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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GRAY YOUTH: THE STORY OF A VERY MODERN COURTSHIP AND A VERY MODERN MARRIAGE \*\*\*

**GRAY  
YOUTH**

—  
**OLIVER  
ONIONS**

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**NOVELS BY OLIVER ONIONS**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EVIDENCE  
THE DEBIT ACCOUNT  
THE STORY OF LOUIE  
GRAY YOUTH

**GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK**

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**GRAY YOUTH**

**THE STORY OF A VERY MODERN COURTSHIP  
AND A VERY MODERN MARRIAGE**

BY  
**OLIVER ONIONS**

Author of "In Accordance with the Evidence,"  
"The Debit Account."

**GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY**  
**NEW YORK**  
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TO  
MARY STEWART

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#### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Gray Youth is published in England in two volumes under the titles: The Two Kisses and A Crooked Mile.

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BOOK ONE

A VERY MODERN COURTSHIP

PART I

ARGUMENT

A GIRL of seventeen, with a knitted tam-o'-shanter cap and a thick cable of red-bronze hair hanging down her back, walked along a gallery of the Louvre, looking for her aunt. The eyes that turned whenever she heard a footfall or, passing a statue or case, saw a fresh vista before her, were of a light brown, with just such a hint of gold in their irises as you see when some opals are turned and catch a different light; and they were confused and overfilled with the treasures on which they had rested. She was an art-student, and must return to London on the morrow in order to resume her studies at the McGrath.

It was her first visit to Paris, and she had spent the whole of her three weeks at the Cluny and the Luxembourg, at the Louvre and Versailles. Now, drenched and sated with beauty, she still could not bear to leave it all. A few minutes before, passing through the Salon Carré, where an elderly lady had been copying the Entombment, she had wished that she too might be old and white-haired if only age might so enlarge her capacity for loveliness, that even youth would be well lost for it. Already she loved the highest when she saw it, and, being an artist, she needs must attempt it too.

The girl found her aunt near the spot where the Antinöus stands on its pedestal, and walked along by her side, neither speaking nor listening to the elder lady's remarks on the objects they passed. They did not seem to her to be worth listening to. She knew that for her aunt art had reached its *comble* on the day when the late Sir Noël Paton had affixed his signature to "The Man with the Muckrake," and she had got out of the way of trying to explain that much water had flowed under London Bridge and many students flowed through the McGrath since that time. Besides, she did not want to talk. She wanted this last high hour in the Louvre as much as might be to herself. She wanted to taste the full emotion of it, not even analysing it, if only for once analysis would cry a truce. At the end of the gallery they turned and walked back again.

It was as they passed the Antinöus for the second time that the girl felt her young bosom rise almost painfully. She could not have told why, without premeditation, she suddenly lingered, so that her aunt passed a little ahead. She watched her disappear behind some plinth or pedestal or other, and then stopped opposite the marble bust.

There was no knowing when she might find herself in this wonderful place again, and it seemed to her that her farewell of it now required some symbol. She gave a furtive glance round. Neither

visitor nor *gardien* was to be seen, and again something seemed to rise in her throat. Noiselessly she stole to the pedestal. For a moment she wondered whether she dared; the next instant she had risen,—in her low-heeled brown shoes she was hardly more than five feet high,—she had risen on tiptoe.

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She crushed her lips against the Antinöus's marble cheek.

What it was she really kissed she had no idea. They say that male artists have been known to kiss the pallid mask of the Girl said to have been found in the Seine, but probably they have kissed, not the senseless plaster, but some more glowing inner image. But the girl thought of no young man, Greek and dead or modern and alive. Perhaps by her act she set young men expressly aside, adoring the imperishable expression instead. It was the first kiss she had ever given. There was no sex-impulse in it, and yet it was a gesture of sex. She would not have known what other gesture to employ.

With a fluttering heart and a heightened colour she rejoined her aunt, and on the following day returned to London. For days after that a nameless wistfulness still lingered in her shallow brook-brown eyes.

A fortnight after her return they gave a fancy-dress dance at the McGrath, and the girl made one of a supper-party of a dozen or more who, during the interval, in one of the smaller painting-rooms, settled on the floor in a wide ring, with plates of sandwiches and jelly and cakes and blancmange making a rapidly disappearing parterre of food in the middle. The ring was as noisy as a merry-go-round of painted horses on a Bank Holiday, and they played Hunt-the-Slipper, and perhaps in the scuffling there was a little crude hand-holding—though nobody held the girl's hand. Then they went back again to dance in the Antique Room, where the tall casts, the "Discobolus" and the "Gladiator," the "Germanicus" and the great writhe of the "Laocoön," had been wheeled back against the walls, and stood, like so many sightless servitors, holding wraps and shawls and the fans and oddments that had been put down on their plinths. The girl danced again.

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She was dressed this time as a porcelain shepherdess, in a hooped skirt of tender pink with tiny sprigs of green sown throughout it. She had borrowed the dress from one of the other girls. At supper, sitting in the ring, she had resembled a rose-peony that had been taken by its stalk and pressed down on the floor. About the slender hyacinth-stalk of her neck was a black velvet ribbon with a locket, and the thick mass of her hair peeped over the shoulders of her partners like an irregular knob of bronze lustre. Her shallow ribboned hat was on "Homer's" head, between the "Gladiator" and the "Greek Slave."

Some time during the later part of the evening, she was induced by a young man in evening-dress, with restrained manners but a hardy eye, to descend the stairs, and, passing the hall-porter's little glass box and pushing at the outer swing-doors, to take a walk in the courtyard of the School. The McGrath is only part of a larger institution. In the forecourt are grass plots enclosed by low swinging chains, and, tall and dim, with many broad steps and Corinthian columns, the pediment of the great main portico towers over the court on the eastern side. The girl and her cavalier crossed the grass plots, ascended the steps, and stood within the gloom of the pillars.

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There, without warning, the young man suddenly stooped and kissed her.

She knew that these things happened, and daily; but tears of misery and revulsion and shame started into her eyes. It seemed—she did not know what—a soilure, a coarseness, a bringing down of some lovely and to-be-dreamed-of thing to mere brutal demonstration. The young man was not even one of her companions of the McGrath; he was a medical student, he had told her, and so perhaps naturally insensible to the finer emotions. With a sudden pained "Oh!" she started from him, her hands crushed with horror against her pretty cheeks and mouth. She thought she heard him say, "Why, what's the matter?" but she was not sure; she was sure of nothing in this moment but of her own sense of miserable outrage. She left the young man calling softly behind her, ran quickly down the steps, and reached the dancing-room again.

Near the door as she entered two men stood, looking on. Both were men of forty-four or forty-five, and one of them was Jowett, the McGrath Professor of Painting. His companion had just asked him a question; he tugged at a ragged and grey-streaked moustache before replying.

"Art students? What becomes of 'em? God knows! You might as well ask what becomes of people who eat their meals in restaurants or little girls who learn to play the piano. They aren't a class. Perhaps one in a thousand or fifteen hundred comes to something, but the rest—well, what this place really is, if you want to know, is a sort of day nursery for the children of the well-to-do middle class."

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"You mean they marry and then drop it?" the other asked.

Jowett tugged again at the unkempt moustache. He spoke patiently and wearily.

"Oh yes; and co-educate their offspring; and by and by I suppose we shall have evolved a sort of intermediate sex, half women who make a hash of doing men's work, and half men who put flowers in their hair and talk about music. It always seems to me that these girls ought to be sewing or baking, and the men drinking beer and singing limericks in a canteen.—There's a girl, now—"

The small creature dressed as a shepherdess had just run past. The eyes of both men followed her. Jowett continued.

"Miss Amory Towers. She's the pick of 'em; one of the clever ones, I mean; and as far as my experience takes me, that means she's just a little too clever for a woman and not nearly clever enough to make a really satisfactory man. But, of course, she's young, and I may be wrong.... I put her straight into the Life when she came here, but what she really needs is somebody to put her into Life in another sense. But I doubt if anybody here'll do it. These fellows don't see other

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men enough; too much squiring these young women about.—Eh? Harm in it? Not a ha'porth; they're too dashed blameless altogether. Sometimes it's positively unnatural; it seems to me to raise the very questions it's supposed to suppress. Probably these youngsters will grow up to be fifty, and then discover all the follies they've had the chance to commit and haven't committed, and then they'll go about preaching doctrines about it all. Really, they scare me sometimes. I'm not naturally gross, but they do drive a fellow——”

But here the other interrupted him.... “Hallo, your little shepherdess seems to be going early.”

Amory Towers, her tiny figure wrapped in a hood and cloak and her young heart one unhappy ache to know the meaning of these two first kisses of her life, was hurrying away.

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## I

### CHEYNE WALK

**I**N Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, there used to stand, and may stand yet, a tenement of which the ground floor was a small “lock-up” greengrocer’s shop, and the remaining portions either dwelling-rooms or else rooms that, like the shop, were left at night and returned to again the next morning. The narrow entry to the right of the shop had once been white-washed, but was now so discoloured that the street boys had ceased to scribble on its walls the names of horses and other matters. It was full of the smell of apples and oranges and of the more suspect odour of earth and bruised rinds and decaying outer leaves, and there was usually a cat or two about, licking up the last splash left by the milkman’s can. When a new milkman took the round he was lucky if he did not come down all-fours at the bottom of the narrow winding staircase that turned off sharp to the right. The staircase itself was as black as the inside of a pair of bellows, and a piece of paper at the foot of it bore two names:

MISS DOROTHY LENNARD  
MISS AMORY TOWERS

These were followed by the words: “First Floor: if Out, leave Parcels at Shop.”

The landing of the first floor was slightly less black than the staircase itself, but the grey half-light filtered through, not from any window, but from the unhinged side of the door of the room rented by Miss Lennard and Miss Towers. As if the landing had been damp and the room beyond warm (which possibly was the case), this door, which was of thin matchboarding, warped inwards quite two inches at the top, and, indeed, seemed to be held only by the fastening in the middle. When the door happened to be locked the glimpse through this crack was always productive of a slight annoyance. It was as if Miss Dorothy Lennard or Miss Amory Towers was nearly in, or not quite gone away, or in any case must be returning in a few minutes. People often waited for quite a long time before finally giving up hope.

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Early on an April afternoon some years ago there walked quickly into the entry and ran confidently up the dark stairs a tall young woman in a large black picture-hat and a long tea-coloured silk raincoat. On the first landing she pushed at the door with her foot. There was a short succession of flapping and shot-like sounds (for if the door skellowed inwards at the top it stuck correspondingly at the bottom), and then the door started open and the young woman entered.

“Amory!” she called loudly. “Where are you?”

The last words were superfluous, since (unless she had climbed out of the long front casement and on to the gutter) it was not possible for Miss Towers to be in hiding in the room. And out of the square aperture at the back, that commanded a view of washing, weeds, discarded bottles, the greengrocer’s “empties” and the back gardens of the west side of Oakley Street, she could not as much as have got her head. Nor did Miss Lennard wait for an answer. Down the chimney opposite the door there came a dense yellow cauliflower of smoke; Miss Lennard hastily closed the door again; and then, first looking for a moment this way and that, she strode to a black-and-white desk near the long casement and began to turn over the litter upon it. This, which was a foot and more high, consisted of magazines and ladies’ journals and tracing-paper and proofs, and it was surmounted, first, by a plate with a couple of bananas and a half-eaten bunch of grapes upon it, and secondly, by a glass of water, clear above, cloudy in the middle, and with a thick reddish sediment at the bottom. As she sought, Miss Lennard popped three or four grapes into her large O of a mouth, throwing the skins towards the fireplace, from which another opaque yellow cauliflower poured, though this time not quite so far out into the room. She had removed her gloves; her hands were large and firm and waxen and without rings; and one or other of them found its way of itself to the grapes while the other continued its search.

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The smoking of the chimney had blackened the ceiling, which bellied downwards in the middle like the under side of a giant’s mattress; and it had also dimmed the surfaces of such of the brighter objects of furniture as the cheap working-room contained—the picture-glasses, the gate-legged table, a bowl full of dead daffodils, and some crockery. But Miss Lennard and Miss Towers frequently said that it was not for the inside of the room, but for the sake of the views from the long lattice in front, that they had chosen the place. These were for ever changing and charming. From a standpoint just within the door you looked over the Embankment Gardens and saw, through trees, lighters following the bullying tugs, or barges, their sails reefed to the sprits, resembling tall attenuated figures in the act of grasping punting-poles. Placing yourself in the middle of the worn floor you saw, crossed out as it were by the middle lattice, the Chelsea Jelly

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Factory and other buildings across the river. And standing quite by the fireplace you saw the lacy lines of the Suspension Bridge and the low grey-green trees of Battersea Park. As the chimney emitted more yellow curds, Miss Lennard, with an "Ugh!" opened the middle section of this window. The papers among which she had been searching were instantly whisked across the floor.

"Bother the thing!" she muttered. "How stupid if it's at Oxford Street all the time!... I say, Amory, have you seen that Doubleday thing? You know—the Chemisettes. I was sure I'd left it here."

The door had rattled again, and Miss Amory Towers had entered.

Miss Towers did not answer at once. From a brown pudding-bowl of a hat with a silken cord round it, she drew out two enamel-headed hatpins, and hung the hat on a hook. Its removal showed her rich hair no longer in a plait, but wreathed round and round her head and interplaited until it resembled a vividly painted fir cone. She wore a peacock's-neck-coloured blouse with several necklaces of iridescent shells at the collar; a roughened leather belt encircled the waist that would have been large had she herself not been so small; and, while the breeze from the open window rippled in Dorothy's tea-coloured raincoat, it hardly stirred the folds of Amory's heavier skirt of dusty-looking brown velvet.

She moved to the window. "I haven't touched your things," she said.

Then she stood, half leaning against the embrasure, gazing moodily across the river.

Certainly she was fetchingly pretty. As if you had looked at her through one of the very weak reducing-glasses illustrators use in order to see how their work will diminish, so her features had not only a special smallness, but somehow a special brightness of their own as well. The slight neck was white as a bluebell stalk; the faint flower-like stippling that never quite broke through into avowed freckles reminded you of a rubbed old miniature that might have been painted, not on ivory, but on a lamina of pale gold; and her inordinate hair lighted up the whole casement angle. But she was perturbed about something. She watched a string of lighters drift down with the tide, and then, without turning her head, said, "Dorothy—"

Dorothy, who had been once more searching among the scattered papers, rose from her knees. She held a piece of paper in her hand. "Got it!" she cried triumphantly. "I knew I'd left it here.... What?"

"Have you heard about Aunt Jerry?"

"Thank goodness I haven't trailed all the way from Oxford Street for nothing!... Aunt Jerry? No. What about her?"

"She's going to be married."

Ordinarily Dorothy Lennard's blue eyes were wide, receptive rounds; in moments of surprise they always seemed to open to twice their size. They did so now.

"No!... Oh, my dear, *do* tell me, quick."

"Mr. Massey, at the boarding-house."

"Mr. —? *Not* the safety-valve?" she cried.

"Yes."

"My—*dear!*... But he's forty if he's a day," Dorothy exclaimed.

"He's forty-three. Aunt Jerry's thirty-eight."

"Oh, but she's such a darling! Have they told people yet? May I write her a note? When are they going to be married?" Miss Lennard came as near to asking the three questions all in one as was physically possible.

