness of Saltram's mind. I tried to tell her—I had it almost on my conscience—what was the proper way to regard him; an effort attended perhaps more than ever on this occasion with the usual effect of my feeling that I wasn't after all very sure of it. She had come to-night out of high curiosity—she had wanted to find out this proper way for herself. She had read some of his papers and hadn't understood them; but it was at home, at her aunt's, that her curiosity had been kindled—kindled mainly by his wife's remarkable stories of his want of virtue. “I suppose they ought to have kept me away,” my companion dropped, “and I suppose they would have done so if I hadn't somehow got an idea that he's fascinating. In fact Mrs. Saltram herself says he is.”

“So you came to see where the fascination resides? Well, you've seen!”

My young lady raised her fine eyebrows. “Do you mean in his bad faith?”

“In the extraordinary effects of it; his possession, that is, of some quality or other that condemns us in advance to forgive him the humiliation, as I may call it, to which he has subjected us.”

“The humiliation?”

“Why mine, for instance, as one of his guarantors, before you as the purchaser of a ticket.”

“You don't look humiliated a bit, and if you did I should let you off, disappointed as I am; for the mysterious quality you speak of is just the quality I came to see.”

“Oh, you can't *see* it!” I exclaimed.

“How then do you get at it?”

“You don't! You mustn't suppose he's good-looking,” I added.

“Why, his wife says he is!”

My hilarity may have struck my interlocutress as excessive, but I confess it broke out afresh. Had she acted only in obedience to this singular plea, so characteristic, on Mrs. Saltram's part, of what was irritating in the narrowness of that lady's point of view? “Mrs. Saltram,” I explained, “undervalues him where he is strongest, so that, to make up for it perhaps, she overpraises him where he's weak. He's not, assuredly, superficially attractive; he's middle-aged, fat, featureless save for his great eyes.”

“Yes, his great eyes,” said my young lady attentively. She had evidently heard all about them.

“They're tragic and splendid—lights on a dangerous coast. But he moves badly and dresses worse, and altogether he's strange to behold.”

My companion appeared to reflect on this, and after a moment she inquired: “Do you call him a real gentleman?”

I started slightly at the question, for I had a sense of recognising it: George Gravener, years before that first flushed night, had put me face to face with it. It had embarrassed me then, but it didn't embarrass me now, for I had lived with it and overcome it and disposed of it. “A real gentleman? Decidedly not!”

My promptitude surprised her a little, but I quickly felt that it was not to Gravener I was now talking. “Do you say that because he's—what do you call it in England?—of humble extraction?”

“Not a bit. His father was a country schoolmaster and his mother the widow of a sexton, but that has nothing to do with it. I say it simply because I know him well.”

“But isn't it an awful drawback?”

“Awful—quite awful.”

“I mean, isn't it positively fatal?”

“Fatal to what? Not to his magnificent vitality.”

Again there was a meditative moment. “And is his magnificent vitality the cause of his vices?”

“Your questions are formidable, but I'm glad you put them. I was thinking of his noble intellect. His vices, as you say, have been much exaggerated: they consist mainly after all in one comprehensive misfortune.”

“A want of will?”

“A want of dignity.”

“He doesn't recognise his obligations?”

“On the contrary, he recognises them with effusion, especially in public: he smiles and bows and beckons across the street to them. But when they pass over he turns away, and he speedily loses them in the crowd. The recognition is purely spiritual—it isn't in the least social. So he leaves all his belongings to other people to take care of. He accepts favours, loans, sacrifices, with nothing more restrictive than an agony of shame. Fortunately we're a little faithful band, and we do what we can.” I held my tongue about the natural children, engendered, to the number of three, in the wantonness of his youth. I only remarked that he did make efforts—often tremendous ones. “But the efforts,” I said, “never come to much; the only things that come to much are the abandonments, the surrenders.”

“And how much do they come to?”

“I've told you before that your questions are terrible! They come, these mere exercises of genius, to a great body of poetry, of philosophy, a notable mass of speculation, of discovery. The genius is there, you see, to meet the surrender; but there's no genius to support the defence.”

“But what is there, after all, at his age, to show?”

“In the way of achievement recognised and reputation established?” I interrupted. “To 'show' if you will, there isn't much, for his writing, mostly, isn't as fine as his talk. Moreover, two-thirds of his work are merely colossal projects and announcements. 'Showing' Frank Saltram is often a poor business; we endeavoured, you will have observed, to show him to-night! However, if he *had* lectured, he would have lectured divinely. It would just have been his talk.”

“And what would his talk just have been?”

I was conscious of some ineffectiveness as well perhaps as of a little impatience as I replied: “The exhibition of a splendid intellect.” My young lady looked not quite satisfied at this, but as I was not prepared for another question I hastily pursued: “The sight of a great suspended, swinging crystal, huge, lucid, lustrous, a block of light, flashing back every impression of life and every possibility of thought!” This gave her something to think about till we had passed out to the dusky porch of the hall, in front of which the lamps of a quiet brougham were almost the only thing Saltram's treachery hadn't extinguished. I went with her to the door of her carriage, out of which she leaned a moment after she had thanked me and taken her seat. Her smile even in the darkness was pretty. “I do want to see that crystal!”

“You've only to come to the next lecture.”

“I go abroad in a day or two with my aunt.”

“Wait over till next week,” I suggested. “It's worth it.”

She became grave. “Not unless he really comes!” At which the brougham started off, carrying her away too fast, fortunately for my manners, to allow me to exclaim “Ingratitude!”

IV

Mrs. Saltram made a great affair of her right to be informed where her husband had been the second evening he failed to meet his audience. She came to me to ascertain, but I couldn't satisfy her, for in spite of my ingenuity I remained in ignorance. It was not till much later that I found this had not been the case with Kent Mulville, whose hope for the best never twirled its thumbs more placidly than when he happened to know the worst. He had known it on the occasion I speak of—that is immediately after. He was impenetrable then, but he ultimately confessed—more than I shall venture to confess to-day. It was of course familiar to me that Saltram was incapable of keeping the engagements which, after their separation, he had entered into with regard to his wife, a deeply wronged, justly resentful, quite irreproachable and insufferable person. She often appeared at my chambers to talk over his *lacunæ*, for if, as she declared, she had washed her hands of him, she had carefully preserved the water of this ablution and she handed it about for inspection. She had arts of her own of exciting one's impatience, the most infallible of which was perhaps her assumption that we were kind to her because we liked her. In reality her personal fall had been a sort of social rise, for there had been a moment when, in our little conscientious circle, her desolation almost made her the fashion. Her voice was grating and her children ugly; moreover she hated the good Mulvilles, whom I more and more loved. They were the people who by doing most for her husband had in the long run done most for herself; and the warm confidence with which he had laid his length upon them was a pressure gentle compared with her stiffer persuadability. I am bound to say he didn't criticise his benefactors, though practically he got tired of them; she, however, had the highest standards about eleemosynary forms. She offered the odd spectacle of a spirit puffed up by dependence, and indeed it had introduced her to some excellent society. She pitied me for not knowing certain people who aided her and whom she doubtless patronised in turn for their luck in not knowing me. I daresay I should have got on with her better if she had had a ray of imagination—if it had occasionally seemed to occur to her to regard Saltram's manifestations in any other manner than as separate subjects of woe. They were all flowers of his nature, pearls strung on an endless thread; but she had a stubborn little way of challenging them one after the other, as if she never suspected that he *had* a nature, such as it was, or that deficiencies might be organic; the irritating effect of a mind incapable of a generalisation. One might doubtless have overdone the idea that there was a general exemption for such a man; but if this had happened it would have been through one's feeling that there could be none for such a woman.

I recognised her superiority when I asked her about the aunt of the disappointed young lady: it sounded like a sentence from a phrase-book. She triumphed in what she told me and she may have triumphed still more in what she withheld. My friend of the other evening, Miss Anvoy, had but lately come to England; Lady Coxon, the aunt, had been established here for years in consequence of her marriage with the late Sir Gregory of that ilk. She had a house in the Regent's Park and a Bath-chair and a page; and above all she had sympathy. Mrs. Saltram had made her acquaintance through mutual friends. This vagueness caused me to feel how much I was out of it and how large an independent circle Mrs. Saltram had at her command. I should have been glad to know more about the charming Miss Anvoy, but I felt that I should know most by not depriving her of her advantage, as she might have mysterious means of depriving me of my knowledge. For the present, moreover, this experience was arrested, Lady Coxon having in fact gone abroad, accompanied by her niece. The niece, besides being immensely clever, was an heiress, Mrs. Saltram said; the only daughter and the light of the eyes of some great American merchant, a man, over there, of endless indulgences and dollars. She had pretty clothes and pretty manners, and she had, what was prettier still, the great thing of all. The great thing of all for Mrs. Saltram was always sympathy, and she spoke as if during the absence of these ladies she might not know where to turn for it. A few months later indeed, when they had come back, her tone perceptibly changed: she alluded to them, on my leading her up to it, rather as to persons in her debt for favours received. What had happened I didn't know, but I saw it would take only a little more or a little less to make her speak of them as thankless subjects of social countenance—people for whom she had vainly tried to do something. I confess I saw that it would not be in a mere week or two that I should rid myself of the image of Ruth Anvoy, in whose very name, when I learnt it, I found something secretly to like. I should probably neither see her nor hear of her

again: the knight's widow (he had been mayor of Clockborough) would pass away, and the heiress would return to her inheritance. I gathered with surprise that she had not communicated to his wife the story of her attempt to hear Mr. Saltram, and I founded this reticence on the easy supposition that Mrs. Saltram had fatigued by over-pressure the spring of the sympathy of which she boasted. The girl at any rate would forget the small adventure, be distracted, take a husband; besides which she would lack opportunity to repeat her experiment.

We clung to the idea of the brilliant course, delivered without a tumble, that, as a lecturer, would still make the paying public aware of our great mind; but the fact remained that in the case of an inspiration so unequal there was treachery, there was fallacy at least, in the very conception of a series. In our scrutiny of ways and means we were inevitably subject to the old convention of the synopsis, the syllabus, partly of course not to lose the advantage of his grand free hand in drawing up such things; but for myself I laughed at our categories even while I stickled for them. It was indeed amusing work to be scrupulous for Frank Saltram, who also at moments laughed about it, so far as the rise and fall of a luxurious sigh might pass for such a sound. He admitted with a candour all his own that he was in truth only to be depended on in the Mulvilles' drawing-room. “Yes,” he suggestively conceded, “it's there, I think, that I am at my best; quite late, when it gets toward eleven—and if I've not been too much worried.” We all knew what too much worry meant; it meant too enslaved for the hour to the superstition of sobriety. On the Saturdays I used to bring my portmanteau, so as not to have to think of eleven o'clock trains. I had a bold theory that as regards this temple of talk and its altars of cushioned chintz, its pictures and its flowers, its large fireside and clear lamplight, we might really arrive at something if the Mulvilles would only charge for admission. But here it was that the Mulvilles shamelessly broke down; as there is a flaw in every perfection, this was the inexpugnable refuge of their egotism. They declined to make their saloon a market, so that Saltram's golden words continued to be the only coin that rang there. It can have happened to no man, however, to be paid a greater price than such an enchanted hush as surrounded him on his greatest nights. The most profane, on these occasions, felt a presence; all minor eloquence grew dumb. Adelaide Mulville, for the pride of her hospitality, anxiously watched the door or stealthily poked the fire. I used to call it the music-room, for we had anticipated Bayreuth. The very gates of the kingdom of light seemed to open and the horizon of thought to flash with the beauty of a sunrise at sea.