"Write if you like. They're getting married in July. I call it—"

But instead of saying what she called it Amory turned impatiently to the window again. She was biting the corner of her upper lip.

"Why," said Dorothy, checked in her glee, "what's the matter?"

But Amory did not speak. She had been about to say, if a thing so obvious needed to be said, that it was ridiculous (to say the least) for people of thirty-eight and forty-three to be thinking about marriage; but that was not all. There were other things, that, since Dorothy could not understand them even if she did say them, were perhaps not worth wasting breath over. Not that Dorothy was actually dull; but for all that Amory had almost ceased to hope that Dorothy would ever grasp her, Amory's, true position. Their circumstances were so very different. Of course Amory was ready to concede that Dorothy, like herself, did contrive to live on what she earned; she earned from thirty to thirty-five shillings a week as a fashion artist; but it was one thing to make do on that, with people behind you to catch you when you stumbled, and quite another to have (as Amory had under her godmother's will) a scanty thirteen pounds a quarter, to sell a sketch or a picture once in a blue moon, and to know that that is all the help you need look forward to. Dorothy would quickly have found out the difference had it been she, Amory, who had had the people with houses in town and places up and down the country, and herself, Dorothy, who had been the daughter of a poor and clever Cambridge practitioner who had died before he had managed to get on his feet, and had left his daughter to live with the only relative she had in the world in a hateful boarding-house in Shepherd's Bush! And it was all very fine for Dorothy to joke about it, and to say that the fewer relatives she had the luckier she was. There was no getting away from it: these things did give a confidence to Dorothy's stride, and an assurance to her glance, and an expectation of success to her eyes.

Therefore Amory did not answer when her friend asked her what was the matter.

But Dorothy, after a moment's cogitation, contrived, though probably by accident, to hit on what was the matter for herself.

"I must write to her at once," she said. "In July—so soon! I *am* glad! I *do* hope they'll be

happy!... And what'll you do? Go on living at the boarding-house?"

Ah! (Amory thought), so Dorothy did see it from somebody's point of view besides Aunt Jerry's! She moved one shoulder petulantly.

"Aunt Jerry paid the bills there," she said.

"Do you mean that you'll go and live with them when they're married?" Dorothy asked.

"No, I don't," said Amory with marked brevity. Dorothy hadn't seen her aunt and Mr. Massey together or she wouldn't have asked that. And one of them was thirty-eight and the other forty-three! Talk about the loves of the valetudinarians!

"Well, what will you do?" Dorothy asked again.

Again Amory turned to the window. She spoke with her back to Dorothy.

"What *can* I do? What is there left? Come and live here, as far as I can see," she replied.

"Oh," cried Dorothy at once, struck with the idea, "that'll be jolly!"

(Jolly! With that warped door and that chimney! Jolly! Amory almost laughed.)

"Oh yes, very jolly," she said, tossing the adorable little head.

But Dorothy caught the tone in which she said it.

"Oh, I don't suppose it will be if you're determined it shan't, but don't I just wish *I* had your talent and chances!" she replied cheerfully. "My hat, wouldn't I swap! Why, think of what all the critics—Hamilton Dix at any rate—are saying about you! You're going to have a show all on your own——"

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"H'm! If I ever do! Don't forget it's been put off three times already."

"Well, but each time it couldn't be helped, and you're going ahead working all the time, and it'll be a tremendous leg-up for you when it does come. You ought to have *my* job, my dear, in the middle of a catalogue rush, or when you've drawn the lingerie ladies as like fishes as ever they can be, and you get letters complaining that you're starting young men on the downward path—you'd come back to your pictures thankfully enough then, *I* can tell you! The fact is you don't know what you do want.... Now I'm going to make a cup of tea and then I must fly back; I only came for that Doubleday thing. Have some?"

She crossed to the sink, emptied the leaves from the teapot on to the heap that already choked the trap, and filled the kettle and set it on the fire.

It always annoyed Amory when Dorothy told her that she didn't know really what she did want, for she always did know—at any rate for the time being. True, she had worked in various styles in the past; to an unintelligent watcher she might even have seemed vacillating and changeable: but after all, what better course could a student follow than that? Youth was the time for bold experiment. Settled convictions too early arrived at were things to be distrusted. And there were indications that she really had "found herself" at last. She had swept aside, quite a long time ago, her earlier efforts of the days of the McGrath; she had outgrown, too, the Meunier-like figures, all muscle and hammers and leather aprons, that had first attracted Mr. Hamilton Dix's attention; and all round that Cheyne Walk room were stacked the canvases of her latest and (she hoped) her finally settled phase—her Saturday night street-markets, her "character studies" worked up from sketches made in Whitechapel and Shoreditch, her scenes sketched in alleys and courts and during long waits in gallery-queues. Therefore she was a little annoyed with Dorothy now.... Dorothy was clearing the table and cutting bread-and-butter. Amory continued to look out of the window.

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Then, while Dorothy still prepared tea, she moved from the window and walked to the little shelf of books that occupied the recess on the farther side of the fireplace. She took down a volume protected by a stout brown paper wrapper and began to read as she stood. Still reading, she sidled slowly back to the window, where the light was better, and mechanically turned the page. She could always pick up a book and lose herself at a moment's notice like this. If at such times she was spoken to, she usually gave an "Eh?" or a "Yes—no, I mean," and continued to read. She considered it to be evidence of her powers of mental concentration.

The book she was reading now was the first volume of *The Golden Bough*. Such a book, of course, was far too expensive for her to buy; therefore, in order that she might read it and its kind, she subscribed to a sort of private Association which was composed of herself and a dozen or so of her old friends of the McGrath. They bought the books as they were published, passed them (protected by the brown paper covers) from one to another, and after a time sold them back to the bookseller again at diminished (but still quite good) prices. None but rather expensive and abstruse books were thus bought; had *The Golden Bough* been procurable in the Bohn Library the Association would have felt that something of its choiceness had gone; and Amory hoped, when she had got through *The Golden Bough*, to be the next in rotation for certain of the Tudor Translations, and she did wish Laura Beamish would hurry up with *Apuleius and the Golden Ass*. These things contributed to breadth of outlook. It had for too long been a justly-founded reproach against artists that they had no general culture. Amory felt that, of all people, an artist certainly could not know too much; and what an artist knows will go, sooner or later, into his or her art.... She was still deep in *The Golden Bough* when Dorothy called, "Ready—come along, Amory——"

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Reluctantly Amory laid aside the book and sat down at the little gate-legged table.

As the two girls took tea they talked of Miss Geraldine Towers's engagement, of Amory's own plans after the wedding, of the Exhibition that for various reasons Mr. Hamilton Dix had repeatedly postponed, and of one thing and another. Then Dorothy rose. She must get back to the fashion studio in Oxford Street.

"You're going to work, I suppose?" she said, as she tucked the Doubleday thing into her belt and adjusted her hat before the little kitchen mirror.

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Amory yawned. That was another thing Dorothy never seemed really to grasp—that while she, Dorothy, might sit down to her absurd attenuated fashion figures as it were with the striking of a

clock, Amory's work was rather different. Dorothy, of course, always professed to admire Amory's painting enormously; in a sense she had no choice but to do so, unless she wished to write herself down an out-and-out fool: but she never really understood, in spite of the pains Amory had taken with her. It was rather pathetic.... Amory yawned again.

"Oh, I don't suppose I shall do very much. This about Aunt Jerry's put me quite off. And"—she grimaced slightly—"there's to-night. They're having a party, or a celebration, or something at our boarding-house. I expect that'll be rather ghastly. Want to come and see?"

But Dorothy only laughed.

"To-night? A party? Me? I shall be lucky if I get away by eleven.... And oh, I say, Amory,"—her tone changed suddenly, and all at once she seemed embarrassed,—“I nearly forgot—there's something—it had almost slipped out of my head—I hope you won't mind my suggesting it—”

It was part of Amory's cleverness, helped of course by her wide reading, that she often knew what people were going to say almost before they knew it themselves. She knew what Dorothy was going to say now. And it was not true that Dorothy had nearly forgotten; that was merely false delicacy and a roundabout way of approaching the subject. Amory smiled.

"You see," Dorothy went on, "there's a job of sorts going—not a fashion—not exactly a fashion, that is—more like a painting—and I think the price could be screwed up to fifteen pounds for it—Mercier would get twenty-five; but then he's Mercier. So I wondered—” She paused diffidently.

It was not the first time she had tried to put work into Amory's way. And Amory knew that she was perfectly right in refusing it; it was Dorothy who did not know that the commercially acceptable thing is separate in kind, and not a dilution of a different excellence. Dorothy, by rising, might in time attain to the heights of the great Mercier, who did "Doubleday Spring Covers," but Amory, stooping, would only have stooped for nothing. She lifted her golden eyes to her friend. She was half amused at the success of her guess, and half sensible of Dorothy's well-meaningness and kindness of heart.

"It's awfully good of you—but you know I simply shouldn't know how to begin," she said. "I think perhaps I'd better stick to my own job."

"Not if I gave you tips?" said Dorothy, almost wistfully.

"I'm afraid not."

Dorothy openly admired her. The two girls had been at the McGrath together, and Dorothy's admiration was the homage that artistic vice (fashion-drawing) paid to artistic virtue (street-markets and an impending one-man-show).

"I say, Amory, you are plucky!" she exclaimed.

Amory knew that she was not plucky in the least, but it did not displease her to let it go at that. She murmured something about "Absurd!" and Dorothy, with a wave, was off. Amory heard her step in the entry below; then the sound died away on Cheyne Walk.

Left alone, Amory set on the kettle again for washing-up; then, until it should boil, she looked anew round the room in which, for all she could see to the contrary, she would soon be living. And tea had now put her into a rather better humour. After all, it might not be so bad. Not that it was not all very fine for Dorothy to talk; anybody could talk lightly about living over greengrocers' shops who had people who rode in cars with tea-baskets and bridge-tables inside them and lived in houses with eight-foot baths and electric lights in the wardrobes so that they could see which frocks they were taking down; nevertheless, it might not be so bad. Cosimo Pratt would help her. Cosimo was so good at arranging things. If anybody could make this single dingy room with the lovely view comfortable, Cosimo could. And Cosimo, unlike Dorothy, really did understand her painting....

She did not pick up *The Golden Bough* again; instead, she stood in front of a photograph of the Gioconda that was pinned to the plaster wall. It was one of a row—a Rembrandt, a Corot, the Infante, and others—which she had bought in Paris four years before. She had Pater's description of the Gioconda by heart, as also she had that of Richard Jeffries of the Accroupie underneath it; and she was murmuring the passage, when, with a great burst of steam, the kettle boiled over. She set about her washing-up.

It was a task she loathed. All domestic work she loathed. In pouring the boiling water on to the cups and saucers, with the kettle held out at arm's length so that she should not splash herself, she got hold of the hot part of the handle; and when she had run cold water on to the utensils she dipped her fingers into a scalding cup in a corner of the tin that had not been cooled. The butter on the plates was horrid, and instead of the proper drying-cloth she got hold of a painting-rag, with turps on it. A knife-handle came off in the boiling water, and, incautiously drawing too near the sink, she splashed the brown velvet skirt after all.

It was as she was washing her greasy hands afterwards that she became conscious of a vague and familiar odour. From what part of the house it came she did not know—perhaps from the greengrocer's downstairs, perhaps from the rooms overhead. It came up the pipe, and it was the smell of water in which cabbage had been boiled.

Hitherto it had not been worth complaining about, but now, if she really was coming to live in this room, something would have to be done. What it was that would have to be done—well, she would ask Cosimo.



“GLENERNE,” the boarding-house between Brook Green and Goldhawk Road in which Amory lived with her aunt, was really two large houses thrown into one; and, besides sheltering its twenty-odd guests, it served as a sort of academy for the teaching of English to foreign waiters. These came—German, Swiss, Danish, Belgian, even Turkish—without a word of our tongue, gave their services for several months in return for their food, and a year or so later were to be found in the restaurants of Frith and Old Compton Streets and the brasseries of Leicester Square, as English as you please. Perhaps in the manner of food they came off better than did the guests themselves, for, while the establishment provided four set meals a day, you had to sit down to all of these unless you would go slightly hungry. Miss one and you never quite caught up again.

But you forgot this slight nearness to the knuckle in the fullness with which Miss Addams’s advertisement in *The Shepherd’s Bush Times*—the one that began “Young Musical Society”—was redeemed. Every night there was something “on”; if it was not a whist drive or singing it was an impromptu dance in the large double drawing-room on the first floor, or charades, or a semi-private rehearsal by the Glenerne contingent of the Goldhawk Amateur Dramatic Society. The *esprit de pension* was very strong; it was as if a vow of loyalty to Miss Addams’s cruets had been taken. [34]

The walls of the drawing-room were trophied with the photographs of former guests; these stood, framed or unframed, in groves on the mantelpiece (indeed, when Christmas came round with its cards, it was impossible to open a door without bringing whole castles of photographs and pasteboard greetings down into the fender); and, ranged on one special little whatnot between the Nottingham lace curtains and Millais’s framed and glazed supplement of “Little Miss Muffet,” were Miss Addams’s “grand-children”—the offspring of the three or four gentlemen or ladies who, at one time and another, had left the boarding-house to get married. About these translated ones something of the legendary, even of the grandiose, had grown up; and one particular chair in the dining-room, that on Miss Addams’s right hand, was still known as “Mr. Wellcome’s chair.”

At half-past eight on the evening of the day on which Amory had told Dorothy of her aunt’s engagement a suppressed gaiety pervaded the whole boarding-house. Dinner was over, and in the little greenhouse that prolonged the hall at the expense of the narrow back garden a few of the men were still smoking; but the drawing-room upstairs was filled with a twittering of anticipation of the guests knew not what. Except that it was to be in honour of Miss Towers’s engagement, Miss Addams had refused to tell what the evening’s entertainment was to be. But even those who had missed dinner had been told that that night Mr. Massey had been promoted to Mr. Wellcome’s chair, *vice* Mr. Edmondson, Glenerne’s youngest gentleman, who hitherto had occupied it in order to settle a disputed point of precedence between Mr. Rainbow and Mr. Massey himself. [35]

So, until Miss Addams should deign to declare herself, it seemed as if whist or dancing might break out at any moment. Mr. Sandys, of the Lille Road Branch of the East Midlands Bank, seemed loaded with song on a hair-trigger, and had already cleared his throat once or twice; little Mrs. Deschamps, who played the accompaniments, needed but a look to remove her rings, set them in a neat row along the piano-top, give the stool a twirl, and ask Mr. Geake, the Estate Agent, to turn over for her; and young Mr. Edmondson, who was a booking-clerk, moved here and there, humorously complaining that it was a bit thick, his being ousted from Mr. Wellcome’s chair like that. He did not cease to pester Miss Addams to tell her little mystery. Miss Addams, huge and pyramidal in her black satin, only smiled over her tatting (she smiled frequently—the expression caused her slight moustache to pass for the shadow of a dimple), and told him to wait and see.

“You know how you can get your place back again—after July,” she said demurely.

Miss Geraldine Towers and Mr. Massey were not in the room, and their absence had already given rise to several of the rallies of wit that were characteristic of Glenerne. For instance, when the little widow, Mrs. Deschamps, had asked Amory with an air of great innocence where her aunt was, and Amory had replied that she thought she was writing letters, a ventriloquial voice, that might or might not have been that of Mr. Sandys, had been heard to ask whether Mr. Massey was licking the stamps; and again, when Mrs. Deschamps had asked Mr. Geake whether he would be so good as to fetch her book for her (it was on the chair by the aquarium), Mr. Geake had given the widow an intelligent look and had replied that he rather thought the corner by the aquarium was No Thoroughfare. Mrs. Deschamps had given a little apologetic cough and had said, How stupid of her! and young Mr. Edmondson, whose conversation was frequently a good deal beyond his years, had raised a laugh by stroking his smooth lip and saying that he supposed it was only Human Nature after all. [36]

Amory was sitting on a painted three-legged stool under a standard lamp, listlessly turning over the pages of a magazine. She hated this place and these people, and only ironically had she asked Dorothy that afternoon whether she would not like to come to this party. And she almost hated her aunt, who was probably still sitting in the little bead-curtained recess on the landing where the cloudy aquarium stood. It seemed to her that if Aunt Jerry must get engaged at thirty-eight, she might at least have done so without giving occasion for this kind of vulgar and familiar comment. But she supposed that that was what the “Young Musical Society” of Miss Addams’s advertisement really meant: gouty flirtations, ping-pong in middle age, having your toes trodden on during scratch dances by stout and breathless partners, and Progressive Whist with twenty-five-years-old stories told between the deals. Amory’s pretty mouth curled: she saw it all with merciless clearness. Glenerne seemed to her to be half ancients trying to be young, and half young people quickly getting old before their time. Oh, that terrible and affable Mr. Edmondson—that awful Mr. Geake—that impossible bank clerk, whatever his name was! And the place itself! [37]

These Nottingham lace curtains, with the dreary joke of the artificial spiders crawling upon them, and the macramé-hung mantelpieces, and the Japanese joy-bells tinkling on the chandelier, when, with plain brown or green paper, and a stencilled frieze in two colours, and a Japanese print or two put just in the right places, and a few chosen books here and there, even Glenerne might have been made quite passable!... She was glad she was going to Cheyne Walk. She would at least be among her own people and her own surroundings there!

She wished herself in Cheyne Walk at that moment when Mr. Edmondson walked up to her where she sat. It never seemed to occur to Mr. Edmondson that his company might not be at all times desirable, and she almost shrank from him as she found her great fir-cone of red-gold hair only an inch or two from his green knitted waistcoat. At a greater distance, she sometimes glanced at this waistcoat with interest, as if, in this place where the old became young again at the expense of their juniors, she expected Mr. Edmondson to become visibly stouter from day to day. Mr. Edmondson spoke now with idiotic cheerfulness.

"Looking at pictures, eh?" he said parentally. "Don't you get a bit fed-up with 'em after a whole day of it?"

"No," said Amory.

"Don't you, really! Well, I must say illusterated papers have made great strides this last few years. Who'd ha' thought of a *Daily Spec* a few years ago? And we think nothing about it now. I see 'em out o' my little window once the morning rush slacks off a bit—the bookstall's just opposight—they chuck their ha'pennies down one after another—'*Spec!*' they say—never think twice about it."

"Oh?" said Amory. Mr. Edmondson might have been the historian of modern journalism, looking back. He continued.

"Uge circulation it must have; why, I've known 'em get through as many as thirty-eight quires in a single morning at our place alone; *somebody* must make some money out of it! I forget what their divvy is.—But I wonder you don't get fed-up with pictures for all that. It'll be like me dealing out tickets instead of cards for whist."

"Almost the same," said Amory.

Mr. Edmondson looked at her for a moment suspiciously, as if he thought she was getting at him. Not very long before, Mr. Edmondson would have resented being got at by girls, especially in his green waistcoat; but he had grown soberer and more tolerant since then. He went avuncularly on.

"What d'you suppose Miss Addams is going to spring on us? I guessed French blind-man's bluff for a start, with word-making and whist to cool off a bit on: but Mrs. D. says forfeits.... What, are you off?"

"Yes, I've a letter to write."

"That's the style: business before pleasure. I hope you write in a good light always: nothing worse for the eyes than writing in a bad light. It's no good wishing you had your eyesight back again when it's gone: the thing is to take care of it while you're young. I saw a bit in the paper the other day—it was about reading in bed——"

But Amory fled.

As she dropped the *portière* of the drawing-room door behind her she encountered her aunt on the landing. She stopped. She was very angry with her aunt; she felt that her aunt was making of her, too, a laughing-stock. She turned her shallow brook-brown eyes, but hardly her head, as she spoke.

"I do think——" she began impetuously, and stopped. She stopped out of the sense that these things ought not to have to be said. In making it necessary for Amory to remark on them at all her aunt was putting her into a false position.

Miss Geraldine Towers had her hand on the knob of the door. She smiled, but did not turn the knob.

"What, dear?" she asked amiably.

"I do think you needn't set them all talking the way you do. You might think of me a bit. Really, it's rather much sometimes."

For a moment Miss Towers turned pink, then she laughed. She was plump and personable; her new way of doing her hair had taken ten years off her age and if her high lace collar was rather tight and did cut her a little under her second chin, well, we all have our troubles, and there are worse ones than plumpness. She straightened her wisteria-coloured satin blouse so that the waist above the tailor-made fawn skirt looked its smallest, and tilted her laughing head back so that it seemed to rock on the two points of her collar-whalebones as if they had been gimballs.

"My dear," she broke out, "*don't* be so absurdly solemn! Try to enjoy yourself; you'll never be younger than you are now! And I do wish you wouldn't go about in those sad art-colours always. You look like a sparrow having a dust-bath. They may be all right for pictures, but it isn't as if you sat in a frame all day. Good gracious, anybody'd think you were eighty to see you sometimes! Laugh and the world laughs with you, my dear. Come inside, and don't be silly; we're going to have great fun."

But again Amory turned away.

More than once she had had a wild wonder whether that trip to Paris had not had something to do with her aunt's preposterous rejuvenescence; but no, it was hardly possible that while she herself had wandered in the museums Aunt Jerry had given herself to secret and wicked pleasures. No, it was the boarding-house and the young musical society again. That clever advertisement had really made Aunt Jerry think that she was young.... It did not occur to Amory that perhaps these ancient ones, of forty or fifty or more, had earned a rest. It did not occur to her that life might have bruised and scarred them, and that they laughed a little loudly and

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stridently for fear of worse, and that there was hardly one of them whose eyes had not rested on sadder and more sordid and tragic scenes than her own had ever seen. She saw them, as it were, in the flat, as a mere human pattern, and when she was bored with it, Glenerne was a thing to be shut up like one of its own photograph albums. Their manners offended her, and she inquired no further.... In the meantime, however, flirtatious little Mrs. Deschamps would sit in a corner with anybody, and her aunt entered into an engagement at an age when she really might have been expected to be thinking of serious things, and the whatnot in the corner, with its photographs of Glenerne's grandchildren, was a source of mirth that seemed never to run dry, and if Amory must be misunderstood, well, it was better to be misunderstood than to be understood by these terrible people.

Amory went to her room and took down a volume of Pater.

But she had hardly opened the book when there came a tap at her door, and, in response to her "Come in," her aunt's middle-aged fiancé entered.

Dorothy Lennard had called Mr. Massey the safety-valve because he always seemed to use three times as many "s's" in his conversation as anybody else. These escaped over a neat little row of very white lower teeth like those of a bulldog. The dark hair that grew up the sides of his head always reminded Amory of the elastics of an old pair of boots, and his cropped dark moustache did not interfere with his perpetual gentle hissing. He wore gold glasses and a closely-buttoned frock-coat; he was an educational bookseller in St. Mark's Road; and it had now been known for some hours in the boarding-house that he, a man of some substance, had been moved to come to Glenerne first of all by the sight of Miss Geraldine Towers shaking the crumb-tray out of the window to feed the birds.

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"My dear Amory," said Mr. Massey, "Geraldine has asked me to come and see whether you won't join the rest of us in our little celebration. I need not say that it would be pleasant if you would assist."

Without (she thought) too open an appearance of resignation, Amory closed her book again. She supposed she must.... "All right, if you like," she said, without fervour.

"Thank you," said Mr. Massey gratefully. "I was sure you would not absent yourself.—And since I am here, I wonder whether I might say a word for which occasion has not hitherto presented itself?"

Amory was silent, noting the educational bookseller's periods. He continued.

"It is perhaps a little too early to speak of it, but it might set your mind at rest. When Geraldine and I are married, in July if all be well, I do not want you to feel that any difference to yourself will be made. Your home, if you wish it, will still be with us."

Amory broke out a little quickly, as if not to leave it for a moment in doubt that she was properly grateful, "Oh, thank you so very much, Mr. Massey—"

"George—or Uncle George——" said Mr. Massey gently.

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"—Uncle George—and I do hope you won't think me horrid—but I thought of living in my studio——"

Mr. Massey made a little calming gesture with his hands, as if to say that all should be exactly as she pleased. He nodded several times.

"I understand; your art; you know best; don't think I wish to put the least constraint on you. I only want to assure you that your aunt's house is always at your disposal," he said kindly.

"Thank you so much," said Amory hurriedly; and there was a sudden pause.

"It will probably," Mr. Massey went on deliberately, as if he passed a succession of desirable dwellings in mental review, "be on the Mall. Yes, Chiswick Mall. One sees such sweet sketches there, especially of sunsets. But in case you do elect to occupy your studio, there will be a little business we shall have to arrange. It may even include a little money. But we can talk of that later.—Shall we join the others, my dear?"

He was genuinely fond of her. When she touched her hair before the little white-draped glass he discreetly turned his back, almost as if he wished to reassure Amory about any stray jest she might have heard about the aquarium corner; and then after a moment he punctiliously gave Amory his arm. They returned to the drawing-room.

Perhaps Miss Addams herself had become a little anxious about her promised surprise, and had decided to make sure of something else in case it failed her, for they had begun to dance. Every boarder was there, including M. Criqui, the Frenchman; and, ranged inseparably against the wall, were the three Indians whose faces resembled olives with white moving eyes. Mats and rugs had been pushed back to the walls; M. Criqui "turned" for Mrs. Deschamps; Mr. Edmondson was waltzing with pretty Miss Crebbin, the typist; and Mr. Sandys danced with Miss Swan, of the Preparatory School near the tram terminus. The window looking on to the back garden was open; the screen of pock-marked coloured glass had been drawn in front of the fire; and the pictures on the walls moved slightly in the draughts. Mr. Geake had placed himself on point-duty near the folding-doors, and was shepherding couples past the awkward place; and from a group of men who conspired out on the landing came sudden bursts of laughter from time to time. Mr. Massey, the hero of the occasion, left Amory, and moved here and there, patting backs, touching elbows, and ever and anon beaming with mild delight about him and rubbing his hands.

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The waltz ended, and another began; and Mr. Edmondson, who seemed to have shaken off his seriousness and to have lapsed into youth again, came up to Amory and asked her whether he might have the pleasure. Amory, resolved to go through it now that she was here, placed her hand on his arm. "Might as well have one of these while there's any left," he said genially, snatching a paper fan from the mantelpiece as they passed; "I wonder what those blighters are up to!" He indicated the group that conspired near the door.... "You ain't interested in football, I s'pose? I'm going to the Final at the Palace on Saturday—special leave, what oh!—Donkins'll take

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my place—and it won't half be a squeeze, I give you *my* word! Funny place to go for a squeeze, eh, Miss Amory?"

Mr. Edmondson was now quite the Mr. Edmondson of the green waistcoat, not to be got at by girls if he knew it.

And still the inscrutable Miss Addams, with her eye drifting a little more frequently towards the door, gave no sign.

"Here, I say, come orf it!" Mr. Edmondson grinned as he and Amory passed M. Criqui and Mrs. Deschamps for the fourth time. They were talking French. "No taking advantage, Criqui!... I don't call that playing the game," he continued to Amory. "But you talk French, of course?"

"A little," said Amory.

"Hanged if I can make out half what them blighters say," Mr. Edmondson continued cheerfully. "In English, I mean. One of 'em came up this morning—8.45—right in the thick. '*To-tnm-croad!*' he says, just like that; and if I don't give him a brief for Tott-n-m C't Road and the right change before you can say knife I've got Aspinall down on me like a cartload o'bricks. It ain't no tea-party, my job ain't, not in the thick, you take *my* word for it! Chap tried to ring a bad two-bob on me this morning; broke in two in the clip—you've seen the clips we use, haven't you? What, you haven't? Just you notice some time!—Broke in two—like that—and him barging there with twenty people behind shouting 'Hurry up' and prodding him with their sticks and brollies. Oh, it's a pinch, I *don't* think!"

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But still Miss Addams's surprise didn't come. After that waltz Mrs. Deschamps flatly refused to play again until she had had a dance, and so Miss Crebbin, the typist, played, to calls of "New ribbon, Miss C—! Mind the visible writing!" Then Mrs. Deschamps sat, first by the door, where she told M. Criqui that all Frenchmen had such dreadful reputations, and next at the open window at the back, where she asked him what "In the Spring a Young Man's Fancy" was in French, and then disappeared altogether. Aunt Geraldine, laughing, moved everywhere, with Mr. Massey following her with his hands clasped behind his back, and if she had to show her half-hoop of diamonds once she had to do so a dozen times. Then Mrs. Deschamps came back, crying over her shoulder, "If you tell, M. Criqui, I'll never speak to you again!" but M. Criqui did tell, of how Mrs. Deschamps, venturing into the greenhouse downstairs that was used as a smoking-room, had been detained almost by force until she had smoked half a cigarette.

Nor was it Miss Addams's surprise even when one of the group of men who had been conspiring by the door handed an envelope to Mrs. Deschamps. "A note for you, Mrs. D.," he said, and Mrs. Deschamps turned it backwards and forwards and said she wondered who it could be from. She tore the envelope open and then fell back with a shriek, while the circle of men about her roared and slapped one another on the shoulders. A small object had leapt from the envelope with an angry buzz, and now lay still on the floor.

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"The Kissing Bee!" shouted elderly Mr. Rainbow, making a reckless attempt to assume the voice of a Ludgate Hill hawker.

"Causes 'eaps o' fun and roars o' laughter!" Mr. Beeton, of the cycle-works, cried.

"Don't go 'ome wifaht it!—"

"One penny!—"

"Knocks the jam-splosh and the spill of ink silly, eh, what?"

"Here, let's have a look—where do you get 'em?"

"*Oh*, you wretches!" pouted Mrs. Deschamps.

And then, in the very midst of the hubbub, Miss Addams's surprise was upon them. A Belgian waiter stood in one of the doorways. He held himself more erect than usual against the wall; save that the tips of his fingers were turned in to prevent his too loose cuffs from falling too far down, his attitude would have been that of perfect "attention."

"Mis-tairr—Ooell-come!" he announced.

A shout went up that stirred the dust on the chandeliers. Stout, red-faced, rubbing his hands, and (in flat violation of Miss Addams's rule) puffing a gigantic cigar, Mr. Wellcome himself stood in the doorway, frowning humorously on the group that twisted with laughter about Mrs. Deschamps.

"Now, now, now, now—what's all this about?" Mr. Wellcome cried with mock severity.

Acclamations broke forth.

"Wellcome, by Jove!" cried Mr. Rainbow, in a sort of glad consternation.