In the consideration of ways and means, the sittings of our little board, we were always conscious of the creak of Mrs. Saltram's shoes. She hovered, she interrupted, she almost presided, the state of affairs being mostly such as to supply her with every incentive for inquiring what was to be done next. It was the pressing pursuit of this knowledge that, in concatenations of omnibuses and usually in very wet weather, led her so often to my door. She thought us spiritless creatures with editors and publishers; but she carried matters to no great effect when she personally pushed into back-shops. She wanted all moneys to be paid to herself; they were otherwise liable to such strange adventures. They trickled away into the desert, and they were mainly at best, alas, but a slender stream. The editors and the publishers were the last people to take this remarkable thinker at the valuation that has now pretty well come to be established. The former were half distraught between the desire to “cut” him and the difficulty of finding a crevice for their shears; and when a volume on this or that portentous subject was proposed to the latter they suggested alternative titles which, as reported to our friend, brought into his face the noble blank melancholy that sometimes made it handsome. The title of an unwritten book didn't after all much matter, but some masterpiece of Saltram's may have died in his bosom of the shudder with which it was then convulsed. The ideal solution, failing the fee at Kent Mulville's door, would have been some system of subscription to projected treatises with their non-appearance provided for—provided for, I mean, by the indulgence of subscribers. The author's real misfortune was that subscribers were so wretchedly literal. When they tastelessly inquired why publication had not ensued I was tempted to ask who in the world had ever been so published. Nature herself had brought him out in voluminous form, and the money was simply a deposit on borrowing the work.

V

I was doubtless often a nuisance to my friends in those years; but there were sacrifices I declined to make, and I never passed the hat to George Gravener. I never forgot our little discussion in Ebury Street, and I think it stuck in my throat to have to make to him the admission I had made so easily to Miss Anvoy. It had cost me nothing to confide to this charming girl, but it would have cost me much to confide to the friend of my youth, that the character of the “real gentleman” was not an attribute of the man I took such pains for. Was this because I had already generalised to the point of perceiving that women are really the unfastidious sex? I knew at any rate that Gravener, already quite in view but still hungry and frugal, had naturally enough more ambition than charity. He had sharp aims for stray sovereigns, being in view most from the tall steeple of Clockborough. His immediate ambition was to wholly occupy the field of vision of that smokily-seeing city, and all his movements and postures were calculated at this angle. The movement of the hand to the pocket had thus to alternate gracefully with the posture of the hand on the heart. He talked to Clockborough in short only less beguilingly than Frank Saltram talked to his electors; with the difference in our favour, however, that we had already voted and that our candidate had no antagonist but himself. He had more than once been at Wimbledon—it was Mrs. Mulville's work, not mine—and, by the time the claret was served, had seen the god descend. He took more pains to swing his censer than I had expected, but on our way back to town he forestalled any little triumph I might have been so artless as to express by the observation that such a man was—a hundred times!—a man to use and never a man to be used by. I remember

that this neat remark humiliated me almost as much as if virtually, in the fever of broken slumbers, I hadn't often made it myself. The difference was that on Gravener's part a force attached to it that could never attach to it on mine. He was able to use him in short, he had the machinery; and the irony of Saltram's being made showy at Clockborough came out to me when he said, as if he had no memory of our original talk and the idea were quite fresh to him: “I hate his type, you know, but I'll be hanged if I don't put some of those things in. I can find a place for them: we might even find a place for the fellow himself.” I myself should have had some fear, not, I need scarcely say, for the “things” themselves, but for some other things very near them—in fine for the rest of my eloquence.

Later on I could see that the oracle of Wimbledon was not in this case so serviceable as he would have been had the politics of the gods only coincided more exactly with those of the party. There was a distinct moment when, without saying anything more definite to me, Gravener entertained the idea of “getting hold” of Mr. Saltram. Such a project was factitious, for the discovery of analogies between his body of doctrine and that pressed from headquarters upon Clockborough—the bottling, in a word, of the air of those lungs for convenient public uncorking in corn-exchanges—was an experiment for which no one had the leisure. The only thing would have been to carry him massively about, paid, caged, clipped: to turn him on for a particular occasion in a particular channel. Frank Saltram's channel, however, was essentially not calculable, and there was no knowing what disastrous floods might have issued. For what there would have been to do “The Empire,” the great newspaper, was there to look to; but it was no new misfortune that there were delicate situations in which “The Empire” broke down. In fine there was an instinctive apprehension that a clever young journalist commissioned to report upon Mr. Saltram might never come back from the errand. No one knew better than George Gravener that that was a time when prompt returns counted double. If he therefore found our friend an exasperating waste of orthodoxy, it was because he was, as he said, up in the clouds; not because he was down in the dust. He would have been a real enough gentleman if he could have helped to put in a real gentleman. Gravener's great objection to the actual member was that he was not one.

Lady Coxon had a fine old house, a house with “grounds,” at Clockborough, which she had let; but after she returned from abroad I learned from Mrs. Saltram that the lease had fallen in and that she had gone down to resume possession. I could see the faded red livery, the big square shoulders, the high-walled garden of this decent abode. As the rumble of dissolution grew louder the suitor would have pressed his suit, and I found myself hoping that the politics of the late Mayor's widow would not be such as to enjoin upon her to ask him to dinner; perhaps indeed I went so far as to hope that they would be such as to put all countenance out of the question. I tried to focus the page, in the daily airing, as he perhaps even pushed the Bath-chair over somebody's toes. I was destined to hear, however, through Mrs. Saltram (who, I afterwards learned, was in correspondence with Lady Coxon's housekeeper), that Gravener was known to have spoken of the habitation I had in my eye as the pleasantest thing at Clockborough. On his part, I was sure, this was the voice not of envy but of experience. The vivid scene was now peopled, and I could see him in the old-time garden with Miss Anvoy, who would be certain, and very justly, to think him good-looking. It would be too much to say that I was troubled by such an image; but I seem to remember the relief, singular enough, of feeling it suddenly brushed away by an annoyance really much greater; an annoyance the result of its happening to come over me about that time with a rush that I was simply ashamed of Frank Saltram. There were limits after all, and my mark at last had been reached.

I had had my disgusts, if I may allow myself to-day such an expression; but this was a supreme revolt. Certain things cleared up in my mind, certain values stood out. It was all very well to talk of an unfortunate temperament; there were misfortunes that people should themselves correct, and correct in private, without calling in assistance. I avoided George Gravener at this moment, and reflected that at such a time I should do so most effectually by leaving England. I wanted to forget Frank Saltram—that was all. I didn't want to do anything in the world to him but that. Indignation had withered on the stalk, and I felt that one could pity him as much as one ought only by never thinking of him again. It wasn't for anything he had done to me; it was for something he had done to the Mulvilles. Adelaide cried about it for a week, and her husband, profiting by the example so signally given him of the fatal effect of a want of character, left the letter unanswered. The letter, an incredible one, addressed by Saltram to Wimbledon during a stay with the Pudneys at Ramsgate, was the central feature of the incident, which, however, had many features, each more painful than whichever other we compared it with. The Pudneys had behaved shockingly, but that was no excuse. Base ingratitude, gross indecency—one had one's choice only of such formulas as that the more they fitted the less they gave one rest. These are dead aches now, and I am under no obligation, thank heaven, to be definite about the business. There are things which if I had had to tell them—well, I wouldn't have told my story.

I went abroad for the general election, and if I don't know how much, on the Continent, I forgot, I at least know how much I missed, him. At a distance, in a foreign land, ignoring, abjuring, unlearning him, I discovered what he had done for me. I owed him, oh unmistakably, certain noble conceptions; I had lighted my little taper at his smoky lamp, and lo, it continued to twinkle. But the light it gave me just showed me how much more I wanted. I was pursued of course by letters from Mrs. Saltram, which I didn't scruple not to read, though I was duly conscious that her embarrassments would now be of the gravest. I sacrificed to propriety by simply putting them away, and this is how, one day as my absence drew to an end, my eye, as I rummaged in my desk for another paper, was caught by a name on a leaf that had detached itself from the packet. The allusion was to Miss Anvoy, who, it appeared, was engaged to be married to Mr. George

Gravener; and the news was two months old. A direct question of Mrs. Saltram's had thus remained unanswered—she had inquired of me in a postscript what sort of man this Mr. Gravener might be. This Mr. Gravener had been triumphantly returned for Clockborough, in the interest of the party that had swept the country, so that I might easily have referred Mrs. Saltram to the journals of the day. But when I at last wrote to her that I was coming home and would discharge my accumulated burden by seeing her, I remarked in regard to her question that she must really put it to Miss Anvoy.

VI

I had almost avoided the general election, but some of its consequences, on my return, had squarely to be faced. The season, in London, began to breathe again and to flap its folded wings. Confidence, under the new ministry, was understood to be reviving, and one of the symptoms, in the social body, was a recovery of appetite. People once more fed together, and it happened that, one Saturday night, at somebody's house, I fed with George Gravener. When the ladies left the room I moved up to where he sat and offered him my congratulation. "On my election?" he asked after a moment; whereupon I feigned, jocosely not to have heard of his election and to be alluding to something much more important, the rumour of his engagement. I daresay I coloured however, for his political victory had momentarily passed out of my mind. What was present to it was that he was to marry that beautiful girl; and yet his question made me conscious of some embarrassment—I had not intended to put that before everything. He himself indeed ought gracefully to have done so, and I remember thinking the whole man was in this assumption, that in expressing my sense of what he had won I had fixed my thoughts on his "seat." We straightened the matter out, and he was so much lighter in hand than I had lately seen him that his spirits might well have been fed from a double source. He was so good as to say that he hoped I should soon make the acquaintance of Miss Anvoy, who, with her aunt, was presently coming up to town. Lady Coxon, in the country, had been seriously unwell, and this had delayed their arrival. I told him I had heard the marriage would be a splendid one; on which, brightened and humanised by his luck, he laughed and said: "Do you mean for *her*?" When I had again explained what I meant he went on: "Oh, she's an American, but you'd scarcely know it; unless, perhaps," he added, "by her being used to more money than most girls in England, even the daughters of rich men. That wouldn't in the least do for a fellow like me, you know, if it wasn't for the great liberality of her father. He really has been most kind, and everything is quite satisfactory." He added that his eldest brother had taken a tremendous fancy to her and that during a recent visit at Coldfield she had nearly won over Lady Maddock. I gathered from something he dropped later that the free-handed gentleman beyond the seas had not made a settlement, but had given a handsome present and was apparently to be looked to, across the water, for other favours. People are simplified alike by great contentments and great yearnings, and whether or no it was Gravener's directness that begot my own, I seem to recall that in some turn taken by our talk he almost imposed it upon me as an act of decorum to ask if Miss Anvoy had also by chance expectations from her aunt. My inquiry elicited that Lady Coxon, who was the oddest of women, would have in any contingency to act under her late husband's will, which was odder still, saddling her with a mass of queer obligations intermingled with queer loopholes. There were several dreary people, Coxon relations, old maids, whom she would have more or less to consider. Gravener laughed, without saying no, when I suggested that the young lady might come in through a loophole; then suddenly, as if he suspected that I had turned a lantern on him, he exclaimed quite dryly: "That's all rot—one is moved by other springs!"