"Bravo!" shouted Mr. Geake. "It's old Wellcome!"

"Come in out o' the wet!"

"Welcome, Wellcome!"

"Hooray!"

Mr. Wellcome came in, crossed straight to Miss Addams, kissed her without a moment's hesitation (only remarking, "When the cat's away—eh?"), slapped his hands loudly together, and then, turning his head half a dozen times this way and that, cried, "Well, and how are we all, eh?"

They cheered him again.

"And now where's Massey and the blushing one?" Mr. Wellcome demanded; and when he had found them and shaken hands with them he almost doubled the scholastic stationer in two with the blow he gave him between the shoulder-blades. He gave a "Ha, ha, ha!" of amazing volume.

"Done it now, my boy!" he cried. "Nasty things, actions for Breach! Twopence on the bus from High Street to the Broadway now! Well, well, we all do it, even the flies on the sugar-basin! Congrats, congrats.—Now, Mrs. Deschamps! Damme, I must have a kiss from you too, if it was only for the sake of old times!—Where's Mrs. W—? Tut-tut, *you* ought to know better than to ask; ask Massey, he knows—or he will one of these days!... Well, now we're all here let's get on

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with the Prayer Meeting. *Phtt!*"

Mr. Wellcome whistled and snapped his fingers to the waiter at the door.

For Mr. Wellcome never came empty-handed. The Belgian waiter approached with a tray, and it was now discovered that another tray chock-full of jingling glasses stood outside. Mr. Wellcome travelled for Perclay Barkins & Co., and knew butlers and wine-tasters and cellar-men and head-waiters, and was to be relied on for valuable information about vintages and bottling and tobacco-crops.—"Stand there, Whiskerino, by Miss Addams," he commanded the waiter; and from the tray he began to toss into Miss Addams's lap a number of articles.

"Thought you might find a use for these," he said off-handedly. (They were packs of cards that had been used once in some Club or other.) "And you might as well have the latest multiple corkscrew as anybody else, I suppose, eh? Catch!—Now, friends and gentlemen all, oblige me by joining me in a smoke. The curtains, mother? Dash the curtains; Massey don't get engaged every day, at least I hope he doesn't; not that there's any knowing what some of them does under the rose—ha, ha, ha!... Now, Sandys, help yourself. Here's a cutter. Smoke half of it, and then throw t'other half away; there's plenty more in the box.—Now, where's Rainbow? Here you are; you're my man; *you* know a little bit of all right when you taste it; half a minute, and I'll ask your opinion of *this*—"

Mr. Wellcome's face became deeply serious as he stooped for a minute; then, as he stood upright again with a bottle in his right hand and a liqueur glass in his left, it shone once more.

"Steady ... *there!*" He passed an exquisitely filled glass to Mr. Rainbow. "Warm it in your hands a minute first—this way—smell it—and now roll it slowly round the inside o' your mouth!—"

Had Mr. Rainbow been Cinquevalli balancing the billiard-balls every eye could not have been more intently on him.

"*Mmmmm!*" he murmured ecstatically, lips closed, nostrils gently sniffing, eyes fondling the glass.

"Eh?" said Mr. Wellcome, winking to all and sundry, as much as to say, Hadn't he told them so? "Eh? What? Spanish, should you say? *I* should think so! W. W. gives you *his* word for that, worth something or worth nothing as the case may be!... Now, all! Rainbow's only the taster, in case it was poison; you hold that tray steady, Antonionio; ladies first, I think, is the law of politeness—"

And the tiny glasses, rich and deep as Amory's hair, were passed round.

Never such a party had been given at Glenerne. The smell of the cigars and the brandy filled the air like some incense burned before the god of the naughty World; more witty things were said by loosened tongues than their owners could ever hope to remember. Fun? Oh, there was fun when Mr. Wellcome himself took matters in hand!... "Now, who says a flutter?" he said by and by, shuffling one of the packs of cards as only Mr. Wellcome could shuffle cards. "For love, Nellie—and forfeits—!" But Nellie (Mrs. Deschamps) had already been fluttered by the Kissing Bee, and was in a mood too softened for cards; and, for fear the brandy should have affected anybody, another tray with strong coffee was passed round by Omar K, the red-fezzed boy from Smyrna with the face of the hue of a chocolate "shape." They kept it up late; for once the "lights out at eleven" rule was suspended; and even Amory sat up quite a long time after she might without singularity have gone to bed. At last Mr. Wellcome rose. He for one had enjoyed himself just fair-to-middling, he said. The mats and rugs were left where they were, pushed back against the walls. Quite twenty voices downstairs in the hall sang that Mr. Wellcome was a jolly good fellow, and what remained of the Spanish brandy was brought downstairs for the two policemen who (nobody knew how) were presently discovered, smiling and with their helmets in their hands, just within the front door.—"Best respects, sir," said one of them, and "Many of 'em," said the other.

And so said all the rest.

### III

#### THE FASHION STUDIO

THE Fashion Studio that employed Miss Dorothy Lennard had originally been, and in a sense was still, the enterprise of a small printer; and Dorothy had been what Amory called "lucky" to get there. Had Amory herself wanted a post as an apprentice to fashion-drawing, she would have had to fill her folio with "specimens," to sit with half a dozen other applicants in a waiting-room until it had pleased some manager or proprietor to touch a bell and to give orders that the prettiest one was to be admitted, and then, on her work or prettiness or both, to take her chance. But Dorothy had been enabled to skip all that. Even more than the wealthy Lennards and Taskers who stood in the background behind her, a certain blindness to higher things had given Dorothy an advantage from the start. She had, for example, quite unprincipled ways with men. Almost any one woman (Dorothy was in the habit of reasoning modestly) could turn any one man round her finger if she went the right way about it; and it seemed to her that the men knew that too. If they didn't, why were they always trying to dodge the individual issue, and to say such fearfully solemn things about the abstraction of Womanhood itself? Dorothy thought she saw the reason. It was that, in the lump, men could usually manage them. It was in detail that they hadn't a chance.

Therefore Dorothy, having quite made up her mind who her printer-victim was to be, had not for a moment dreamed of writing him a letter and then waiting on him with a folio. Instead, she had cast about among cousins and so forth until she had found one who knew the sleeping-partner of the firm. Then, after some little consideration of ways and means, she had contrived to

meet this sleeping-partner, this maker and unmaker of mere printers, not in the firm's matchboarded office with the machines growling overhead, but at supper at an hotel. These things make all the difference to the consideration in which you are held.... She had hardly had to ask for her job. Machinating men, with their stories and drinks and cigars, can do a good deal, but Dorothy knew how to make of her guileless blue eyes a spiritualizing of mere drinks and stories and cigars. She had, too, ideas the very *naïveté* of which was likely to strike a man immersed in mere dull business routine. Meeting the printers' sleeping-partner again, this time at a lunch that spread over into tea-time, she had been able to drop into his ears her own purely personal conviction (against which he would, no doubt, see any number of reasons: still, there it was)—her conviction that his fashion-business, as it stood, was not capable of very much further development. It was not her affair, she had said; that was merely how it struck her; but—she wondered whether the band *could* be induced to play the "Chanson Triste!"—

And so the printers' catalogue-business had been turned topsy-turvy.

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The printing-office was in Endell Street, and the printing was still done there; but the fashion-studio was there no longer. It was now in Oxford Street, not far from Manchester Square and the Wallace Collection. The single room on the top floor overlooked the vast interior square where, later, acres of glass roofs and flying bridges of iron were to arise; in a word, they had subrented part of the premises of Hallowell & Smith's, the huge Ladies' Emporium—and if you have never heard of Hallowell & Smith's it is not Hallowell & Smith's fault. A mutually profitable "dicker" that had something to do with Hallowell & Smith's minor printing made the place cheap; and, though the firm's Summer and Winter Catalogues were still drawn and printed elsewhere, nothing (it had seemed to Dorothy) would be lost by allowing Hallowell & Smith's to discover presently that they had facilities for this kind of work actually on the spot.... This was the kind of hint she had dropped to the power behind the printer who had shown himself so fussy about the ice-pail and the music "by request." She had no plan, but streams did seem to set in certain directions, and it was not much good going against them. They had not obtained the order for Hallowell's Catalogues yet, but one thing at a time. Dorothy must learn her own part of the business first. She must practise her Fur-touch, graduating to Feathers, and so on to faces themselves. More might happen by and bye.

In one respect at least the change was not altogether for the better, for, bad as the rumble of the machines at Endell Street had been, Hallowell's mammoth rebuilding, which included much throwing down of old walls amid eruptions of lime and dust, and the running day and night of a crane the top of which lost itself in the blue air, was worse. These activities shook the whole fabric of the place, playing the very deuce with Torchon and Valenciennes. But in every other respect the change was not only an improvement, but the Fashion Studio now stood in the full stream of general developments. It only needed a time-serving, and, for choice, a feminine mind, and there was no telling what might not happen.

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To reach the upper room where the seven or eight girls worked, you had to pass from the lift along a long concrete-floored corridor and then through a large outer room that was one of the sitting-rooms of Hallowell's "living-in" female employees. Of the fashion-drawing factory Miss Porchester was head. She herself went out in the mornings to shops and warehouses to sketch, sometimes taking as many as a dozen buses and cabs in the course of a single morning; and in the afternoon she returned with, the fruits of her wanderings—or, rather, with the seeds, for they were yet to grow and ripen marvellously. Fat Miss Benson took them in hand first. With a foot-rule by her side for checking, lest there should be too much even of a good thing, she roughed in those elongated and fish-like figures which, if you would see them in normal proportion, you must squint at aslant up the tilted page. Then Miss Hurst or blonde Miss Umpleby took over the drawing, further developing the Tea-gown or the Walking Costume, or the lady in her corsets riding in a motor car, or whatever it might be. From them it passed to Miss Smedley or Miss Cowan, who worked it up with lamp-black or Chinese-white or what not, for Miss Ruffell to put in the faces, large-eyed and soulful. Dorothy measured and squared the production, gave a last look to see that the fish-like ideal had not been lost in its progress from hand to hand and that there was nothing else that might start a young man on the downward path, and put a line round it if a line was needed. Pigtailed little Smithie affixed the protecting piece of tissue-paper. It was finished.

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Miss Porchester, gaunt and dark, sat at a little table apart, where she could keep an eye on her staff. She kept the register of work done, and saw that the requisite "points" were properly emphasized—the new skirt "set" with a slight difference, the hat tilted an inch lower over one eyebrow than during the season before. She received the travellers, and taught her girls, if they must talk to one another as they worked, to do so without removing their eyes from their sheets of Bristol-board. Quite animated conversations would go on by the hour together without so much as a head moving; and Dorothy's own blue eyes, which were never so wide open but that they could always open a little wider, would contract and dilate over her work as she talked as if they had contained a pulse.

Whatever Amory might think about it, the other girls too thought Dorothy lucky to have had a real art-training. They had not been to the McGrath.... And, quite apart from the *cachet* this gave her, Dorothy herself certainly had a way with her. Miss Smedley, for example, was as old as Dorothy, but Miss Smedley, for no reason that could be described, always seemed to move in an atmosphere of kindly-bestowed pity; but nobody would have dreamed of pitying Dorothy. It was very much the other way. As if they had known her methods with sleeping-partners (which they did not), they looked up to her. Her sayings were repeated, her mistakes covered up for her; and even Miss Porchester never gave her "one for herself." She was the only one of the girls so exempted.

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One morning at about the time Miss Geraldine Towers became engaged to Mr. Massey, the

fashion-studio was able at last to draw a long breath of relief and to tell itself that the worst of the half-yearly rush was about over. The last page of the last Summer Catalogue had been sent off to Endell Street, and for a month or two only the normal trickle of odd jobs would be coming in. Even the rule about not moving your head as you talked had been relaxed, and only one cloud marred the general sense of release—the certainty that some of the girls would be “given a holiday” until the next rush began in the Autumn. The girls were discussing this that afternoon. Miss Porchester had gone to Endell Street; fat Miss Benson, her second in command, had passed through the adjoining sitting-room half an hour before, and was guessed to be talking on the stairs with Mr. Mooney, of Hallowell’s Handkerchief Department; and Dorothy also intended to take the risk of Miss Porchester’s inquiring for her and to fly off presently to Cheyne Walk.

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“Oh, *you* needn’t worry, Smithie,” said Miss Umpleby, her chair tilted back so that her primrose hair and clasped hands rested against the coats and jackets on the wall. “They always want somebody to run about and be useful. Hilda and I’ll be the ladies till August. We shall come back again with the Furs.”

Hilda Jeyes had her elbows on the table; she was munching an apple.

“It all comes of our being kept at the one thing, over and over again,” she declared. “Look at me: what am I? A Camisole Specialist! Why, if I was to be set to do Damask, or Mourning, or Boots, like Benny, I should no more know where to begin than I could fly! If only that girl on the *Daily Spec* would die! I’d be after her place in two twos, I promise you!”

“They never die when they’re on newspapers,” Miss Umpleby remarked, with the detached air of one who reminds her hearers of a well-known fact in mortality statistics. “Splendid thing for the health. I wonder the doctors don’t prescribe it.”

“And when they get married they stick to their jobs just the same,” another girl commented. (To be on the staff of a newspaper, it may be said, is the prize of the fashion-artist’s profession.)

“No ladies with one foot on a chair for the *Daily Spec*, like the one you began this morning,” Miss Umpleby remarked.

“Well, what chance have we here, I should like to know, with one roughing out all the time, and another doing nothing but heads, and another the curly-cues! There isn’t one of us except Benny who could do a job right through!” Hilda Jeyes grumbled.

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“Just so that we can turn the stuff out quicker!” somebody else joined in. “‘Holiday’s’ a good name for it, I *don’t* think!”

Miss Umpleby turned her eyes nonchalantly to the coats above her head. “Monte Carlo for me, I think,” she said. “Then I shall be able to put in those petticoat bodices with Casino backgrounds and do somebody else out of a job.”

Hilda Jeyes threw away the core of her apple. “You needn’t growl, anyway, Umpy. You are engaged.”

“So I am,” remarked Miss Umpleby, as if she had just remembered it. “I think I’ll ring my source of trouble up now.” She brought the chair down on to its fore-legs again. “Tell me if Benny comes. You can all listen if you like.—Hallo, Exchange!—One-six-double-one Hop!”

And at the telephone on Miss Porchester’s table she began a conversation in which the words “Carlton ... or the Savoy if you like ... Mentone ... I’ve a little time on my hands now,” recurred from time to time.

Dorothy herself had more than once thought that this sub-division of work was hard on the girls. Umpy lived with her mother near dotting Hill Gate Station, and was engaged to a boy who got thirty shillings a week as a clerk in the Russian Import trade; Benny and Hilda Jeyes shared cheap rooms somewhere in Bloomsbury; the others lunched on buns or brought bread-and-butter or sandwiches in paper, and would have had to spend an hour in looking for a dropped shilling had they been so fortunate as to possess a shilling to drop. All were at the mercy of the half-yearly rush and the intervals of idleness between. Dorothy had sometimes wondered whether she herself ought not to have sponged on her relations rather than keep one of these needy girls out of a place.... But she was a practical young woman, with more plans than theories, and eyes that did not carry over many of the dreams of the night into the working days; and beyond a certain point she refused to shoulder the responsibilities of a world she had had no hand in making. Up to that point—well, if (say, by and by) she were ever to “run” a studio of this kind, she would see that the work was not so sub-divided that her girls had no chance in the open market. And she would offer now and then a little inducement over and above wages, and would arrange for them to get quite good but shop-soiled things at a fair reduction, and would get them to take an interest in their work, and would stop Hilda sucking her brushes, and would have the brick taken out of that ventilation-pipe, and another set of wash-bowls, and would annex that adjoining room, and—and—well, anyway, if Catalogues had to be done like this, she would see that those who did them were no worse off with her than with anybody else, and perhaps a bit better.... And now she must get off to Cheyne Walk. She rose, and went for her hat and raincoat.