A fortnight later, at Lady Coxon's own house, I understood well enough the springs one was moved by. Gravener had spoken of me there as an old friend, and I received a gracious invitation to dine. The knight's widow was again indisposed—she had succumbed at the eleventh hour; so that I found Miss Anvoy bravely playing hostess, without even Gravener's help, inasmuch as, to make matters worse, he had just sent up word that the House, the insatiable House, with which he supposed he had contracted for easier terms, positively declined to release him. I was struck with the courage, the grace and gaiety of the young lady left to deal unaided with the possibilities of the Regent's Park. I did what I could to help her to keep them down, or up, after I had recovered from the confusion of seeing her slightly disconcerted at perceiving in the guest introduced by her intended the gentleman with whom she had had that talk about Frank Saltram. I had at that moment my first glimpse of the fact that she was a person who could carry a responsibility; but I leave the reader to judge of my sense of the aggravation, for either of us, of such a burden when I heard the servant announce Mrs. Saltram. From what immediately passed between the two ladies I gathered that the latter had been sent for post-haste to fill the gap created by the absence of the mistress of the house. "Good!" I exclaimed, "she will be put by *me*!" and my apprehension was promptly justified. Mrs. Saltram taken in to dinner, and taken in as a consequence of an appeal to her amiability, was Mrs. Saltram with a vengeance. I asked myself what Miss Anvoy meant by doing such things, but the only answer I arrived at was that Gravener was verily fortunate. She had not happened to tell him of her visit to Upper Baker Street, but she would certainly tell him to-morrow; not indeed that this would make him like any better her having had the simplicity to invite such a person as Mrs. Saltram on such an occasion. I reflected that I had never seen a young woman put such ignorance into her cleverness, such freedom into her modesty: this, I think, was when, after dinner, she said to me frankly, with almost jubilant mirth: "Oh, you don't admire Mrs. Saltram!" Why should I? She was truly an innocent maiden. I had briefly to consider before I could reply that my objection to the lady in question was the objection often formulated in regard to persons met at the social board—I knew all her stories. Then, as Miss Anvoy remained momentarily vague, I added: "About her husband."

“Oh yes, but there are some new ones.”

“None for me. Oh, novelty would be pleasant!”

“Doesn't it appear that of late he has been particularly horrid?”

“His fluctuations don't matter,” I replied; “they are all covered by the single circumstance I mentioned the evening we waited for him together. What will you have? He has no dignity.”

Miss Anvoy, who had been introducing with her American distinctness, looked encouragingly round at some of the combinations she had risked. “It's too bad I can't see him.”

“You mean Gravener won't let you?”

“I haven't asked him. He lets me do everything.”

“But you know he knows him and wonders what some of us see in him.”

“We haven't happened to talk of him,” the girl said.

“Get him to take you some day out to see the Mulvilles.”

“I thought Mr. Saltram had thrown the Mulvilles over.”

“Utterly. But that won't prevent his being planted there again, to bloom like a rose, within a month or two.”

Miss Anvoy thought a moment. Then, “I should like to see them,” she said with her fostering smile.

“They're tremendously worth it. You mustn't miss them.”

“I'll make George take me,” she went on as Mrs. Saltram came up to interrupt us. The girl smiled at her as kindly as she had smiled at me, and addressing the question to her, continued: “But the chance of a lecture—one of the wonderful lectures? Isn't there another course announced!”

“Another? There are about thirty!” I exclaimed, turning away and feeling Mrs. Saltram's little eyes in my back. A few days after this, I heard that Gravener's marriage was near at hand—was settled far Whitsuntide; but as I had received no invitation I doubted it, and presently there came to me in fact the report of a postponement. Something was the matter; what was the matter was supposed to be that Lady Coxon was now critically ill. I had called on her after my dinner in the Regent's Park, but I had neither seen her nor seen Miss Anvoy. I forget to-day the exact order in which, at this period, certain incidents occurred and the particular stage at which it suddenly struck me, making me catch my breath a little, that the progression, the acceleration was for all the world that of a drama. This was probably rather late in the day, and the exact order doesn't matter. What had already occurred was some accident determining a more patient wait. George Gravener, whom I met again, in fact told me as much, but without signs of perturbation. Lady Coxon had to be constantly attended to, and there were other good reasons as well. Lady Coxon had to be so constantly attended to that on the occasion of a second attempt in the Regent's Park I equally failed to obtain a sight of her niece. I judged it discreet under the circumstances not to make a third; but this didn't matter, for it was through Adelaide Mulville that the side-wind of the comedy, though I was at first unwitting, began to reach me. I went to Wimbledon at times because Saltram was there and I went at others because he was not. The Pudneys, who had taken him to Birmingham, had already got rid of him, and we had a horrible consciousness of his wandering roofless, in dishonour, about the smoky Midlands, almost as the injured Lear wandered on the storm-lashed heath. His room, upstairs, had been lately done up (I could hear the crackle of the new chintz), and the difference only made his smirches and bruises, his splendid tainted genius, the more tragic. If he wasn't barefoot in the mire, he was sure to be unconventionally shod. These were the things Adelaide and I, who were old enough friends to stare at each other in silence, talked about when we didn't speak. When we spoke it was only about the charming girl George Gravener was to marry, whom he had brought out the other Sunday. I could see that this introduction had been happy, for Mrs. Mulville commemorated it in the only way in which she ever expressed her confidence in a new relation. “She likes me—she likes me”: her native humility exulted in that measure of success. We all knew for ourselves how she liked those who liked her, and as regards Ruth Anvoy she was more easily won over than Lady Maddock.

VII

One of the consequences, for the Mulvilles, of the sacrifices they made for Frank Saltram was that they had to give up their carriage. Adelaide drove gently into London in a one-horse greenish thing, an early Victorian landau, hired, near at hand, imaginatively, from a broken-down jobmaster whose wife was in consumption—a vehicle that made people turn round all the more when her pensioner sat beside her in a soft white hat and a shawl, one of her own. This was his position and I daresay his costume when on an afternoon in July she went to return Miss Anvoy's visit. The wheel of fate had now revolved, and amid silences deep and exhaustive, compunctions and condonations alike unutterable, Saltram was reinstated. Was it in pride or in penance that Mrs. Mulville began immediately to drive him about? If he was ashamed of his ingratitude she might have been ashamed of her forgiveness; but she was incorrigibly capable of liking him to be seen strikingly seated in the landau while she was in shops or with her acquaintance. However, if

he was in the pillory for twenty minutes in the Regent's Park (I mean at Lady Coxon's door, while her companion paid her call), it was not for the further humiliation of anyone concerned that she presently came out for him in person, not even to show either of them what a fool she was that she drew him in to be introduced to the clever young American. Her account of this introduction I had in its order, but before that, very late in the season, under Gravener's auspices, I met Miss Anvoy at tea at the House of Commons. The member for Clockborough had gathered a group of pretty ladies, and the Mulvilles were not of the party. On the great terrace, as I strolled off a little with her, the guest of honour immediately exclaimed to me: “I've seen him, you know—I've seen him!” She told me about Saltram's call.

“And how did you find him?”

“Oh, so strange!”

“You didn't like him?”

“I can't tell till I see him again.”

“You want to do that?”

She was silent a moment. “Immensely.”

We stopped; I fancied she had become aware Gravener was looking at us. She turned back toward the knot of the others, and I said: “Dislike him as much as you will—I see you're bitten.”

“Bitten?” I thought she coloured a little.

“Oh, it doesn't matter!” I laughed; “one doesn't die of it.”

“I hope I sha'n't die of anything before I've seen more of Mrs. Mulville.” I rejoiced with her over plain Adelaide, whom she pronounced the loveliest woman she had met in England; but before we separated I remarked to her that it was an act of mere humanity to warn her that if she should see more of Frank Saltram (which would be likely to follow on any increase of acquaintance with Mrs. Mulville), she might find herself flattening her nose against the clear hard pane of an eternal question—that of the relative importance of virtue. She replied that this was surely a subject on which one took everything for granted; whereupon I admitted that I had perhaps expressed myself ill. What I referred to was what I had referred to the night we met in Upper Baker Street—the importance relative (relative to virtue) of other gifts. She asked me if I called virtue a gift—as if it were handed to us in a parcel on our birthday; and I declared that this very question showed me the problem had already caught her by the skirt. She would have help however, help that I myself had once had, in resisting its tendency to make one cross.

“What help do you mean?”

“That of the member for Clockborough.”

She stared, smiled, then exclaimed: “Why, my idea has been to help *him*!”

She *had* helped him—I had his own word for it that at Clockborough her bedevilment of the voters had really put him in. She would do so doubtless again and again, but I heard the very next month that this fine faculty had undergone a temporary eclipse. News of the catastrophe first came to me from Mrs. Saltram, and it was afterwards confirmed at Wimbledon: poor Miss Anvoy was in trouble—great disasters, in America, had suddenly summoned her home. Her father, in New York, had had reverses—lost so much money that no one knew what mightn't yet come of it. It was Adelaide who told me that she had gone off, alone, at less than a week's notice.

“Alone? Gravener has permitted that?”

“What will you have? The House of Commons?”

I'm afraid I damned the House of Commons: I was so much interested. Of course he would follow her as soon as he was free to make her his wife; only she mightn't now be able to bring him anything like the marriage-portion of which he had begun by having the pleasant confidence. Mrs. Mulville let me know what was already said: she was charming, this Miss Anvoy, but really these American girls! What was a man to do? Mr. Saltram, according to Mrs. Mulville, was of opinion that a man was never to suffer his relation to money to become a spiritual relation, but was to keep it wholesomely mechanical. “*Moi pas comprendre!*” I commented on this; in rejoinder to which Adelaide, with her beautiful sympathy, explained that she supposed he simply meant that the thing was to use it, don't you know! but not to think too much about it. “To take it, but not to thank you for it?” I still more profanely inquired. For a quarter of an hour afterwards she wouldn't look at me, but this didn't prevent my asking her what had been the result, that afternoon in the Regent's Park, of her taking our friend to see Miss Anvoy.

“Oh, so charming!” she answered, brightening. “He said he recognised in her a nature he could absolutely trust.”

“Yes, but I'm speaking of the effect on herself.”

Mrs. Mulville was silent an instant. “It was everything one could wish.”

Something in her tone made me laugh. “Do you mean she gave him something?”

“Well, since you ask me!”

"Right there—on the spot?"