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“You’re not off, are you, Lennie?” said Miss Umpleby. She had finished talking into the telephone. Her last words had been, “Mean old thing!... Well, will you treat me to eighteen-pennorth at the Finbec, then?... Fried plaice and chips?... All right....”

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“Yes. Another stroke in my unfortunate family, tell Porchester. They came in a cab to fetch me. Good-bye....”

She sought the lift, descended, passed along the narrow alley to the side street, and caught an Oxford Street bus.

Her reason for leaving early was to warn Amory that guests might be expected at Cheyne Walk that evening. Going out to lunch that day she had met, coming away from the Wallace, a party of her old fellow-students of the McGrath. She had recognized them fifty yards away up Duke Street—tall Cosimo Pratt, without hat and with a grey flannel turned-down collar about his shapely

throat, Walter Wyron in his snuff-coloured corduroys, Laura Beamish, Katie Deedes, and two or three other girls in clothes that (it seemed to Dorothy) looked as if a touch of opaque Chinese-white had somehow found its way into clear greens and russets and browns.—“Why, there’s Dorothy!” Walter Wyron had exclaimed, turning from the Peasant Industries Shop on the west side of the street. “Hi, Dorothy!...” (Half the street had turned to see who shouted so.) “Dorothy!...” (The other half of the street had turned.) “Come here and tell us how’s Fashions!...”

They had borne Dorothy off to a teashop to lunch.

Dorothy sometimes wished that they would find a newer joke than that about her occupation. It seemed to come virgin to them every time they met. It was not as if she had had any illusions about it. Moreover, when you came to think of it, Walter Wyron (much as Dorothy admired his decorative drawings in black and white), only published one of them every three or four months, and lived on his hundred and fifty a year the rest of the time. And handsome Cosimo Pratt had never published a drawing nor exhibited a painting in his life. Of course, even their failures were as much higher than Dorothy’s successes as the heavens are higher than the earth: but Miss Porchester would not have trusted one of them with a Summer or Winter Catalogue cover. In her secret heart Dorothy was rather glad that Amory had not accepted her own offer of a day or two before. Mercier was going to do it. And Mercier didn’t suppose it would be bought for the nation when it was done.

But for all that they had rather rubbed Dorothy’s job in at lunch that day, and, when they had tired of doing so directly, had continued to do so indirectly by asking, in altered tones, questions about Amory and what she was doing. When (they wanted to know) *was* that show of hers going to be? *Why* didn’t she hurry Hamilton Dix up? Didn’t Amory know that that Harris girl was painting all her subjects and had one at the Essex Gallery now? A talent like Amory’s!—

“You’d better come and ask her,” Dorothy had replied. “Why not all come round to-night? Cosimo, you’re quite near, and Laura could fetch her guitar—”

“No! Really?” Cosimo had broken out in his glad, rich voice. “I say, shall we all go?”

“I’m on,” Walter Wyron had cried eagerly.

“You could fetch your guitar, couldn’t you, Laura?”

“And Amory hasn’t heard Walter’s new recitation—”

“Good. We’ll come.”

“Rather!”

And now Dorothy was hurrying to Cheyne Walk to help Amory to prepare.

She reached the room over the greengrocer’s shop at half-past four, and found Amory in a long pinafore, painting. “You needn’t knock off,” she said, when she had made her announcement; “I’ll go out and buy in.”

But whether it was that Amory was in difficulties with her work, or whether her pulse had suddenly bounded at the thought of a party really after her own heart, she threw down her palette.

“Oh no, rather not!” she cried. “I’ll come with you. Just half a minute; I’ll wash my brushes when we come back. How ripping!”

Joyously she snatched down from the hook her porringer hat; her eyes shone as she thrust the enamel-headed pins through it. She had not seen Cosimo for several weeks, the others for months and months, and she was pining, simply pining, for a party that a rational person could enjoy. So excited was she, and so full of the preparations for their guests, that she quite forgot their own dinner; it was Dorothy who stopped at the butcher’s for three-quarters of a pound of steak, and, at the confectioner’s remembered the Chelsea buns. At a wine-shop they bought a flask of Chianti, and at a grocer’s nuts, biscuits, and a box of dates. Walter and Cosimo could be relied on to provide cigarettes, and oranges and bananas were to be had at the shop downstairs. As the clock of Chelsea Church struck five they descended Oakley Street again, so laden with parcels that the disturbance of a single package or paper bag would have meant the spilling of the lot. For the oranges and bananas Amory went downstairs again. By the time she returned Dorothy had taken a brush and was making ready to sweep.

“Oh, please,” said Amory, “just a minute till I’ve put my canvas out of the way—and it won’t take me three minutes to clean my palette and wash my brushes—”

She carried her wet canvas out on to the landing beyond the warped door.

If, while Dorothy swept, Amory lingered a little over her brush-washing and palette-cleaning, and then proceeded to make of the wasted paint a paper “butterfly,” she had this justification—that she swept as badly as she washed up. Moreover, she was already running over beforehand the heads of a really elevating talk she wanted to have with Cosimo on the subject of Eugenics. Cosimo was the kind of man you could talk to sanely and sensibly about these things; he could discuss them with her in the proper inquiring spirit, and without either mock modesty or a thought behind. He despised mock modesty and the thought behind as much as Amory herself despised them; he had frequently said so. That, with the knowledge that she herself was by a good deal the cleverer of the two, seemed to Amory the really satisfactory relation. They were “the best of pals.” Amory liked the expression. It was so unlike Glenerne and the leers about the aquarium corner.

Therefore, as Dorothy, sweeping, asked her how her aunt’s engagement-party had gone off, she replied with an almost indulgent laugh. Dorothy wouldn’t believe (she said) how absurd her aunt could be. Dorothy, burrowing with the broom into a corner, laughed too.

“All aunts are, my dear. (Mind your foot.) Don’t talk to me about aunts. I’ve got some, thanks. (Sorry, and I’m afraid I shall sweep all the dust on you if you stand there.) Our latest is a frightful row between Aunt Emmie, that’s the one in Calcutta, and Aunt Eliza, the one in Wales. All about some diamonds everybody’d forgotten all about, but some stupid old busybody of a bank-manager



must go and turn them up, and Aunt Emmie says grandfather gave them to *her*, and Aunt Eliza says he gave them to *her*, and ... well, there you are. The less said about those diamonds the better in a family like ours, *I* should have said. (Oh dear, Amory, *do* stand somewhere else!) Cousin Clara says they're pretty sure to be the wages of somebody's sin. Talk about your one aunt! I've a dozen, half of 'em not quite right in their heads ... (Amory, if you don't move I shall hit you with the brush!)..."

Amory moved, finished her "butterfly," and began to cut it out with a pair of scissors.

"I'll unpack the bananas," she said, as Dorothy laid the broom aside.

Deftly she unpacked the bananas; skilfully she took the oranges from their tissue-paper, dropping the tissue-paper on the floor. She arranged them on a large apple-green dish, which she set on the gate-legged table; and then she stood back surveying the colour and grouping while Dorothy peppered and salted and prepared to cook the three-quarters of a pound of steak. She turned the dish this way and that, seeking fresh lights to put it in. Amory's work was never done. Often she was busiest when she seemed most idle. *She* could not say to eye and brain, as Dorothy could say to mere hands, "It is finished now ... you may rest..." It was not finished even when Dorothy had set the table, cooked the steak, and made all ready for serving. There were the yellow bananas and the glowing oranges to paint in her mind, on the white cloth now instead of on the oaken board...

They dined and cleared away, and, while Dorothy washed up, Amory replaced the dish of fruit on the table, set out the biscuits and cakes on the Persian Rose plates, and made of all, with the flask of Chianti, another still-life group. Then she disposed the chairs as if by happy accident, and poked the fire. The casement looking over the river became an oblong of dim blue; the fire burnt up, and glowed on the black and sagging old ceiling; and Amory hoped that the people overhead were going to be quiet to-night.

Then, at a little after eight, there came from outside, somewhere beyond the Pier Hotel, the sound of a baritone voice. It was Walter Wyron, singing "The Raggle-taggle Gipsies." Amory started up.

"Here they come!" she cried, clapping her hands.

And she ran down the stairs to meet them.

#### IV

##### THE MCGRATH

AMORY liked people to be one thing or the other; that was the real reason why she loathed and abhorred Glenerne. She had had ripping times amid the naphtha-lights of the Saturday night street-markets and at Bank Holiday merry-go-rounds and cocoanut-shies; and, of course, when Van Eeden on Dreams came up for discussion, or Galton on Heredity, or Pater on the Renaissance, or the clear-eyed Weiniger on the Relation of the Sexes, she was again entirely at home. On the heights or in the depths she felt the real throb of Humanity's heart. But those dreadful middle grades! Those terrible estate-agents and booking-clerks and bank-cashiers and brewers' travellers of whom the world seemed to be so full! As so many phenomena in the science of vision—solid objects for colour to possess and light to fall upon—she admitted they had their uses; but she was entirely uninterested in them otherwise. Of all the fine things Cosimo had done in the past, she thought he had done nothing finer nor more full of profound meaning than when he had once given a crossing-sweeper a shilling, taken the broom from his hand, and for an hour swept the crossing himself. It took true nobility to do that. Mr. Geake could not have done it, nor Mr. Wellcome, nor the egregious young man in the green knitted waistcoat who had advised her to take care of her eyes, and had then told her that the Crystal Palace was a "funny place to go for a squeeze"—Mr. Edmondson.

All talking at once, Amory and her half-dozen guests trooped back up the narrow stairs.

"Well, here we are——" they announced themselves.

"Donkey's years since we've seen you, Amory——"

"How are you?"

"How's Life and Work?"

"This is Bielby, Amory ... don't suppose you know him ... we just brought him along——"

"You should see the view from here in the day-time, Bielby ... stunning!——"

"Chuck your things down ... mind Laura's guitar——"

They threw their hats and coats and cloaks into the window-seat, and filled the room as they stood talking, laughing and straightening their hair. Amory asked Cosimo for a match, and approached the two candles that stood in the brass sticks on the gate-legged table.

"Oh, don't light up!" three or four broke out at once; "the firelight's so jolly!"

"No?"

"Positively sinful to spoil this effect!——"

"Pull the chairs up round the fire—the floor'll do for me——"

"Me too——"

"I'll lean against your knees, Dorothy——"

"Oh, now I've left my handkerchief in my pocket! Lend me yours, Cosimo——"

"Well, Amory——!"

They settled about the hearth, Cosimo Pratt with his shoulder-blades against Dorothy's knees,

Walter Wyron propping up Laura Beamish, Katie Deedes and Mr. Bielby on chairs, Dickie Lemesurier with the firelight shining on her peacock-feather yoke at one end of the fender, Amory curled up against the coal-box at the other.

"I say—Amory's hair!—" Walter Wyron broke rapturously out, as Amory settled into her place.

"Quite unpaintable, Walter," said Laura Beamish, peering over the edge of her hand.

"Suppose so—but *isn't* it Venetian!—"

"Just put that green plate with the oranges in her lap!—"

"Oh ... magnificent!"

It did indeed make an astonishing glow.

"Well," said Cosimo Pratt presently, when each had applied his or her adjective to Amory's appearance, "and how's Jellies and Mrs. 'Ill, Amory?"

You would not now have known Amory for the same girl who had conversed with Mr. Edmondson on the progress of illustrated journalism and stately inclined her head when the awful Mr. Wellcome had offered her a liqueur-glass of the famous old Spanish brandy. She gave a low rippling laugh. She snuggled contentedly up against the coal-box.

"What! hasn't Dorothy told you?" she ejaculated. If Dorothy hadn't told, that was really rather nice of Dorothy.

"No," said Cosimo, turning his huge black-coffee-coloured eyes on her, all anticipation.

"Jellies is engaged!" Amory announced, with another low laugh.

Cosimo started dramatically. "*No!*"

Amory nodded. She could always rely on Cosimo.

"You don't say so! Oh, *do* tell me! Do you think!—" a short pause, "—he's worthy of her?"

"Just look at Cosimo's face!" bubbled Laura Beamish. It bore an expression of the deepest mock gravity.

"*Do* tell me!" Cosimo implored....

Mrs. 'Ill was the woman who came in twice a week to do up the studio; Jellies (so called because she worked at the Jelly Factory across the river) was her daughter. Cosimo spoke again, in tragic tones.

"At least tell me whether he's 'in' or 'out'!" he begged.

"Bielby's out of this; tell Bielby, Amory," several voices said at once; and Amory's pretty golden eyes sought Mr. Bielby. She explained.

Jellie's fiancé (she said) was 'in'—in prison. It had been (said Amory), oh, so killing! He had snatched a jacket from outside a second-hand clothes' shop, and had run away with it and had put it on: but he had not had time to remove the wooden hanger—Mr. Bielby knew those wooden hangers they hang coats on?—well, he'd not had time to remove the hanger before a policeman had collared him, and there he had been, swearing the coat was his, with the wire hook sticking up at the back of his neck! Fancy—just fancy!—the psychological situation! Really, somebody ought to write to William James about it!—'Orris ('Orris Jackman his name was—after orris-root, Amory supposed) vowing that he'd bought the coat weeks ago, and then the policeman putting his finger through the hook and hauling him away!...

"And Mrs. 'Ill—" Amory rippled on to Mr. Bielby—

"Oh yes—tell him about Mrs. 'Ill and the Creek!" they cried.

"Mrs. 'Ill, you see, Mr. Bielby, keeps what she calls a Creek—that's a *crèche*! (We *must* all go and see it one of these days!) It's in the World's End Passage, next door to a fried fish shop, and there are twenty babies, and the woman at the fried fish shop keeps an eye on them when Mrs. 'Ill comes in here on Wednesdays and Saturdays, that is, unless Jellies happens to be out of work—"

"But the hens are the best, Amory—tell him about the hens—" they prompted.

With that Amory was fairly launched. Mrs. 'Ill (she said) not only took charge of other people's babies; she kept hens also, in a sort of back scullery, and at tea-time they sat in her lap and ate winkles off her plate, and she said she felt towards them just as if they were her own! Hens and babies—*Figurez vous!*—And there was always a christening party or something at the Creek, to which the hens went too, and—(they *must* listen to this!)—at one party they'd had, last Christmas, nobody'd been to bed for two nights, and Mrs. 'Ill had explained that they'd had to cut it short because of 'Ill having been dead only a week!—

"Oh, but about 'Ill—he hasn't heard about 'Ill—"

"Well, her name isn't 'Ill at all, you see. That didn't come out till her husband died. His real name was Berry, or Barry, or something, and he signed the register 'Barry' when he was married. But it seems he'd been in the Army and deserted, and was afraid of being caught, so he called himself Hill. But (here's Westermarck for you!) when his first baby was going to be born his conscience seems to have been troubled (it would make a lovely psychological story, Mrs. 'Ill with the child and Mr. 'Ill with the conscience), and so he made a sort of bet with himself, that if it was a boy he'd give himself up, and if it was a girl he'd just go on being Mr. 'Ill and a deserter. And of course it was Jellies, and so Mrs. 'Ill's Mrs. 'Ill...."