Again poor Adelaide faltered. "It was to me of course she gave it."

I stared; somehow I couldn't see the scene. "Do you mean a sum of money?"

"It was very handsome." Now at last she met my eyes though I could see it was with an effort. "Thirty pounds."

"Straight out of her pocket?"

"Out of the drawer of a table at which she had been writing. She just slipped the folded notes into my hand. He wasn't looking; it was while he was going back to the carriage. Oh," said Adelaide reassuringly, "I dole it out!" The dear practical soul thought my agitation, for I confess I was agitated, had reference to the administration of the money. Her disclosure made me for a moment muse violently, and I daresay that during that moment I wondered if anything else in the world makes people as indelicate as unselfishness. I uttered, I suppose, some vague synthetic cry, for she went on as if she had had a glimpse of my inward amaze at such episodes. "I assure you, my dear friend, he was in one of his happy hours."

But I wasn't thinking of that. "Truly, indeed, these American girls!" I said. "With her father in the very act, as it were, of cheating her betrothed!"

Mrs. Mulville stared. "Oh, I suppose Mr. Anvoy has scarcely failed on purpose. Very likely they won't be able to keep it up, but there it was, and it was a very beautiful impulse."

"You say Saltram was very fine?"

"Beyond everything. He surprised even me."

"And I know what *you've* heard." After a moment I added: "Had he peradventure caught a glimpse of the money in the table-drawers?"

At this my companion honestly flushed. "How can you be so cruel when you know how little he calculates?"

"Forgive me, I do know it. But you tell me things that act on my nerves. I'm sure he hadn't caught a glimpse of anything but some splendid idea."

Mrs. Mulville brightly concurred. "And perhaps even of her beautiful listening face."

"Perhaps, even! And what was it all about?"

"His talk? It was *à propos* of her engagement, which I had told him about: the idea of marriage, the philosophy, the poetry, the profundity of it." It was impossible wholly to restrain one's mirth at this, and some rude ripple that I emitted again caused my companion to admonish me. "It sounds a little stale, but you know his freshness."

"Of illustration? Indeed I do!"

"And how he has always been right on that great question."

"On what great question, dear lady, hasn't he been right?"

"Of what other great men can you equally say it? I mean that he has never, but *never*, had a deviation?" Mrs. Mulville exultantly demanded.

I tried to think of some other great man, but I had to give it up. "Didn't Miss Anvoy express her satisfaction in any less diffident way than by her charming present?" I was reduced to inquiring instead.

"Oh yes, she overflowed to me on the steps while he was getting into the carriage." These words somehow brushed up a picture of Saltram's big shawled back as he hoisted himself into the green landau. "She said she was not disappointed," Adelaide pursued.

I meditated a moment. "Did he wear his shawl?"

"His shawl?" She had not even noticed.

"I mean yours."

"He looked very nice, and you know he's always clean. Miss Anvoy used such a remarkable expression—she said his mind is like a crystal!"

I pricked up my ears. "A crystal?"

"Suspended in the moral world—swinging and shining and flashing there. She's monstrously clever, you know."

I reflected again. "Monstrously!"

VIII

George Gravener didn't follow her, for late in September, after the House had risen, I met him in a railway-carriage. He was coming up from Scotland, and I had just quitted the abode of a

relation who lived near Durham. The current of travel back to London was not yet strong; at any rate on entering the compartment I found he had had it for some time to himself. We fared in company, and though he had a blue-book in his lap and the open jaws of his bag threatened me with the white teeth of confused papers, we inevitably, we even at last sociably, conversed. I saw that things were not well with him, but I asked no question until something dropped by himself made an absence of curiosity almost rude. He mentioned that he was worried about his good old friend Lady Coxon, who, with her niece likely to be detained some time in America, lay seriously ill at Clockborough, much on his mind and on his hands.

“Ah, Miss Anvoy's in America?”

“Her father has got into a horrid mess, lost no end of money.”

I hesitated, after expressing due concern, but I presently said, “I hope that raises no obstacle to your marriage.”

“None whatever; moreover it's my trade to meet objections. But it may create tiresome delays, of which there have been too many, from various causes, already. Lady Coxon got very bad, then she got much better. Then Mr. Anvoy suddenly began to totter, and now he seems quite on his back. I'm afraid he's really in for some big disaster. Lady Coxon is worse again, awfully upset by the news from America, and she sends me word that she *must* have Ruth. How can I give her Ruth? I haven't got Ruth myself!”

“Surely you haven't lost her,” I smiled.

“She's everything to her wretched father. She writes me by every post, telling me to smooth her aunt's pillow. I've other things to smooth; but the old lady, save for her servants, is really alone. She won't receive her Coxon relations, because she's angry at so much of her money going to them. Besides, she's off her head,” said Gravener very frankly.

I don't remember whether it was this, or what it was, that made me ask if she had not such an appreciation of Mrs. Saltram as might render that active person of some use.

He gave me a cold glance, asking me what had put Mrs. Saltram into my head, and I replied that she was unfortunately never out of it. I happened to remember the wonderful accounts she had given me of the kindness Lady Coxon had shown her. Gravener declared this to be false: Lady Coxon, who didn't care for her, hadn't seen her three times. The only foundation for it was that Miss Anvoy, who used, poor girl, to chuck money about in a manner she must now regret, had for an hour seen in the miserable woman (you could never know what she would see in people), an interesting pretext for the liberality with which her nature overflowed. But even Miss Anvoy was now quite tired of her. Gravener told me more about the crash in New York and the annoyance it had been to him, and we also glanced here and there in other directions; but by the time we got to Doncaster the principal thing he had communicated was that he was keeping something back. We stopped at that station, and, at the carriage door, some one made a movement to get in. Gravener uttered a sound of impatience, and I said to myself that but for this I should have had the secret. Then the intruder, for some reason, spared us his company; we started afresh, and my hope of the secret returned. Gravener remained silent however, and I pretended to go to sleep; in fact, in discouragement, I really dozed. When I opened my eyes I found he was looking at me with an injured air. He tossed away with some vivacity the remnant of a cigarette and then he said: “If you're not too sleepy I want to put you a case.” I answered that I would make every effort to attend, and I felt it was going to be interesting when he went on: “As I told you a while ago, Lady Coxon, poor dear, is a maniac.” His tone had much behind it—was full of promise. I inquired if her ladyship's misfortune were a feature of her malady or only of her character, and he replied that it was a product of both. The case he wanted to put me was a matter on which it would interest him to have the impression—the judgment, he might also say—of another person. “I mean of the average intelligent man,” he said: “but you see I take what I can get.” There would be the technical, the strictly legal view; then there would be the way the question would strike a man of the world. He had lighted another cigarette while he talked, and I saw he was glad to have it to handle when he brought out at last, with a laugh slightly artificial: “In fact it's a subject on which Miss Anvoy and I are pulling different ways.”

“And you want me to pronounce between you? I pronounce in advance for Miss Anvoy.”

“In advance—that's quite right. That's how I pronounced when I asked her to marry me. But my story will interest you only so far as your mind is not made up.” Gravener puffed his cigarette a minute and then continued: “Are you familiar with the idea of the Endowment of Research?”

“Of Research?” I was at sea for a moment.

“I give you Lady Coxon's phrase. She has it on the brain.”

“She wishes to endow——?”

“Some earnest and disinterested seeker,” Gravener said. “It was a half-baked plan of her late husband's, and he handed it on to her; setting apart in his will a sum of money of which she was to enjoy the interest for life, but of which, should she eventually see her opportunity—the matter was left largely to her discretion—she would best honour his memory by determining the exemplary public use. This sum of money, no less than thirteen thousand pounds, was to be called the Coxon Fund; and poor Sir Gregory evidently proposed to himself that the Coxon Fund should cover his name with glory—be universally desired and admired. He left his wife a full

declaration of his views; so far at least as that term may be applied to views vitiated by a vagueness really infantine. A little learning is a dangerous thing, and a good citizen who happens to have been an ass is worse for a community than the small-pox. He's worst of all when he's dead, because then he can't be stopped. However, such as they were, the poor man's aspirations are now in his wife's bosom, or fermenting rather in her foolish brain: it lies with her to carry them out. But of course she must first catch her hare."

"Her earnest, disinterested seeker?"

"The man suffering most from want of means, want of the pecuniary independence necessary to cause the light that is in him to shine upon the human race. The man, in a word, who, having the rest of the machinery, the spiritual, the intellectual, is most hampered in his search."

"His search for what?"

"For Moral Truth. That's what Sir Gregory calls it."

I burst out laughing. "Delightful, munificent Sir Gregory! It's a charming idea."

"So Miss Anvoy thinks."

"Has she a candidate for the Fund?"

"Not that I know of; and she's perfectly reasonable about it. But Lady Coxon has put the matter before her, and we've naturally had a lot of talk."

"Talk that, as you've so interestingly intimated, has landed you in a disagreement."

"She considers there's something in it," Gravener said.

"And you consider there's nothing?"

"It seems to me a puerility fraught with consequences inevitably grotesque and possibly immoral. To begin with, fancy the idea of constituting an endowment without establishing a tribunal—a bench of competent people, of judges."

"The sole tribunal is Lady Coxon?"

"And any one she chooses to invite."

"But she has invited you."

"I'm not competent—I hate the thing. Besides, she hasn't. The real history of the matter, I take it, is that the inspiration was originally Lady Coxon's own, that she infected him with it, and that the flattering option left her is simply his tribute to her beautiful, her aboriginal enthusiasm. She came to England forty years ago, a thin transcendental Bostonian, and even her odd, happy, frumpy Clockborough marriage never really materialised her. She feels indeed that she has become very British—as if that, as a process, as a *Werden*, were conceivable; but it's precisely what makes her cling to the notion of the 'Fund' as to a link with the ideal."

"How can she cling if she's dying?"

"Do you mean how can she act in the matter?" my companion asked. "That's precisely the question. She can't! As she has never yet caught her hare, never spied out her lucky impostor (how should she, with the life she has led?) her husband's intention has come very near lapsing. His idea, to do him justice, was that it *should* lapse if exactly the right person, the perfect mixture of genius and chill penury, should fail to turn up. Ah! Lady Coxon's very particular—she says there must be no mistake."

I found all this quite thrilling—I took it in with avidity. "If she dies without doing anything, what becomes of the money?" I demanded.

"It goes back to his family, if she hasn't made some other disposition of it."

"She may do that, then—she may divert it?"

"Her hands are not tied. The proof is that three months ago she offered to make it over to her niece."

"For Miss Anvoy's own use?"

"For Miss Anvoy's own use—on the occasion of her prospective marriage. She was discouraged—the earnest seeker required so earnest a search. She was afraid of making a mistake; every one she could think of seemed either not earnest enough or not poor enough. On the receipt of the first bad news about Mr. Anvoy's affairs she proposed to Ruth to make the sacrifice for her. As the situation in New York got worse she repeated her proposal."

"Which Miss Anvoy declined?"

"Except as a formal trust."

"You mean except as committing herself legally to place the money?"