There was nothing of the snob about Amory. These were the people among whom she had moved during her painting of Saturday night scenes and street markets, and she did not pretend that they were not. And she had an undeniable gift for such narrations. Laura Beamish, who tried to cap her with some story of a Charing Cross flower-girl and a black eye, fell by comparison quite flat; and even Katie Deedes's tale of her mother's entrée-cook did not gain quite the same applause. And Walter Wyron's, about the ex-sergeant who had looked after his father's house-boat, was an old one. Yes, Amory liked people to be one thing or the other.

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But she did not tell any stories about Mr. Wellcome and Mr. Geake.

From these and similar stories to the larger issues of Democracy was but a step, and as Dorothy rose and opened the flask of Chianti, the step was taken. The Fabian Nursery and the S.D.F. came all in the stride.... The space within the fender became half full of banana-skins and orange peel; the fire-light shone up on the eager faces; and Amory, in the half-shadow by the coal-box, fed her eyes on effects.

What ripping drawing there was in Dickie Lemesurier's neck as it issued from its square-cut, peacock's-feather-embroidered frame! What a perfectly glorious colour Walter's snuff-coloured corduroys took in the glow (only glaze on glaze of burnt-sienna could ever get it!) And how stunning was the shadow of Cosimo's hand over his handsome chin as he put the cigarette into his mouth!... Cosimo's hair clung like tendrils about his temples and over the back of his soft grey collar; Amory had made at one time and another a dozen drawings of his splendid throat; she hoped to make a dozen more. She was very proud of having Cosimo for a friend. He set down appearances at their proper value, no more. He was quite free from those stupid old-fashioned prejudices that, in so arrogantly setting apart certain subjects as undiscussable between young men and young women, had so delayed the real freedom that, for all that, was coming. She laughed as Cosimo, who had just put a lump of coal on the fire with his fingers, asked Dorothy whether he might wipe them on her stockings, and made some remark about Spring Novelties when Dorothy said that he might not. It was only Cosimo. Everybody understood. There was just that touch of gentle womanliness in Cosimo (Amory thought) that perfects and finishes a man.

In watching Cosimo and the others, but especially Cosimo, Amory had a little disregarded the conversation. She was recalled to it by a sudden exclamation from Katie Deedes—

"Oh no—carnations for Dickie, and just green leaves for Amory—"

"Late ones, slightly turning," Laura Beamish suggested, peering critically over her hand again as she strove to compass a mental image of Amory wearing the leaves.

"Or green grapes," Walter Wyron suggested, peering also.

"Amory, do take down your hair!" they suddenly implored.

Amory grumbled sweetly. It was such a bother to put it up again, she said. But Cosimo, starting from his seat against Dorothy's knees, cried, "Oh yes, Amory!" and took a fresh place by her feet. "With the firelight through it it should be just unbelievable!" he cried excitedly.... So Amory's hands went to the great red-gold fir cone; she shook down the heavy plaits; and Cosimo's fingers parted and disposed them.

"How's that? Wait—just a minute—it wants just one touch—there!" he said, drawing back.

Cries of admiration broke out. Amory was as hidden by it as a weeping elm is hidden by its leaves.

"Oh—green leaves, most decidedly!" cried Walter Wyron with conviction. "Amory, you really *must* paint yourself so—none of us could do it—*what* a sonnet Rossetti would have written!"

"Or Swinburne—"

"Or Baudelaire—!"

"Or Verlaine!"

Rapt they gazed for some moments longer....

"Green leaves for Amory, then, and carnations for Dickie.... What's Dorothy?"

"Oh, Dot's a tea-rose—"

"Periwinkle, to go with her eyes—"

"'*Pervenche*' they always call it in the Catalogues, don't they, Dot? Must have superior terms for Catalogues!"

"And amethyst earrings—"

"No, pearls—"

"I say amethyst!"

"I say pearls!"

"Pooh! Pearls are obviously Laura's wear!"

"Laura! My dear chap! Why, what were emeralds made for if they weren't made for Laura?..."

At this point the party split up into two cliques, Amory turning to Cosimo again, and Walter and the others continuing their semi-symbolistic pastime.

Amory had not yet told Cosimo that she intended presently to make this room her home. Cosimo was leaning against her knees now, and had tied two strands of her hair together in a loose knot on his breast; and when she spoke to him he turned up his fine face so that she saw it upside down. When Cosimo had removed into his studio near the Vestry Hall seven or eight months ago, Amory had spent whole days with him, reading aloud passages from one or other of her Association volumes while he had papered and distempered and hung his curtains, and nothing had ever been so jolly; and so she told him now of her own approaching change. He twined half round within the loop of hair.

"Give you a hand? Rather! By Jove, with your view you ought to be able to make this place perfectly ripping! How are you thinking of doing your windows?"

Amory had known that he would be enthusiastic. She began to say something about muslin, but Cosimo shook his handsome tendrilled head peremptorily. He loosed himself from the bond of hair and faced round, cross-legged, before her.

"Oh no, you mustn't dream of having muslin! I know something *far* better than that! There's a remnant-sale at Peter Hardy's, and they have some shop-soiled casement-cloth at one-four-three double width, all colours; *that's* your stuff! Oh, decidedly!... Then stencil it—something like Dickie's yoke there, only a broader treatment, of course—and there you are! They'll take down and put up again in a couple of jiffs, and you have to put muslin up wet, and it catches every bit

of dust, and only washes about twice—oh no: the casement-cloth by all means!... Now, what furniture have you got?..."

He entered wholeheartedly into her plans; he was so handsome and intuitive, so big and tall, yet so almost femininely sympathetic. Amory could have hugged him, there was so little of the mere superior blatant male about him.... They plunged into a discussion—or rather Cosimo plunged into a harangue—on the most satisfactory way of staining floors....

Dorothy had been talking to Mr. Bielby, the young man who had been "just brought along," and had discovered that he was still at the McGrath. Suddenly she gave a laugh and a call to Laura Beamish. [77]

"I say, Laura! Mr. Jowett's still just the same as ever, Mr. Bielby says," she said.

Walter Wyron broke into a laugh. "Jowett? 'Pon my word, I'd almost forgotten poor old Jowett! Immortelle's *his* flower, I should say! What's Jowett's latest, Bielby?"

Mr. Bielby related the "latest" of the Painting Professor through whose hands so many students had passed, all so different and all so exactly alike, that he had been driven to find what peace of mind he could in a saturnine resignation. Walter Wyron laughed again.

"Dear old Jowett! But he seems to be getting a bit below his game. He used to get off better ones than that. Do you remember him on the womanly woman, Dickie?"

"I remember his looking at my life-drawing and asking me if I couldn't sew," Dickie Lemesurier replied, bristling still at the recollection.

"And he told me my drawing was the best in the class, and that didn't mean it was worth the time I'd spent on it," Walter chuckled. "The joke is that poor old Jowett can say such funny things and never dream that they're funny!"

"Why, he didn't think tremendously of Amory herself!" said Katie Deedes indignantly.

"And still," Laura remarked with dreamy irony, "I suppose we *ought* to hide our abashed heads really—but somehow or other we go on painting——" [78]

"—still survive——"

"—bear up——"

"—quite happy in our ignorance——"

"Curiously blind all the world must be except Jowett——"

"Rather dreadful to know you're the only wise man left——"

"Funny old stick!... But it's only a pose really——"

"That exactly describes it——"

"Certainly the immortelle for Jowett!"...

But the party proper had not begun yet: Walter had not recited, and Laura Beamish's guitar still lay in its case in the window-seat. Katie Deedes, who always kept a sort of tally of the good things said and awarded marks (as it were) to the sayers, had not thought of striking her balance yet.

"Give Dickie another cigarette, Cosimo, and then do let's have a song, Laura!" Amory exclaimed; and Walter Wyron jumped up to get Laura's instrument. It had long, many-coloured streamers of ribbon, which Walter disposed like *serpentins* about Laura as she sat, and Laura, turning pegs and tenderly strumming, asked what she should sing.

"Oh, 'The Trees they do Grow High!'" said Amory quickly; "and then 'The Sweet Primeroses' and 'The Clouded Yellow Butterfly,' please!—Do stop wriggling against my knees, Cosimo—and oh, how exquisite!—look, the moon's just coming in at the window!" [79]

And Laura's voice rose on the tender strumming as if a light and fluty sound planed over the intervals between chord and chord.

"Lovely!" Amory murmured.... "Please, that verse again, about the ribbon, Laura!"

"And she tied a piece of ribbon round his bonnie, bonnie waist,  
To let the ladies know he was married,"

Laura sang....

"Oh, lovely!" Amory murmured, her golden eyes closed.

Then Walter, whose father was Herman Wyron the impresario, recited an unpublished poem of Wilde's, following it with one of Aristide Bruant's in French; and after that Laura sang again, 'The Morning Dew.' Amory wished that she was coming into her new abode on the morrow, and that these delightful companions might come to visit her every night. She had whispered to Cosimo to get up quietly and get her a crayon and a piece of paper; putting her hair from her eyes with the fingers of her left hand, she quietly made notes on a piece of paper on the floor with her right; and "Amory's going to do it!" the whisper went softly round.... Amory felt that she really must "do" it. It ought to "come" beautifully—Laura with the guitar and the coloured streamers, so—Walter's thin face at its most pensive, so—Katie Deedes in that adorable curled-up pose at Laura's feet, with the jewel of fire-light on her shoe-buckle and her face quite lost in the shadow, so—and perhaps when she came to paint it, she would get Cosimo to stand quite behind, where the moonlight on the window-sill was almost of a sulphur-flame blue.... And as she saw Amory busily sketching, Laura did not put down the guitar, but went on softly singing song after song, from her *Somersetshire Songs* and the *Persian Garden*, her fingers seeming to cull the sparse and chosen chords from the strings as if each one had been a picked flower. How different from Glenerne, with its brainless vamping and its bawled choruses from *The Scottish Students' Song Book!*... Amory, as she worked, now revelled in the thought that she would not be at Glenerne much longer.... [80]

The sulphur-blue moonlight crept farther along the lattice, and shimmered on the river as if a piece of silver foil had been crumpled and straightened out again; and on the smoky, sagging

ceiling the shadows fluctuated, soft and enormous, whenever a head or a hand was moved. Laura had laid aside her guitar now, and they, had drawn more closely together, and were telling ghost-stories. Dickie Lemesurier told one that had happened to somebody her mother knew as well as they knew one another sitting there; and then, as Amory put aside her hair again and began to speak, she gave a little shriek: "No—not that *frrrightful* one out of Myers, Amory!"... But Amory told it, and Katie Deedes remembered the dark stairs, and said that she would never dare to go down them.... So by and by Cosimo got up and lighted the two candles, and the terrors receded as the flames crept up, and Laura was persuaded to sing just one more song and then (she said) she really must go—her people would be wondering whatever had become of her. But Walter said that that was all right: he'd see her home. And Mr. Bielby would go along with Katie and Dorothy, who went together, and of course Cosimo would take Amory herself. Laura tucked the guitar with the coloured ribbons into its case, and reluctantly they sought their hats and coats. Amory was putting her hair up again. Cosimo took two blazing cobs of coal from the fire, putting them out of harm's way on an iron shovel; and as Dorothy saw her friends out and locked the door, the cheerful glow on the ceiling could still be seen where the upper part of the door warped inwards. They groped their way down the dark stairs, and passed in a body up Oakley Street; and at the corner by the King's Road they said good-night.

"We walk, I suppose?" Cosimo said to Amory.

"Rather!" said Amory.

They turned their faces towards Shepherd's Bush.

It was as they walked up Redcliffe Gardens that Amory suddenly said, with a little sigh of regret, "Poor Dorothy!"

Cosimo nodded. He always understood so quickly; that was the wonderful thing about Cosimo. —"You mean she was a bit out of it?"

"She only spoke about three times, and that was to Mr. Bielby."

Cosimo gave a shrug, and that was delicate of him too. He knew that it would be a pleasure to Amory to defend a lightly disparaged friend. Amory did defend Dorothy.

"You really underrate her, Cosimo. Of course there's that dreadful job of hers, but she does know better really. I do hope she wasn't bored."

"Well, you can't help Dorothy's shortcomings, Amory," Cosimo remarked, as if true artists had sorrows enough of their own without taking those of fashion-artists on their shoulders.

"But I'm worried about her, Cosimo——"

"Of course you are," Cosimo replied promptly. "That's what I always find so fine about you. The stronger *always* worries about the weaker. It seems to be a Law——"

"Do you think it is a Law?" Amory asked thoughtfully.

"Well, *isn't* it? Just look at it, now...."

Cosimo began to set it forth. Halfway up North End Road Amory had reluctantly to confess that it did seem to be a Law. She had suspected it before, but never, never had it been made quite so clear to her. She resolved that she must be very gentle with Dorothy. At that moment she was very fond of her indeed.

She continued her walk with Cosimo.

## V

### POUNDS AND SHILLINGS

WHEN Mr. Hamilton Dix, the renowned critic, had first mentioned Amory in print, he had made a perhaps pardonable error about her sex. But the error itself had been a compliment. In speaking of "Mr. Amory Towers" he had been misled by the rugged masculinity of "The Pavlovs," her second exhibited picture.

Amory was not sure that she liked Mr. Dix very much. He seemed to her to have a rather remarkable faculty for slightly impairing the value of everything of which he wrote or spoke. His conclusions were undeniable; when Mr. Hamilton Dix had pronounced on a thing Q.E.D. might be written after that thing; there was no more to be said about it. But somehow all the fun had gone out of it. You told yourself, grossly unfairly, that if it interested Mr. Hamilton Dix it had no further interest for you. That was your loss, since Mr. Dix usually fastened on the best things. In appearance he was a big man with an overpowering presence, a promising eye, and brown curls that frothed all over his head like the "top" of a mug of porter; and you wondered whether a person could ever be so glad to see anybody whomsoever as Mr. Hamilton Dix appeared to be to see everybody. He still occasionally called Amory "Mr. Towers" by way of a joke.

Mr. Dix had no official connection with the Crozier Gallery. He frequently wrote of "another admirable Exhibition at the Crozier which no serious student of art must miss," or "the gift of discovering the best among our younger artists which the proprietors of the Crozier seem to possess," but that was all. As a professional critic he was not eligible for membership of the artists' clubs, but he blew like a March gale through their studios, and the smaller and poorer the studio the more he irradiated it with the light of his optimistic eye.

During their earlier interviews he had carried Amory entirely off her feet. Though his tongue had cautioned and disclaimed, there had been no resisting the promise of his eye. Croziers' were going to take her up, and—well, at the present stage "Mr. Towers" (ha, ha) would quite understand that Mr. Dix did not want to say too much about it.—But his very reticence had

seemed a guarantee. It was not to be supposed that Messrs. Crozier took people up without a certain amount of belief in them.... And that had kept Amory's head in the clouds for quite a long time.... But little by little it had dawned on Amory that time seemed of very little value to Messrs. Crozier. A thousand years in their sight—or two years, to be precise—was but as yesterday. Delay after delay had occurred; Messrs. Crozier had not judged this time to be quite ripe, had considered that market to be a little overstocked; it was necessary, if the success was to be made for which they hoped, that the time should be chosen to the hour; and so on and so forth. —“You're far from being old yet, if I may say so without offence, Miss Towers,” Mr. Dix had remarked, rolling his eye over Amory's small, straight little figure, as if the organ had been mounted on an universal joint....

[85]

But lately it had looked as if things really were in motion again. Amory had had several letters with the Crozier embossing on the envelope flap, asking her to state at once in what state of advancement her works were, and once she had even had a prepaid telegram.... Then things had slowed up once more, and Amory had fumed.

Then, on a morning in May, a hansom cab drew up at the greengrocer's in Cheyne Walk, and Mr. Hamilton Dix, seeing Amory look out of the window, had waved his plump hand. He blundered up the stairs, and told Amory that he wished to see the canvases themselves, at once; at once, mind you.... There were between twenty-five and thirty of these canvases; they were stacked round the walls like the slates in a builder's yard; and Mr. Dix rolled his eye over them as Amory set them, one after another, on her easel. Then he rolled the eye over Amory herself again. Again Amory somehow had the impression of gluten. It was as if the eye had left traces where it had rested.

“Excellent. Admirable. Very choice. Very good indeed,” said Mr. Dix. “And now, Miss Towers, I'm afraid I've a disappointment for you.”

If Mr. Dix spoke of a disappointment it was sure not to be so bad as it sounded. Amory watched him a little anxiously, however. Another postponement would be really too bad.

“It's the old difficulty, the difficulty of fitting in the dates,” Mr. Dix said. “Mr. Hugh Crozier is deeply apologetic about it; he's quite as much disappointed as you can possibly be; but—well, I see I shall have to tell you a secret that must on no account pass these four walls.”

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Mr. Dix told his secret. It was that Herbertson, the brilliant pastelist, was not expected to live through the week.

“Not a word, mind,” Mr. Dix cautioned Amory. “It's only because the circumstances in your case are special that I have Mr. Hugh's permission to tell you this at all. But you see the difficulty it places him in. Poor Herbertson's exhibition will be ten times as valuable if it comes while the papers are still full of his obituary—valuable to poor Mrs. Herbertson, I mean—I'm sure you'll see that—”

Even the little thrill of being taken into Mr. Dix's confidence did not altogether compensate for Amory's disappointment. Another postponement now would mean no exhibition until the autumn. Slowly she took down from the easel the canvas she had last placed there.

“In that case I suppose there's no hurry,” she said, plunging into dejection once more.

But Mr. Dix's plump white hand went so far as to pat her reassuringly on the shoulder. The touch of his hand was only slightly more a contact than the resting of his eye.

“But you mustn't suppose that that is all I came to tell you,” he said. “My dear young lady, Mr. Crozier isn't that kind of man. He quite appreciates the hardship this is on you, and—don't look dismayed—it doesn't at all suit those pretty eyes—he has authorized me to make you a proposal.”

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“What?” said Amory. She did not like the remark about her pretty eyes. Cosimo never spoke of her pretty eyes.

“It is this: that I am empowered to ask you if it would be convenient to you that he should pay you a sum of money now, in advance and on account of sales, at our customary rate of interest in such cases, the pictures themselves to be our security, at a valuation to be arrived at in consultation between Mr. Crozier and yourself? In fact, substantially the same terms that were accepted by poor Herbertson.”

Amory's heart had given a leap. She did not entirely understand, but there was one thing that she did understand, namely, that Mr. Dix was offering her money at once. Money at once would enable her to begin her tenancy at Cheyne Walk at once.... Mr. Dix looked into the pretty eyes again, smiled, and continued.

“Well, what shall we say? If you were to ask my private opinion—but there, I've no right to try to influence you. But a considerable sum now—say a hundred pounds—eh—?”

He almost winked at Amory. It was as if he advised her to cry “Done” at once before Mr. Crozier had time to change his mind.

A hundred pounds! Amory thought....

“Mr. Crozier doesn't mean that he buys the pictures for a hundred pounds, does he?” she asked presently.

[88]

Mr. Dix laughed heartily. “My dear Miss Towers!... I can assure you that if Mr. Crozier had meant that he'd have had to find another messenger. No, no. You may regard this, if you like, as a mere *solatium* for the postponement—to be a first charge, of course, on whatever the pictures may ultimately fetch. That, we trust, will be a far greater sum. We're watching the market very keenly, and you may trust Mr. Crozier to make the most of it when it comes.... Well, what am I to tell him?”

A hundred pounds, now!—

Almost precipitately Amory accepted.

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Dix, as if Amory had performed a deed of bravery. And he bent gallantly over her hand.

Amory was beside herself with importance and delight. She had not now a mere promise from Croziers'—she was to have a proper contract, and a cheque for a hundred pounds posted to her the very moment the contract was signed. All that day she could not sit still for a minute in one place, and in the afternoon she suddenly started up, crammed her hat on her head, and ran out to the confectioner's in the King's Road, where the use of a telephone was to be had for twopence. She must tell Dorothy that she particularly wanted to see her at the studio that afternoon—why, she refused to say. Then, treading on air, she returned to the studio again, humming Laura's song "The Trees they do Grow High" as she went. Still singing, she began to potter about among the tins in the little cupboard, to see in which one the tea was kept.

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Dorothy came running in an hour later, just as Amory sat down before the plate of bread-and-butter and the saucerless cup she had placed on the little gate-legged table. Her eyes were as big as the heads of Amory's hatpins.

"What is it?" she cried breathlessly. "Not Cosimo——?"

"How Cosimo?" Amory asked, staring a little.

"I mean, I thought—I thought perhaps he'd proposed——"

Only for a moment or so was Amory a little stiff. "I think Cosimo can be trusted not to do anything quite so obvious," she replied. "You don't seem to understand, Dorothy.... No, it's far more exciting than that——"

And she told her.

Somehow it struck Amory that Dorothy received the news in an unexpectedly critical spirit. She had expected her to jump up with delight, or at least to say that she was glad. But instead of that Dorothy stared at Amory until Amory felt quite uncomfortable, and had to say "Well?" If this was the way Dorothy took it, she was rather sorry she had rung her up.

"Tell me what Mr. Dix said again," said Dorothy, still almost glaring at Amory.

Amory did so.

"And he's sending for the pictures to-morrow?"

"Yes, but you don't understand; this isn't the price of the pictures."

"And he doesn't say when the Show will be?"

[90]

Amory spoke gently; of course it must be difficult for Dorothy to realize that Picture Exhibitions were not Catalogues.

"It will be as soon as the market is favourable. They wait for a favourable market and then——" She made an upward gesture with her hands. "And you see, Dorothy," she explained kindly, "pictures aren't much good to a dealer either just to shut up in a cellar and keep. They buy them in order to sell them again. That's their business."

But Dorothy hardly seemed to hear.

"And they've got thirty pictures?" she asked presently.

"Twenty-eight."

"And can you exhibit new ones anywhere else?"

"They'll take the new ones too, at the same rate."

"But can you exhibit them anywhere else if you want?"

"Not for two years."

"Then," said Dorothy slowly, "I don't think I'd sign the contract, Amory."

Amory took a drink of tea; then she leaned back with the air of one who might say, "This is interesting."—"Oh? Why not?" she asked.

"Well, if it's as you say, it seems to me that they just muzzle you for two years."

"Well, I can hardly expect to have dealings with two sets of people at once, can I? I don't want to exhibit anywhere else. That would be to nobody's interest. And my Show would have been next except for——" She checked herself; she had almost forgotten that Herbertson's condition was a secret. "And anyway, Mr. Dix is going to write a number of articles on me at once, and Mr. Dix doesn't write articles for amusement, I can assure you. There are wheels within wheels, Dorothy. I call it a splendid bargain. *I'm* perfectly satisfied——"

[91]

The last words seemed to say, "So if I am, I don't see what anybody else has got to complain about." She was a little disappointed in Dorothy. She thought that friends ought to rejoice at one another's good fortune. She hoped there was not just a trace of jealousy in Dorothy's demeanour.

When Dorothy next spoke Amory wondered, too, whether she had come from Oxford Street entirely in obedience to her telephone-summons. For Dorothy, it appeared, also had something to say. For the last ten days Dorothy had been very little in the studio in Cheyne Walk; the reason for this, Amory understood, was that certain of her fellow-artists (she supposed they called themselves that) had been given a holiday; and now Dorothy was telling Amory that Cheyne Walk was about to see even less of her.

"You see," Dorothy explained, "I've known for some time that Miss Porchester was after a job on the *Daily Speculum*, and now she's got it. That means that Miss Benson takes her place. And as there are all sorts of things going on, I shall simply have to be there most of my time. There's this re-building, you see. Mr. Miller—he's Hallowell's manager, and we're doing one or two of their jobs now—he's making all sorts of new plans. They're going to launch out in all directions, he says; in fact, they're going to waken London up. So what I was going to say—I hope you won't find it inconvenient, and of course there are a few weeks yet——"

[92]

There was no need for Dorothy to be more precise. Amory nodded. Dorothy wanted to be released from her share of the Cheyne Walk place. That simplified things. With Amory living there the place certainly would not have been big enough for the pair of them.

"Well, if you hadn't mentioned it I suppose I should have had to do so," she said. "I think I shall be able to manage now."

"You mean you're accepting that offer?"

"Accepting it? Of course I'm accepting it," said Amory with a laugh. "I should be a perfect goose not to accept it."

"Oh, well," said Dorothy with a shrug. "I only meant that if any other dealer happened to want you you're tied hand and foot for two years."

Amory laughed again. "Oh, I'll risk that," she assured Dorothy. "And now," she said unselfishly, "tell me more about the changes at your place."

For of course she was glad that, in her own peculiar line, Dorothy also stood in advancement's way.

On the next day but one she signed her contract.

When, on the day following that, there was brought to Glenerne, by an ordinary postman, along with other ordinary letters, an ordinary envelope addressed to Miss Amory Towers with a cheque for ninety-five pounds inside it, Glenerne felt that it was indeed privileged to participate in the making of history. Amory was a little taken aback to find that interest at the rate of five per cent. had already been deducted from the sum; there seemed, not (of course) an indelicacy, but a very great promptitude about this clipping at the round figure. She would have liked the full hundred, if only to call hers for a day; and she had not *quite* realized that the euphemism "five per cent." meant five real pounds.—But that was not Glenerne's way of looking at it. The breakfast-table gaped with astonishment. Ninety-five pounds for Miss Amory's pictures!... Pictures, of course, *were* pictures; they had never denied that; very pretty to look at, and hang on walls and all that, especially water-colours: but—ninety-five pounds!... Had ninety-five tongues of fire settled upon Amory's bright head they could hardly have held her in greater awe. They looked at her anew. They had actually been living in the same house with this prodigious young woman! And Mr. Edmondson had asked her whether she did not get "fed up" with painting towards the end of the day! "Fed up!" *They* should think so! It would take a lot of feeding up of that sort before the boarders of Glenerne cried "Enough!"... Mr. Edmondson was not there when the cheque arrived; Mr. Edmondson rose at five-thirty, cleaned his boots, made himself a cup of tea over the little spirit-lamp in his bedroom, and was out of the house before half-past six; but Mr. Rainbow missed the nine-two that morning, and Uncle George, who never went to business before ten and (it was reverentially whispered) hardly needed to go before lunch unless he chose, took the whole morning off. He had something to say to Amory.—"He's going to advise her about investments," Mr. Geake murmured to Miss Addams as Mr. Massey and Amory left the breakfast-table together.

What Uncle George had really taken Amory apart for was, in the new turn events had taken, a delight crowning a delight. At any other time she would have had quite a number of interior comments to make on Mr. Massey's bashful communication; her attitude about such as have not the gift of continence was sometimes almost Pauline in its severity: but that morning all was a golden hurly-burly. Mr. Massey, in a corner of the double drawing-room that had been dusted, lisped, blushing, that he and her aunt had been talking matters over—that they had come to the conclusion that there seemed no sufficient reason why their marriage should not take place *earlier* than July—and so in the circumstances.... Here Mr. Massey had hissed himself to a complete standstill.

"There is really nothing to wait for," he went on presently, recovering a little. "I have taken the house on the Mall from the June quarter, and—and—I am sure you'll understand—at any rate I hope you will some day—"

Amory, hardly hearing, said that she hoped so too.

"So," Mr. Massey continued, "we had come to that decision, and now this happy circumstance has befallen—I think my bed will have been made; if you will come into my bedroom there is a little business we might discuss—"

Mr. Massey's bed had not been made, but Mr. Massey modestly covered its disarray with the counterpane. Then placing a chair for Amory, he plunged into the little matter of business.

An hour later Amory's pecuniary circumstances stood as follows:—

From her godmother she had long had her thirteen pounds a quarter, and now she had her ninety-five pounds. This sum Mr. Massey had begged, with many delicate preliminaries, to be allowed to bring up to the round figure again out of his own pocket—"simply as a slight present, Amory—please don't thank me—it is such a pleasure to be of assistance to those who know how to help themselves." And in view of the hastened marriage Mr. Massey had further to announce that of her aunt's tiny fortune a sum was to be earmarked sufficient to allow Amory the continuance of the pound or so a week that had been paid for her at Glenerne. That, Mr. Massey said, made a steady two pounds a week, plus the very nice little nest-egg of a hundred pounds.

"And dear Geraldine and I fully expect to see you a Kauffman or a Butler or a Rosa Bonheur yet," he beamed in conclusion.

Amory hoped that the event would prove them to be mistaken, but for the first time she kissed Uncle George. The educational bookseller wiped his glasses. Somehow or other Amory had the impression that even his engagement to Aunt Jerry had seemed to him to lack something without this sanction of her own.

All that day Amory did nothing but build palaces of fairy gold, laying them low again only to re-erect them more shining than before. Say her pictures sold at the very lowest figure, ten pounds apiece (but twenty or thirty or more would be nearer the mark—Crozier's didn't dabble in mere ten-pound prices). Some of them she had painted in a day, but call it two days, or even two pictures a week. Why, there, at the most ridiculously low estimate, was a thousand pounds a year! Fifteen hundred would really be nearer the mark, and that without counting the moral encouragement that would come by mere force of success. Two thousand would hardly be too much; but call it a thousand in order to be perfectly safe. Her two pounds a week would be mere



glove-money. She could spend that on handkerchiefs. Not real lace ones, of course; she would have to do better even than a thousand before she could afford real lace ones, with everything else to match; but this, after all, was only a beginning. Ten pounds a canvas? Why, Morton, who did not paint half as well as she did, had got three hundred for that rubbishy "Fête Galante" only the other day—a thing shockingly out of drawing, and the colour—oh dear! "Aha!" (Amory smiled). Let them wait just a bit! She would show them at the McGrath! She would make the saturnine Mr. Jowett sit up presently! And she would help the less fortunate, too, provided they were deserving. She would publish a book of Walter's drawings for him; they were really quite good—better, at any rate, than a good deal of the stuff that was published. That was what the country had wanted for a long time; not so much patrons who bought pictures, but patrons who knew what they had got when they had bought them. And even if she only painted a few pictures a year, that, when she had made her name....