"On the head of the deserving object, the great man frustrated," said Gravener. "She only consents to act in the spirit of Sir Gregory's scheme."

“And you blame her for that?” I asked with an excited smile.

My tone was not harsh, but he coloured a little and there was a queer light in his eye. “My dear fellow, if I 'blamed' the young lady I'm engaged to, I shouldn't immediately say so even to so old a friend as you.” I saw that some deep discomfort, some restless desire to be sided with, reassuringly, becomingly reflected, had been at the bottom of his drifting so far, and I was genuinely touched by his confidence. It was inconsistent with his habits; but being troubled about a woman was not, for him, a habit: that itself was an inconsistency. George Gravener could stand straight enough before any other combination of forces. It amused me to think that the combination he had succumbed to had an American accent, a transcendental aunt and an insolvent father; but all my old loyalty to him mustered to meet this unexpected hint that I could help him. I saw that I could from the insincere tone in which he pursued: “I've criticised her of course, I've contended with her, and it has been great fun.” It clearly couldn't have been such great fun as to make it improper for me presently to ask if Miss Anvoy had nothing at all settled upon herself. To this he replied that she had only a trifle from her mother—a mere four hundred a year, which was exactly why it would be convenient to him that she shouldn't decline, in the face of this total change in her prospects, an accession of income which would distinctly help them to marry. When I inquired if there were no other way in which so rich and so affectionate an aunt could cause the weight of her benevolence to be felt, he answered that Lady Coxon was affectionate indeed, but was scarcely to be called rich. She could let her project of the Fund lapse for her niece's benefit, but she couldn't do anything else. She had been accustomed to regard her as tremendously provided for, and she was up to her eyes in promises to anxious Coxons. She was a woman of an inordinate conscience, and her conscience was now a distress to her, hovering round her bed in irreconcilable forms of resentful husbands, portionless nieces and undiscoverable philosophers.

We were by this time getting into the whirr of fleeting platforms, the multiplication of lights. “I think you'll find,” I said with a laugh, “that the difficulty will disappear in the very fact that the philosopher *is* undiscoverable.”

He began to gather up his papers. “Who can set a limit to the ingenuity of an extravagant woman?”

“Yes, after all, who indeed?” I echoed as I recalled the extravagance commemorated in Mrs. Mulville's anecdote of Miss Anvoy and the thirty pounds.

IX

The thing I had been most sensible of in that talk with George Gravener was the way Saltram's name kept out of it. It seemed to me at the time that we were quite pointedly silent about him; yet afterwards I inclined to think that there had been on my companion's part no conscious avoidance. Later on I was sure of this, and for the best of reasons—the reason, namely, of my perceiving more completely that, for evil as well as for good, he left Gravener's imagination utterly cold. Gravener was not afraid of him; he was too much disgusted with him. No more was I, doubtless, and for very much the same reason. I treated my friend's story as an absolute confidence; but when before Christmas, by Mrs. Saltram, I was informed of Lady Coxon's death without having had news of Miss Anvoy's return, I found myself taking for granted that we should hear no more of these nuptials, in which I now recognised an element incongruous from the first. I began to ask myself how people who suited each other so little could please each other so much. The charm was some material charm, some affinity exquisite doubtless, but superficial; some surrender to youth and beauty and passion, to force and grace and fortune, happy accidents and easy contacts. They might dote on each other's persons, but how could they know each other's souls? How could they have the same prejudices, how could they have the same horizon? Such questions, I confess, seemed quenched but not answered when, one day in February, going out to Wimbledon, I found my young lady in the house. A passion that had brought her back across the wintry ocean was as much of a passion as was necessary. No impulse equally strong indeed had drawn George Gravener to America; a circumstance on which, however, I reflected only long enough to remind myself that it was none of my business. Ruth Anvoy was distinctly different, and I felt that the difference was not simply that of her being in mourning. Mrs. Mulville told me soon enough what it was: it was the difference between a handsome girl with large expectations and a handsome girl with only four hundred a year. This explanation indeed didn't wholly content me, not even when I learned that her mourning had a double cause—learned that poor Mr. Anvoy, giving way altogether, buried under the ruins of his fortune and leaving next to nothing, had died a few weeks before.

“So she has come out to marry George Gravener?” I demanded. “Wouldn't it have been prettier of him to have saved her the trouble?”

“Hasn't the House just met?” said Adelaide. Then she added: “I gather that her having come is exactly a sign that the marriage is a little shaky. If it were certain, so self-respecting a girl as Ruth would have waited for him over there.”

I noted that they were already Ruth and Adelaide, but what I said was: “Do you mean that she has returned to make it a certainty?”

“No, I mean that I imagine she has come out for some reason independent of it.” Adelaide could only imagine as yet, and there was more, as we found, to be revealed. Mrs. Mulville, on hearing

of her arrival, had brought the young lady out, in the green landau, for the Sunday. The Coxons were in possession of the house in the Regent's Park, and Miss Anvoy was in dreary lodgings. George Gravener was with her when Adelaide called, but he had assented graciously enough to the little visit at Wimbledon. The carriage, with Mr. Saltram in it but not mentioned, had been sent off on some errand from which it was to return and pick the ladies up. Gravener left them together, and at the end of an hour, on the Saturday afternoon, the party of three drove out to Wimbledon. This was the girl's second glimpse of our great man, and I was interested in asking Mrs. Mulville if the impression made by the first appeared to have been confirmed. On her replying, after consideration, that of course with time and opportunity it couldn't fail to be, but that as yet she was disappointed, I was sufficiently struck with her use of this last word to question her further.

“Do you mean that you're disappointed because you judge that Miss Anvoy is?”

“Yes; I hoped for a greater effect last evening. We had two or three people, but he scarcely opened his mouth.”

“He'll be all the better this evening,” I added after a moment. “What particular importance do you attach to the idea of her being impressed?”

Adelaide turned her clear, pale eyes on me as if she were amazed at my levity. “Why, the importance of her being as happy as *we* are!”

I'm afraid that at this my levity increased. “Oh, that's a happiness almost too great to wish a person!” I saw she had not yet in her mind what I had in mine, and at any rate the visitor's actual bliss was limited to a walk in the garden with Kent Mulville. Later in the afternoon I also took one, and I saw nothing of Miss Anvoy till dinner, at which we were without the company of Saltram, who had caused it to be reported that he was out of sorts and lying down. This made us, most of us—for there were other friends present—convey to each other in silence some of the unutterable things which in those years our eyes had inevitably acquired the art of expressing. If an American inquirer had not been there we would have expressed them otherwise, and Adelaide would have pretended not to hear. I had seen her, before the very fact, abstract herself nobly; and I knew that more than once, to keep it from the servants, managing, dissimulating cleverly, she had helped her husband to carry him bodily to his room. Just recently he had been so wise and so deep and so high that I had begun to be nervous—to wonder if by chance there were something behind it, if he were kept straight, for instance, by the knowledge that the hated Pudneys would have more to tell us if they chose. He was lying low, but unfortunately it was common knowledge with us that the biggest splashes took place in the quietest pools. We should have had a merry life indeed if all the splashes had sprinkled us as refreshingly as the waters we were even then to feel about our ears. Kent Mulville had been up to his room, but had come back with a facial inscrutability that I had seen him achieve in equal measure only on the evening I waited in the lecture-room with Miss Anvoy. I said to myself that our friend had gone out, but I was glad that the presence of a comparative stranger deprived us of the dreary duty of suggesting to each other, in respect of his errand, edifying possibilities in which we didn't ourselves believe. At ten o'clock he came into the drawing-room with his waistcoat much awry but his eyes sending out great signals. It was precisely with his entrance that I ceased to be vividly conscious of him. I saw that the crystal, as I had called it, had begun to swing, and I had need of my immediate attention for Miss Anvoy.

Even when I was told afterwards that he had, as we might have said to-day, broken the record, the manner in which that attention had been rewarded relieved me of a sense of loss. I had of course a perfect general consciousness that something great was going on: it was a little like having been etherised to hear Herr Joachim play. The old music was in the air; I felt the strong pulse of thought, the sink and swell, the flight, the poise, the plunge; but I knew something about one of the listeners that nobody else knew, and Saltram's monologue could reach me only through that medium. To this hour I'm of no use when, as a witness, I'm appealed to (for they still absurdly contend about it), as to whether or no on that historic night he was drunk; and my position is slightly ridiculous, for I have never cared to tell them what it really was I was taken up with. What I got out of it is the only morsel of the total experience that is quite my own. The others were shared, but this is incommunicable. I feel that now, I'm bound to say, in even thus roughly evoking the occasion, and it takes something from my pride of clearness. However, I shall perhaps be as clear as is absolutely necessary if I remark that she was too much given up to her own intensity of observation to be sensible of mine. It was plainly not the question of her marriage that had brought her back. I greatly enjoyed this discovery and was sure that had that question alone been involved she would have remained away. In this case doubtless Gravener would, in spite of the House of Commons, have found means to rejoin her. It afterwards made me uncomfortable for her that, alone in the lodging Mrs. Mulville had put before me as dreary, she should have in any degree the air of waiting for her fate; so that I was presently relieved at hearing of her having gone to stay at Coldfield. If she was in England at all while the engagement stood the only proper place for her was under Lady Maddock's wing. Now that she was unfortunate and relatively poor, perhaps her prospective sister-in-law would be wholly won over. There would be much to say, if I had space, about the way her behaviour, as I caught gleams of it, ministered to the image that had taken birth in my mind, to my private amusement, as I listened to George Gravener in the railway carriage. I watched her in the light of this queer possibility—a formidable thing certainly to meet—and I was aware that it coloured, extravagantly perhaps, my interpretation of her very looks and tones. At Wimbledon for instance it had seemed to me that she was literally afraid of Saltram, in dread of a coercion that she had begun already to feel. I

had come up to town with her the next day and had been convinced that, though deeply interested, she was immensely on her guard. She would show as little as possible before she should be ready to show everything. What this final exhibition might be on the part of a girl perceptibly so able to think things out I found it great sport to conjecture. It would have been exciting to be approached by her, appealed to by her for advice; but I prayed to heaven I mightn't find myself in such a predicament. If there was really a present rigour in the situation of which Gravener had sketched for me the elements she would have to get out of her difficulty by herself. It was not I who had launched her and it was not I who could help her. I didn't fail to ask myself why, since I couldn't help her, I should think so much about her. It was in part my suspense that was responsible for this: I waited impatiently to see whether she wouldn't have told Mrs. Mulville a portion at least of what I had learned from Gravener. But I saw Mrs. Mulville was still reduced to wonder what she had come out again for if she hadn't come as a conciliatory bride. That she had come in some other character was the only thing that fitted all the appearances. Having for family reasons to spend some time that spring in the west of England, I was in a manner out of earshot of the great oceanic rumble (I mean of the continuous hum of Saltram's thought), and my nervousness tended to keep me quiet. There was something I wanted so little to have to say that my prudence surmounted my curiosity. I only wondered if Ruth Anvoy talked over the idea of the Coxon Fund with Lady Maddock, and also somewhat why I didn't hear from Wimbledon. I had a reproachful note about something or other from Mrs. Saltram, but it contained no mention of Lady Coxon's niece, on whom her eyes had been much less fixed since the recent untoward events.

X

Adelaide's silence was fully explained later; it was practically explained when in June, returning to London, I was honoured by this admirable woman with an early visit. As soon as she appeared I guessed everything, and as soon as she told me that darling Ruth had been in her house nearly a month I exclaimed: “What in the name of maidenly modesty is she staying in England for?”

“Because she loves me so!” cried Adelaide gaily. But she had not come to see me only to tell me Miss Anvoy loved her: that was now sufficiently established, and what was much more to the point was that Mr. Gravener had now raised an objection to it. That is he had protested against her being at Wimbledon, where in the innocence of his heart he had originally brought her himself; in short he wanted her to put an end to their engagement in the only proper, the only happy manner.

“And why in the world doesn't she do so?” I inquired.

Adelaide hesitated. “She says you know.” Then on my also hesitating she added: “A condition he makes.”

“The Coxon Fund?” I cried.

“He has mentioned to her his having told you about it.”

“Ah, but so little! Do you mean she has accepted the trust!”

“In the most splendid spirit—as a duty about which there can be no two opinions.” Then said Adelaide after an instant: “Of course she's thinking of Mr. Saltram.”

I gave a quick cry at this, which, in its violence, made my visitor turn pale. “How very awful!”

“Awful?”

“Why, to have anything to do with such an idea oneself.”

“I'm sure you needn't!” Mrs. Mulville gave a slight toss of her head.

“He isn't good enough!” I went on; to which she responded with an ejaculation almost as lively as mine had been. This made me, with genuine, immediate horror, exclaim: “You haven't influenced her, I hope!” and my emphasis brought back the blood with a rush to poor Adelaide's face. She declared while she blushed (for I had frightened her again), that she had never influenced anybody and that the girl had only seen and heard and judged for herself. *He* had influenced her, if I would, as he did everyone who had a soul: that word, as we knew, even expressed feebly the power of the things he said to haunt the mind. How could she, Adelaide, help it if Miss Anvoy's mind was haunted? I demanded with a groan what right a pretty girl engaged to a rising M.P. had to *have* a mind; but the only explanation my bewildered friend could give me was that she was so clever. She regarded Mr. Saltram naturally as a tremendous force for good. She was intelligent enough to understand him and generous enough to admire.

“She's many things enough, but is she, among them, rich enough?” I demanded. “Rich enough, I mean, to sacrifice such a lot of good money?”

“That's for herself to judge. Besides, it's not her own money; she doesn't in the least consider it so.”

“And Gravener does, if not *his* own: and that's the whole difficulty?”

“The difficulty that brought her back, yes: she had absolutely to see her poor aunt's solicitor. It's clear that by Lady Coxon's will she may have the money, but it's still clearer to her conscience

that the original condition, definite, intensely implied on her uncle's part, is attached to the use of it. She can only take one view of it. It's for the Endowment or it's for nothing."

"The Endowment is a conception superficially sublime but fundamentally ridiculous."

"Are you repeating Mr. Gravener's words?" Adelaide asked.

"Possibly, though I've not seen him for months. It's simply the way it strikes me too. It's an old wife's tale. Gravener made some reference to the legal aspect, but such an absurdly loose arrangement has no legal aspect."

"Ruth doesn't insist on that," said Mrs. Mulville; "and it's, for her, exactly this weakness that constitutes the force of the moral obligation."

"Are you repeating her words?" I inquired. I forgot what else Adelaide said, but she said she was magnificent. I thought of George Gravener confronted with such magnificence as that, and I asked what could have made two such people ever suppose they understood each other. Mrs. Mulville assured me the girl loved him as such a woman could love and that she suffered as such a woman could suffer. Nevertheless she wanted to see me. At this I sprang up with a groan. "Oh, I'm so sorry!—when?" Small though her sense of humour, I think Adelaide laughed at my tone. We discussed the day, the nearest, it would be convenient I should come out; but before she went I asked my visitor how long she had been acquainted with these prodigies.

"For several weeks, but I was pledged to secrecy."

"And that's why you didn't write?"

"I couldn't very well tell you she was with me without telling you that no time had even yet been fixed for her marriage. And I couldn't very well tell you as much as that without telling you what I knew of the reason for it. It was not till a day or two ago," Mrs. Mulville went on, "that she asked me to ask you if you wouldn't come and see her. Then at last she said that you knew about the idea of the Endowment."

I considered a little. "Why on earth does she want to see me?"

"To talk with you, naturally, about Mr. Saltram."

"As a subject for the prize?" This was hugely obvious, and presently exclaimed: "I think I'll sail to-morrow for Australia."

"Well then—sail!" said Mrs. Mulville, getting up.

"On Thursday at five, we said?" I frivolously continued. The appointment was made definite and I inquired how, all this time, the unconscious candidate had carried himself.

"In perfection, really, by the happiest of chances: he has been a dear. And then, as to what we revere him for, in the most wonderful form. His very highest—pure celestial light. You *won't* do him an ill turn?" Adelaide pleaded at the door.

"What danger can equal for him the danger to which he is exposed from himself?" I asked. "Look out sharp, if he has lately been reasonable. He will presently treat us to some exhibition that will make an Endowment a scandal."

"A scandal?" Mrs. Mulville dolorously echoed.

"Is Miss Anvoy prepared for that?"

My visitor, for a moment, screwed her parasol into my carpet. "He grows larger every day."

"So do you!" I laughed as she went off.

That girl at Wimbledon, on the Thursday afternoon, more than justified my apprehensions. I recognised fully now the cause of the agitation she had produced in me from the first—the faint foreknowledge that there was something very stiff I should have to do for her. I felt more than ever committed to my fate as, standing before her in the big drawing-room where they had tactfully left us to ourselves, I tried with a smile to string together the pearls of lucidity which, from her chair, she successively tossed me. Pale and bright, in her monotonous mourning, she was an image of intelligent purpose, of the passion of duty; but I asked myself whether any girl had ever had so charming an instinct as that which permitted her to laugh out, as if in the joy of her difficulty, into the *blasée* old room. This remarkable young woman could be earnest without being solemn, and at moments when I ought doubtless to have cursed her obstinacy I found myself watching the unstudied play of her eyebrows or the recurrence of a singularly intense whiteness produced by the parting of her lips. These aberrations, I hasten to add, didn't prevent my learning soon enough why she had wished to see me. Her reason for this was as distinct as her beauty: it was to make me explain what I had meant, on the occasion of our first meeting, by Mr. Saltram's want of dignity. It wasn't that she couldn't imagine, but she desired it there from my lips. What she really desired of course was to know whether there was worse about him than what she had found out for herself. She hadn't been a month in the house with him, that way, without discovering that he wasn't a man of starch and whalebone. He was like a jelly without a mould, he had to be embanked; and that was precisely the source of her interest in him and the ground of her project. She put her project boldly before me: there it stood in its preposterous beauty. She was as willing to take the humorous view of it as I could be: the only difference was

that for her the humorous view of a thing was not necessarily prohibitive, was not paralysing.

Moreover she professed that she couldn't discuss with me the primary question—the moral obligation: that was in her own breast. There were things she couldn't go into—injunctions, impressions she had received. They were a part of the closest intimacy of her intercourse with her aunt, they were absolutely clear to her; and on questions of delicacy, the interpretation of a fidelity, of a promise, one had always in the last resort to make up one's mind for oneself. It was the idea of the application to the particular case, such a splendid one at last, that troubled her, and she admitted that it stirred very deep things. She didn't pretend that such a responsibility was a simple matter; if it had been she wouldn't have attempted to saddle me with any portion of it. The Mulvilles were sympathy itself; but were they absolutely candid? Could they indeed be, in their position—would it even have been to be desired? Yes, she had sent for me to ask no less than that of me—whether there was anything dreadful kept back. She made no allusion whatever to George Gravener—I thought her silence the only good taste and her gaiety perhaps a part of the very anxiety of that discretion, the effect of a determination that people shouldn't know from herself that her relations with the man she was to marry were strained. All the weight, however, that she left me to throw was a sufficient implication of the weight that he had thrown in vain. Oh, she knew the question of character was immense, and that one couldn't entertain any plan for making merit comfortable without running the gauntlet of that terrible procession of interrogation-points which, like a young ladies' school out for a walk, hooked their uniform noses at the tail of governess Conduct. But were we absolutely to hold that there was never, never, never an exception, never, never, never an occasion for liberal acceptance, for clever charity, for suspended pedantry—for letting one side, in short, outbalance another? When Miss Anvoy threw off this inquiry I could have embraced her for so delightfully emphasising her unlikeness to Mrs. Saltram. “Why not have the courage of one's forgiveness,” she asked, “as well as the enthusiasm of one's adhesion?”

“Seeing how wonderfully you have threshed the whole thing out,” I evasively replied, “gives me an extraordinary notion of the point your enthusiasm has reached.”

She considered this remark an instant with her eye on mine, and I divined that it struck her I might possibly intend it as a reference to some personal subjection to our fat philosopher, to some fanciful transfigurement, some perversion of taste. At least I couldn't interpret otherwise the sudden flush that came into her face. Such a manifestation, as the result of any word of mine, embarrassed me; but while I was thinking how to reassure her the colour I speak of passed away in a smile of exquisite good nature. “Oh, you see, one forgets so wonderfully how one dislikes him!” she said; and if her tone simply extinguished his strange figure with the brush of its compassion, it also rings in my ear to-day as the purest of all our praises. But with what quick response of compassion such a relegation of the man himself made me privately sigh: “Ah, poor Saltram!” She instantly, with this, took the measure of all I didn't believe, and it enabled her to go on: “What can one do when a person has given such a lift to one's interest in life?”

“Yes, what can one do?” If I struck her as a little vague it was because I was thinking of another person. I indulged in another inarticulate murmur—“Poor George Gravener!” What had become of the lift *he* had given that interest? Later on I made up my mind that she was sore and stricken at the appearance he presented of wanting the miserable money. It was the hidden reason of her alienation. The probable sincerity, in spite of the illiberality, of his scruples about the particular use of it under discussion didn't efface the ugliness of his demand that they should buy a good house with it. Then, as for *his* alienation, he didn't, pardonably enough, grasp the lift Frank Saltram had given her interest in life. If a mere spectator could ask that last question, with what rage in his heart the man himself might! He was not, like her, I was to see, too proud to show me why he was disappointed.

XI

I was unable, this time, to stay to dinner: such, at any rate, was the plea on which I took leave. I desired in truth to get away from my young lady, for that obviously helped me not to pretend to satisfy her. How *could* I satisfy her? I asked myself—how could I tell her how much had been kept back? I didn't even know, myself, and I certainly didn't desire to know. My own policy had ever been to learn the least about poor Saltram's weaknesses—not to learn the most. A great deal that I had in fact learned had been forced upon me by his wife. There was something even irritating in Miss Anvoy's crude conscientiousness, and I wondered why after all she couldn't have let him alone and been content to entrust George Gravener with the purchase of the good house. I was sure he would have driven a bargain, got something excellent and cheap. I laughed louder even than she, I temporised, I failed her; I told her I must think over her case. I professed a horror of responsibilities and twitted her with her own extravagant passion for them. It was not really that I was afraid of the scandal, the moral discredit for the Fund; what troubled me most was a feeling of a different order. Of course, as the beneficiary of the Fund was to enjoy a simple life-interest, as it was hoped that new beneficiaries would arise and come up to new standards, it would not be a trifle that the first of these worthies should not have been a striking example of the domestic virtues. The Fund would start badly, as it were, and the laurel would, in some respects at least, scarcely be greener from the brows of the original wearer. That idea however was at that hour, as I have hinted, not the source of anxiety it ought perhaps to have been, for I felt less the irregularity of Saltram's getting the money than that of this exalted young woman's giving it up. I wanted her to have it for herself, and I told her so before I went away. She looked graver at this than she had looked at all, saying she hoped such a preference wouldn't make me dishonest.

It made me, to begin with, very restless—made me, instead of going straight to the station, fidget a little about that many-coloured Common which gives Wimbledon horizons. There was a worry for me to work off, or rather keep at a distance, for I declined even to admit to myself that I had, in Miss Anvoy's phrase, been saddled with it. What could have been clearer indeed than the attitude of recognising perfectly what a world of trouble the Coxon Fund would in future save us, and of yet liking better to face a continuance of that trouble than see, and in fact contribute to, a deviation from attainable bliss in the life of two other persons in whom I was deeply interested? Suddenly, at the end of twenty minutes, there was projected across this clearness the image of a massive, middle-aged man seated on a bench, under a tree, with sad, far-wandering eyes and plump white hands folded on the head of a stick—a stick I recognised, a stout gold-headed staff that I had given him in throbbing days. I stopped short as he turned his face to me, and it happened that for some reason or other I took in as I had perhaps never done before the beauty of his rich blank gaze. It was charged with experience as the sky is charged with light, and I felt on the instant as if we had been overspanned and conjoined by the great arch of a bridge or the great dome of a temple. Doubtless I was rendered peculiarly sensitive to it by something in the way I had been giving him up and sinking him. While I met it I stood there smitten, and I felt myself responding to it with a sort of guilty grimace. This brought back his attention in a smile which expressed for me a cheerful, weary patience, a bruised noble gentleness. I had told Miss Anvoy that he had no dignity, but what did he seem to me, all unbuttoned and fatigued as he waited for me to come up, if he didn't seem unconcerned with small things, didn't seem in short majestic? There was majesty in his mere unconsciousness of our little conferences and puzzlements over his maintenance and his reward.

After I had sat by him a few minutes I passed my arm over his big soft shoulder (wherever you touched him you found equally little firmness,) and said in a tone of which the suppliance fell oddly on my own car: “Come back to town with me, old friend—come back and spend the evening.” I wanted to hold him, I wanted to keep him, and at Waterloo, an hour later, I telegraphed possessively to the Mulvilles. When he objected, as regards staying all night, that he had no things, I asked him if he hadn't everything of mine. I had abstained from ordering dinner, and it was too late for preliminaries at a club; so we were reduced to tea and fried fish at my rooms—reduced also to the transcendent. Something had come up which made me want him to feel at peace with me, which was all the dear man himself wanted on any occasion. I had too often had to press upon him considerations irrelevant, but it gives me pleasure now to think that on that particular evening I didn't even mention Mrs. Saltram and the children. Late into the night we smoked and talked; old shames and old rigours fell away from us; I only let him see that I was conscious of what I owed him. He was as mild as contrition and as abundant as faith; he was never so fine as on a shy return, and even better at forgiving than at being forgiven. I daresay it was a smaller matter than that famous night at Wimbledon, the night of the problematical sobriety and of Miss Anvoy's initiation; but I was as much in it on this occasion as I had been out of it then. At about 1.30 he was sublime.

He never, under any circumstances, rose till all other risings were over, and his breakfasts, at Wimbledon, had always been the principal reason mentioned by departing cooks. The coast was therefore clear for me to receive her when, early the next morning, to my surprise, it was announced to me that his wife had called. I hesitated, after she had come up, about telling her Saltram was in the house, but she herself settled the question, kept me reticent, by drawing forth a sealed letter which, looking at me very hard in the eyes, she placed, with a pregnant absence of comment, in my hand. For a single moment there glimmered before me the fond hope that Mrs. Saltram had tendered me, as it were, her resignation and desired to embody the act in an unsparing form. To bring this about I would have feigned any humiliation; but after my eyes had caught the superscription I heard myself say with a flatness that betrayed a sense of something very different from relief: “Oh, the Pudneys?” I knew their envelopes, though they didn't know mine. They always used the kind sold at post-offices with the stamp affixed, and as this letter had not been posted they had wasted a penny on me. I had seen their horrid missives to the Mulvilles, but had not been in direct correspondence with them.

“They enclosed it to me, to be delivered. They doubtless explain to you that they hadn't your address.”

I turned the thing over without opening it. “Why in the world should they write to me?”

“Because they have something to tell you. The worst,” Mrs. Saltram dryly added.

It was another chapter, I felt, of the history of their lamentable quarrel with her husband, the episode in which, vindictively, disingenuously as they themselves had behaved, one had to admit that he had put himself more grossly in the wrong than at any moment of his life. He had begun by insulting the matchless Mulvilles for these more specious protectors, and then, according to his wont at the end of a few months, had dug a still deeper ditch for his aberration than the chasm left yawning behind. The chasm at Wimbledon was now blessedly closed; but the Pudneys across their persistent gulf, kept up the nastiest fire. I never doubted they had a strong case, and I had been from the first for not defending him—reasoning that if they were not contradicted they would perhaps subside. This was above all what I wanted, and I so far prevailed, that I did arrest the correspondence in time to save our little circle an infliction heavier than it perhaps would have borne. I knew, that is I divined, that they had produced as yet as much as they dared, conscious as they were in their own virtue of an exposed place in which Saltram could have planted a blow. It was a question with them whether a man who had himself so much to cover up would dare; so that these vessels of rancour were in a manner afraid of each other. I judged that

on the day the Pudneys should cease for some reason or other to be afraid they would treat us to some revelation more disconcerting than any of its predecessors. As I held Mr. Saltram's letter in my hand it was distinctly communicated to me that the day had come—they had ceased to be afraid. "I don't want to know the worst," I presently declared.

"You'll have to open the letter. It also contains an enclosure."

I felt it—it was fat and uncanny. "Wheels within wheels!" I exclaimed. "There is something for me too to deliver."

"So they tell me—to Miss Anvoy."

I stared; I felt a certain thrill. "Why don't they send it to her directly?"

Mrs. Saltram hesitated! "Because she's staying with Mr. and Mrs. Mulville."

"And why should that prevent?"

Again my visitor faltered, and I began to reflect on the grotesque, the unconscious perversity of her action. I was the only person save George Gravener and the Mulvilles who was aware of Sir Gregory Coxon's and of Miss Anvoy's strange bounty. Where could there have been a more signal illustration of the clumsiness of human affairs than her having complacently selected this moment to fly in the face of it? "There's the chance of their seeing her letters. They know Mr. Pudney's hand."

Still I didn't understand; then it flashed upon me. "You mean they might intercept it? How can you imply anything so base?" I indignantly demanded.

"It's not I; it's Mr. Pudney!" cried Mrs. Saltram with a flush. "It's his own idea."

"Then why couldn't he send the letter to *you* to be delivered?"

Mrs. Saltram's colour deepened; she gave me another hard look. "You must make that out for yourself."

I made it out quickly enough. "It's a denunciation?"

"A real lady doesn't betray her husband!" this virtuous woman exclaimed.

I burst out laughing, and I fear my laugh may have had an effect of impertinence.

"Especially to Miss Anvoy, who's so easily shocked? Why do such things concern *her*?" I asked, much at a loss.

"Because she's there, exposed to all his craft. Mr. and Mrs. Pudney have been watching this; they feel she may be taken in."

"Thank you for all the rest of us! What difference can it make, when she has lost her power to contribute?"

Again Mrs. Saltram considered; then very nobly: "There are other things in the world than money," she remarked. This hadn't occurred to her so long as the young lady had any; but she now added, with a glance at my letter, that Mr. and Mrs. Pudney doubtless explained their motives. "It's all in kindness," she continued as she got up.

"Kindness to Miss Anvoy? You took, on the whole, another view of kindness before her reverses."

My companion smiled with some acidity. "Perhaps you're no safer than the Mulvilles!"

I didn't want her to think that, nor that she should report to the Pudneys that they had not been happy in their agent; and I well remember that this was the moment at which I began, with considerable emotion, to promise myself to enjoin upon Miss Anvoy never to open any letter that should come to her with a stamp worked into the envelope. My emotion and I fear I must add my confusion quickly increased; I presently should have been as glad to frighten Mrs. Saltram as to think I might by some diplomacy restore the Pudneys to a quieter vigilance. "It's best you should take *my* view of my safety," I at any rate soon responded. When I saw she didn't know what I meant by this I added: "You may turn out to have done, in bringing me this letter, a thing you will profoundly regret." My tone had a significance which, I could see, did make her uneasy, and there was a moment, after I had made two or three more remarks of studiously bewildering effect, at which her eyes followed so hungrily the little flourish of the letter with which I emphasised them, that I instinctively slipped Mr. Pudney's communication into my pocket. She looked, in her embarrassed annoyance, as if she might grab it and send it back to him. I felt, after she had gone, as if I had almost given her my word I wouldn't deliver the enclosure. The passionate movement, at any rate, with which, in solitude, I transferred the whole thing, unopened, from my pocket to a drawer which I double-locked would have amounted, for an initiated observer, to some such promise.

XII

Mrs. Saltram left me drawing my breath more quickly and indeed almost in pain—as if I had just perilously grazed the loss of something precious. I didn't quite know what it was—it had a shocking resemblance to my honour. The emotion was the livelier doubtless in that my pulses

were still shaken with the great rejoicing with which, the night before, I had rallied to the most potent inspirer it could ever have been a man's fortune to meet. What had dropped from me like a cumbersome garment as Saltram appeared before me in the afternoon on the heath was the disposition to haggle over his value. Hang it, one had to choose, one had to put that value somewhere; so I would put it really high and have done with it. Mrs. Mulville drove in for him at a discreet hour—the earliest she could presume him to have got up; and I learned that Miss Anvoy would also have come had she not been expecting a visit from Mr. Gravener. I was perfectly mindful that I was under bonds to see this young lady, and also that I had a letter to deliver to her; but I took my time, I waited from day to day. I left Mrs. Saltram to deal as her apprehensions should prompt with the Pudneys. I knew at last what I meant—I had ceased to wince at my responsibility. I gave this supreme impression of Saltram time to fade if it would; but it didn't fade, and, individually, it has not faded even now. During the month that I thus invited myself to stiffen again Adelaide Mulville, perplexed by my absence, wrote to me to ask why I *was* so stiff. At that season of the year I was usually oftener with them. She also wrote that she feared a real estrangement had set in between Mr. Gravener and her sweet young friend—a state of things only partly satisfactory to her so long as the advantage accruing to Mr. Saltram failed to disengage itself from the cold mists of theory. She intimated that her sweet young friend was, if anything, a trifle too reserved; she also intimated that there might now be an opening for another clever young man. There never was the slightest opening, I may here parenthesise, and of course the question can't come up to-day. These are old frustrations now. Ruth Anvoy has not married, I hear, and neither have I. During the month, toward the end, I wrote to George Gravener to ask if, on a special errand, I might come to see him, and his answer was to knock the very next day at my door. I saw he had immediately connected my inquiry with the talk we had had in the railway carriage, and his promptitude showed that the ashes of his eagerness were not yet cold. I told him there was something I thought I ought in candour to let him know—I recognised the obligation his friendly confidence had laid upon me.

“You mean that Miss Anvoy has talked to you? She has told me so herself,” he said.

“It was not to tell so that *I* wanted to see you,” I replied; “for it seemed to me that such a communication would rest wholly with herself. If however she did speak to you of our conversation she probably told you that I was discouraging.”

“Discouraging?”

“On the subject of a present application of the Coxon Fund.”

“To the case of Mr. Saltram? My dear fellow, I don't know what you call discouraging!” Gravener exclaimed.

“Well, I thought I was, and I thought she thought I was.”

“I believe she did, but such a thing is measured by the effect. She's not discouraged.”

“That's her own affair. The reason I asked you to see me was that it appeared to me I ought to tell you frankly that decidedly I can't undertake to produce that effect. In fact I don't want to!”

“It's very good of you, damn you!” my visitor laughed, red and really grave. Then he said: “You would like to see that fellow publicly glorified—perched on the pedestal of a great complimentary fortune?”

“Taking one form of public recognition with another, it seems to me on the whole I could bear it. When I see the compliments that are paid right and left, I ask myself why this one shouldn't take its course. This therefore is what you're entitled to have looked to me to mention to you. I have some evidence that perhaps would be really dissuasive, but I propose to invite Miss Anvoy to remain in ignorance of it.”

“And to invite me to do the same?”

“Oh, you don't require it—you've evidence enough. I speak of a sealed letter which I've been requested to deliver to her.”

“And you don't mean to?”

“There's only one consideration that would make me.”

Gravener's clear, handsome eyes plunged into mine a minute; but evidently without fishing up a clue to this motive—a failure by which I was almost wounded. “What does the letter contain?”

“It's sealed, as I tell you, and I don't know what it contains.”

“Why is it sent through you?”

“Rather than you?” I hesitated a moment. “The only explanation I can think of is that the person sending it may have imagined your relations with Miss Anvoy to be at an end—may have been told they were by Mrs. Saltram.”

“My relations with Miss Anvoy are not at an end,” poor Gravener stammered.

Again, for an instant, I deliberated. “The offer I propose to make you gives me the right to put you a question remarkably direct. Are you still engaged to Miss Anvoy?”

“No, I'm not,” he slowly brought out. “But we're perfectly good friends.”

“Such good friends that you will again become prospective husband and wife if the obstacle in your path be removed?”

“Removed?” Gravener vaguely repeated.

“If I give Miss Anvoy the letter I speak of she may drop her project.”

“Then for God's sake give it!”

“I'll do so if you're ready to assure me that her dropping it would now presumably bring about your marriage.”

“I'd marry her the next day!” my visitor cried.

“Yes, but would she marry you? What I ask of you of course is nothing less than your word of honour as to your conviction of this. If you give it me,” I said, “I'll place the letter in her hand to-day.”

Gravener took up his hat; turning it mechanically round, he stood looking a moment hard at its unruffled perfection. Then, very angrily, honestly and gallantly: “Place it in hell!” he broke out; with which he clapped the hat on his head and left me.

“Will you read it or not?” I said to Ruth Anvoy, at Wimbledon, when I had told her the story of Mrs. Saltram's visit.

She reflected for a period which was probably of the briefest, but which was long enough to make me nervous. “Have you brought it with you?”

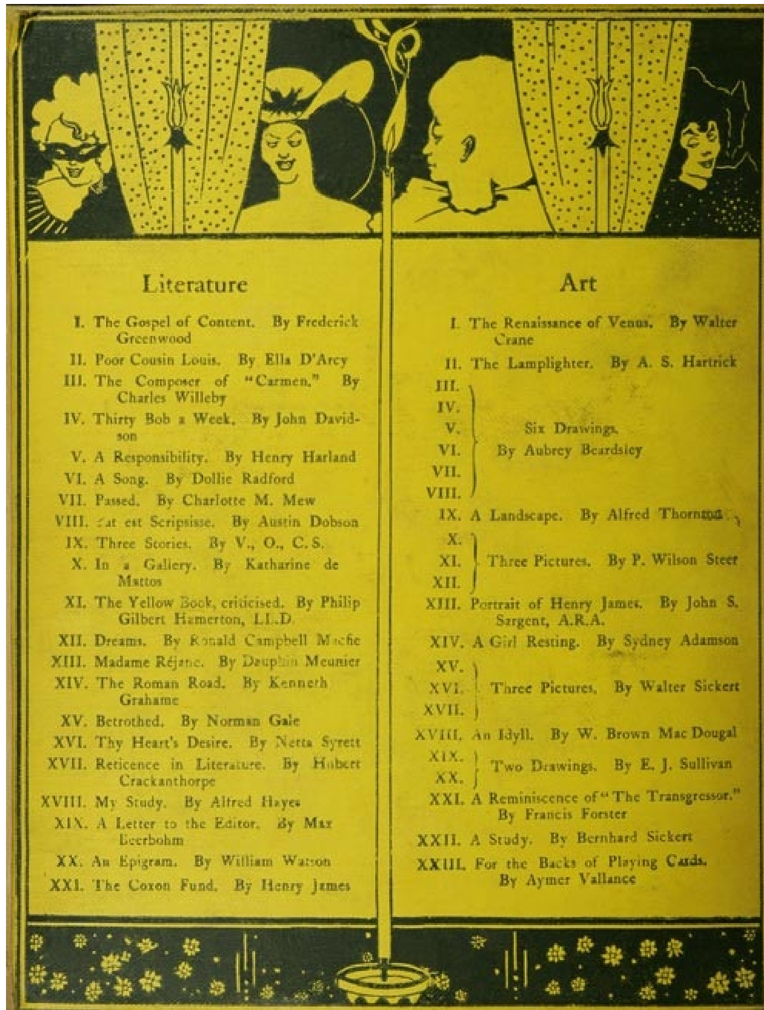
“No indeed. It's at home, locked up.”

There was another great silence, and then she said: “Go back and destroy it.”

I went back, but I didn't destroy it till after Saltram's death, when I burnt it unread. The Pudneys approached her again pressingly, but, prompt as they were, the Coxon Fund had already become an operative benefit and a general amaze; Mr. Saltram, while we gathered about, as it were, to watch the manna descend, was already drawing the magnificent income. He drew it as he had always drawn everything, with a grand abstracted gesture. Its magnificence, alas, as all the world now knows, quite quenched him; it was the beginning of his decline. It was also naturally a new grievance for his wife, who began to believe in him as soon as he was blighted and who to this day accuses us of having bribed him to gratify the fad of a pushing American, to renounce his glorious office, to become, as she says, like everybody else. On the day he found himself able to publish he wholly ceased to produce. This deprived us, as may easily be imagined, of much of our occupation, and especially deprived the Mulvilles, whose want of self-support I never measured till they lost their great inmate. They have no one to live on now. Adelaide's most frequent reference to their destitution is embodied in the remark that dear far-away Ruth's intentions were doubtless good. She and Kent are even yet looking for another prop, but everyone is so dreadfully robust. With Saltram the type was scattered, the grander, the elder style. They have got their carriage back, but what's an empty carriage? In short, I think we were all happier as well as poorer before; even including George Gravener, who, by the deaths of his brother and his nephew, has lately become Lord Maddock. His wife, whose fortune clears the property, is criminally dull; he hates being in the Upper House and he has not yet had high office. But what are these accidents, which I should perhaps apologise for mentioning, in the light of the great eventual boon promised the patient by the rate at which the Coxon Fund must be rolling up?

For the Backs of Playing Cards

By Aymer Vallance



Literature

I. The Gospel of Content. By Frederick Greenwood

II. Poor Cousin Louis. By Ella D'Arcy

III. The Composer of "Carmen." By Charles Willeby

IV. Thirty Bob a Week. By John Davidson

V. A Responsibility. By Henry Harland

VI. A Song. By Dollie Radford

VII. Passed. By Charlotte M. Mew

VIII. [illegible]at est Scripsisse. By Austin Dobson

IX. Three Stories. By V., O., C. S.

X. In a Gallery. By Katharine de Mattos

XI. The Yellow Book, criticised. By Philip Gilbert Hamerton, LL.D.

XII. Dreams. By Ronald Campbell Macfie

XIII. Madame Réjane. By Dauphin Meunier

XIV. The Roman Road. By Kenneth Grahame

XV. Betrothed. By Norman Gale

XVI. Thy Heart's Desire. By Netta Syrett

XVII. Reticence in Literature. By Hubert Crackanthorpe

XVIII. My Study. By Alfred Hayes

XIX. A Letter to the Editor. By Max Beerbohm

XX. An Epigram. By William Watson

XXI. The Coxon Fund. By Henry James

Art

I. The Renaissance of Venus. By Walter Crane

II. The Lamplighter. By A. S. Hartrick

III., IV., V., VI., VII., VIII. Six Drawings. By Aubrey Beardsley

IX. A Landscape. By Alfred Thornton

X., XI., XII. Three Pictures. By P. Wilson Steer

XIII. Portrait of Henry James. By John S. Sargent, A.R.A.

XIV. A Girl Resting. By Sydney Adamson

XV., XVI., XVII. Three Pictures. By Walter Sickert

XVIII. An Idyll. By W. Brown Mac Dougal

XIX., XX. Two Drawings. By E. J. Sullivan

XXI. A Reminiscence of "The Transgressor." By Francis Forster

XXII. A Study. By Bernhard Sickert

XXIII. For the Backs of Playing Cards. By Aymer Vallance

Transcriber's Notes:

Punctuation, use of hyphens, and accent marks were standardized. Dialect, obsolete and alternative spellings were left unchanged. Missing (unprinted) letters were added. Spelling corrections are noted below:

'resourse' to 'resource'
'do' to 'to'
'Rennuf' to 'Renouf'
'Chausée' to 'Chaussée'
'consciouness' to 'consciousness'
'lettter' to 'letter'
'you're' to 'your'
'musn't' to 'mustn't'
'senuous' to 'sensuous'
'architectual' to 'architectural'
missing word 'you' added
'hackeyed' to 'hackneyed'
'wisdow' to 'wisdom'
'musn't' to 'mustn't'
'lasping' to 'lapsing'
'their' to 'there'

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YELLOW BOOK, AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY, VOL. 2, JULY 1894 ***

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