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Of course she laughed at herself from time to time; she knew she was piling it on, but it was delicious for all that. Like a queen she received their full chorus of congratulations at Glenerne that night—a stately little queen, crowned with the barbaric red gold of her hair. She forbore to ask them whether they had thought that artists painted pictures for the mere sake of killing time; she did not want to rub in their booking-clerkships and estate-agencies too much. It was enough that they saw things now as they really were. Young Mr. Edmondson would no more have dared to speak to her of squeezing at the Crystal Palace now than he would have dared to discuss with her the subjects that made her friendship with Cosimo so wonderful; it was, rather, a quite aged and very much subdued Mr. Edmondson who for a full hour talked of Closing Prices to Mr. Rainbow.... And even when, the felicitations over, Mr. Sandys slapped his hands together in a business-like way and said to Mrs. Deschamps, "Well, what about a tune, Mrs. D.?" that too in its way was a tribute. It meant that even of exalted things poor weak human nature can have more than its fill. Amory knew that she had given Glenerne something to talk about for many, many months to come.

Then, on the morrow, setting her cloud-castle building sternly on one side, she riveted her attention to immediate things. She was going to remove to Cheyne Walk immediately; she had announced the fact to Miss Addams. Not only had no opposition been offered; it had been tacitly accepted that Glenerne was no place for one to whom these stupendous things could happen. Amory would seek Cosimo that morning; without Cosimo nothing could be done. Dorothy, she was afraid, would have to make other arrangements at once; she must telephone to Dorothy that day.

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Blithely she tripped down the Glenerne steps and sought the Goldhawk Road tram. It was early; it was not likely that Cosimo would have gone out. She might even have time to call at Katie Deedes's and get *The Golden Ass* on the way.

When, two days later, there arrived at Glenerne a blue press-cutting envelope containing an article nearly a column long on "The Art of Miss Amory Towers," by Hamilton Dix—and when, a day or two later still, there followed half a dozen quotations from that same article from the provincial papers—Glenerne was almost glad of Amory's translation. The honour was too heavy. It was felt on all hands that the crags of Sinai, and not the boarding-houses of Shepherd's Bush, were the proper habitation for Miss Towers and her renown.

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## VI

### WOMAN'S WHOLE EXISTENCE

THERE was nobody like Cosimo for beginning at the beginning. "What," he asked, extending a magnificent arm, bare (and black) to the very shoulder, "is the use of doing the floor when you're going to fetch all sorts of cobwebs down from the walls and ceiling, and haven't as much as got the chimney swept? It's simply doing work twice over. No; let that plumber chap finish the sink-pipe first, then, when the things we've bought come, I'll have the men give them a thorough sweeping in the cart and Mrs. 'Ill or Jellies can wash them with ammonia and water downstairs, so that everything'll come in perfectly clean. Jellies, did you get lots of old newspapers? All right, I don't want 'em yet, they're to cover the floor when I distemper the walls. Put 'em out on the landing there.—Now give me that brush, Mrs. 'Ill—"

He took a long brush from Mrs. 'Ill and began at the corner of the ceiling beyond the fireplace.

Dorothy had taken away her black-and-white desk and her other belongings some days before; now the table, the chairs, Amory's easel and a whole clutter of other things filled the landing and staircase outside. The plumber worked crouched half under the sink; but the chimney-sweep who had promised to come that morning at eight had not yet put in an appearance. The floor was an inch deep in dust and cobwebs and débris, and Cosimo's broom fetched down fresh showers moment by moment. He wore an old deer-stalker cap, to keep them out of his tendrilled hair. Amory, too, wore an old dust-bonnet of Mrs. 'Ill's and her oldest painting pinafore. Cosimo gave her loud warnings to stand out of the way as each fall came down. Mrs. 'Ill and Jellies grimaced and spat the dust out of their mouths as they swept the walls.

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For a whole week Cosimo had been past telling helpful and enthusiastic. He had not gone out when Amory had called on him that morning; he had been still in bed; but, hearing her knock and knowing her step, he had called, "That you, Amory? Oh, do come in!" So Amory had sat on the edge of Cosimo's bed, and Cosimo had bounded upward into a sitting posture as Amory had told him her great news. "No, by Jove, really, though!" he had shouted joyously. "You've got the

money? I say, Amory, that's perfectly glorious! Tell me quickly what you're going to do!"

And they had taken a header into plans, both talking at once.

Cosimo had done the whole of the shopping; Amory had merely stood by and nodded and admired. "Leave it all to me," he had said repeatedly; "you have your own special work that nobody but you can do: I can just about manage this.... Now, have you a bed? And a bath? And what about somewhere for your clothes? Tell me everything you've got, and then we shall know where we are."

So Cosimo had chosen Amory's narrow bed for her, going down into the basement for a slightly out-of-date pattern, much cheaper and probably better made; and since Amory must have a bath, Cosimo had advised her to get one of those oval ones with a lid that served as a travelling trunk as well; they were a little dearer, but much cheaper than buying the bath and the trunk separately. Then he had known where a second-hand chest of drawers was going for next to nothing, also a bowl and basin. And, cleverest of all, he had given orders that these things were to be sent, not at once, but on dates when, he calculated, the place would be just ready for their reception. Amory had ticked off these purchases on a slip of paper, as also she had those of turpentine and paraffin, boiled oil and soap and firewood and tins of distemper. She had read aloud from the list: "Soap, scrubbing-brushes, blacklead, condensed milk——" and Cosimo, laying his hand on each article as she named it, had replied with "Right—right——" It had been great fun.

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It was lucky, too, that Jellies was out of work; that gave them somebody to help when Mrs. 'Ill was at the Creek ("or buying winkles for the hens," Amory laughed). And the pair of them were almost as funny as a pantomime about Amory and Cosimo. They waited quite half a minute between knocking at the door and entering the room where the friends were, and if one of them went out again both of them did. It caused Amory the greatest amusement; they were as funny as Dorothy, when she had run in that afternoon thinking Amory wanted to tell her, not about Croziers' and the pictures, but about—Cosimo! Really, these one-ideaed people were killing! It never occurred to them that it was just possible that their narrow, illiberal views were not shared by everybody! There was her aunt, for example: Aunt Jerry was the most comical, mid-Victorian survival imaginable. She had stated flatly, not two nights ago, that if she wasn't married in a church, by two clergymen, with a bouquet and bells and "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden," she should not consider herself married at all! Bouquets and bells, at this time of day!... Amory (she thanked goodness) intended never to marry. Hers and Cosimo's was a much more rational relation. They had argued it out anthropologically from *Primitive Culture* and *The Golden Bough*.

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The plumber under the sink had a gas-jet and a soldering-iron, and he was raising a smell of warm lead and flux. He, too, seemed to have jumped to the same ludicrous conclusion as Mrs. 'Ill and Jellies. There was an intelligence about his back view, as if that aspect of him said, "I see—I'm minding my business—nearly finished—three's none—'nuff said." And when, as Cosimo swept, Amory approached the plumber and asked him whether the smell of cabbage-water would now cease, he turned round almost with a start.

"Beg pardon, Miss?... Oh, that! Don't you worry your 'ead about that. A S-pipe'll do it if anything will, and I'll explain it to the master afore I go."

The master!... Amory and Cosimo had to go out on to the landing in order to laugh. Otherwise they would have stifled.

Then, at nearly midday, the sweep arrived, and to the smells of dust and hot lead was added that of the soot that rustled down the chimney. Amory and Cosimo, unable to eat in the room itself and too begrimed to lunch at the little restaurant along the Embankment, sat with their glasses of milk and paper bag of sandwiches on the dark stairs.

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Amory always devoutly hoped that when Cosimo married he would marry some nice girl whose friend she could be. At present he was as poor as a church mouse, but would not be so when his uncle died; and Cosimo was not the kind of man money would spoil. If he had not known the value of money he would not have been able to do Amory's shopping for her so admirably; and if anything at all could still further have uplifted their beautiful friendship, it would have been that Cosimo should by and by be buying chests of drawers and washbowls for some girl of whom Amory could really approve. Girl after girl—Katie Deedes, Dickie Lemesurier, and others—Amory had suggested them all at one time and another as more or less eligible partners for her "pal"; but Cosimo had only laughed. He supposed he would marry some time or other, he had said, though why he must (now he came to think of it) he didn't quite know. Indeed, he thought he probably wouldn't, after all. "You see," he explained frankly, "it would have to be somebody so awfully like you, and there *isn't* anybody else so wonderful."—"What rubbish, Cosimo!" Amory usually replied, "there are lots of girls; why, you couldn't find a worse wife than me! What good should *I* be about a house or nursing a baby?"—"True," Cosimo would then reply,—thoughtfully yet equably: "but you're unique, you see. You have your art."—And that, it always seemed to Amory, was the whole point. An ordinary young man would not have had the perception to recognize her art as the crux of the whole matter. He would have wanted to hold her hand or to put his arm about her, and so would have ruined all.

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And Cosimo sometimes, but of course only as a joke, spoke of her art with a sort of humorous resentment, as a man who is allowed much but is still excluded from one favour might speak of the rival in whose preference he after all concurs. Amory thought that a perfecting touch. Seriousness must be unassailable before such gracious, humorous little liberties can be taken with it.

As they drank their milk and ate their sandwiches that day they laughed together over Aunt Jerry's old-fashioned courtship. Cosimo asked to be told again what Aunt Jerry proposed to wear at her wedding. He had already been told several times, but he had the power, so rare among men, of visualizing a dress from a verbal description, and could carry the precise shade of a

ribbon "in his eye" for matching purposes better than Amory herself....

"Doesn't it sound like the year of the Great Exhibition!" he chuckled when Amory had told him.

"The dress?" Amory laughed. "The dress is nothing; it's the whole thing that's like the year of the Great Exhibition! Why, when I asked auntie an ordinary, simple question—whether she thought there would be any babies—she blushed as if she really believed the storks brought them, and implored me not to *dream* of saying anything of the sort to George! Who to, I should like to know, if not to George? Such absurd false shame!... And this to-day, my dear, if you please, with Forel's book to be had at any French bookseller's, and Altruism and Camaraderie taught at even ordinary schools, and everything thrown open to sensible discussion just as you and I discuss these things! It's too funny!"

"There's only one word for it really—'prurient,'" Cosimo opined.

"Oh, but that's taking it too seriously; I prefer the funny side of it. Babies! Is she expecting butterflies, I wonder?... I did my best for her; I tried to explain what a chromosome was; but it was no good. You've never seen Aunt Jerry; I must have you meet her; she's *so* like the lady who went to see Anthony and Cleopatra and said it was very unlike the homelife of the dear late Queen!"

Cosimo was silent for a moment; then his voice came authoritatively out of the darkness. Cosimo was not much of a painter, but he really had views that were often quite well worth hearing.

"You see, Amory, it's the swing of the pendulum. Action and re-action. Perfectly simple. Take wearing stays, for example. What woman to-day would think of wearing the stays they used to wear? Half the women we know wear none at all, and the other half only these ribbon corsets. And it's just the same with their views on marriage. They make such mysteries about it, and what's the result? Why, in trying to make it impossibly beautiful they miss the real beauty that's there all the time, the beauty of the physical process. We have to rediscover that to-day. And we've got a whole lot of abolishing to do before we can begin. Sorry to have to abolish your aunt, but really, as you say, Amory, we haven't time to-day to waste on people who marry and expect to have butterflies."

Sometimes Amory wondered whether these daring and illuminating talks with Cosimo were altogether a good thing for her art. They sometimes seemed to enlarge her ideas *too* much. It was difficult, with a common brush and an ordinary canvas and a paint-box like anybody else's, to express the true philosophical meaning of the heart of things as Cosimo sometimes set that meaning forth; or rather, she could explain what she meant, but could not always make it explain itself. She expressed this doubt to Cosimo now, and found him quite extraordinarily full of help.

"I know," he said thoughtfully. "It's hard, but it's what you've got to do, Amory. It's your job. Fundamental brainwork, as Rossetti said. The old traditions are *epuisées*—worn out; in making the new one you must say to yourself, 'Is this that I am doing merely a repetition, or does it belong to the age that has—well, say, wireless telegraphy?' I don't mean that you've got to muddle yourself, of course; that's the other danger: like Scylla and Charybdis; there are always two dangers, underdoing and overdoing; it's a Law. What I mean is that your art must be *the* thing. See what I mean? Break fresh ground. Do something new. Say to yourself 'I'm going to do something new.' That's what the Pre-Raphaelites did, and look at Ford Madox Brown! As I say, it's the swing of the pendulum; action and re—(Hallo, here's Mrs. 'Ill—listen to her cough).... What a dreadful cold you have, Mrs. 'Ill!"

And they chuckled for a quarter of an hour over Mrs. 'Ill's comical confusion.

That afternoon they had one of their jolliest chats about Heredity. Amory wished she had Galton by her so that she could show Cosimo what she really meant, but Galton, in that topsyturvy, was not to be laid hands on. Cosimo rested on his broom from time to time to listen, fastened his coffee-brown eyes earnestly on her face, and said that she ought to paint a picture, not necessarily to be called "Heredity," but to have something of Galton's meaning and spirit about it. "Express him in a different medium, if you understand me," he said.... Then he finished his walls, and they washed their begrimed hands and faces together over a bucket and went out to tea. Mrs. 'Ill and Jellies were left to sweep up and to make all ready for Cosimo to distemper the walls and stain the floor to-morrow. They dined, talking ever the more rapidly and brightly as the hours wore on; and Amory went as reluctantly back to Glenerne that night as if she had been going from a glorious liberty to a prison.

Here, however, a piece of bad news awaited her. After dinner Uncle George drew her aside and handed her a paragraph he had cut from a newspaper. Amory read it, and then looked inquiringly up at Mr. Massey. Except that it contained a name with which she was somehow remotely familiar, it conveyed nothing to her. Not many things in newspapers did convey much to Amory. She thought them dull, and wished they had a Cosimo at the head of them to fill them with the really interesting things about the New Movement and criticism and art.

Nor did the scholastic bookseller himself appear to know the full purport of the paragraph. It announced baldly and briefly that a trustee had absconded with certain funds, and Mr. Massey feared that those funds might include the capital sum that hitherto had yielded the thirteen pounds a quarter Amory had had from her godmother. The man might, of course (Mr. Massey said), be—something or other—"extradited" she thought the word was; but, on the other hand, he might not. Even if he were to be extradited, Mr. Massey feared that such delinquents commonly bolted, not with the money, but after the money was spent. So he would not advise Amory to build too much on the recovery of the money.... And Amory discovered something new and rather unexpected in her prospective uncle, namely, that while it was "a pleasure to assist" (as he had softly hissed) a young woman who had shown herself as capable as Amory had of assisting herself, he did not think it necessary to keep hold of her hand once she was set on her feet. She had a hundred pounds in actual cash, on account of a sum that might be very large indeed; and

he himself would have thought himself lucky had he been possessed of half that capital at her age.... This mid-Victorian, heavy-father view of Mr. Massey's, that young people should be kept a little short in the very years of their capacity for enjoyment, could, of course, have been demolished in a minute by any modern and rational and hard-up young man: it was manifestly absurd that people should have money only when they were past their pleasures: but it would have taken more than Cosimo to knock it out of Mr. Massey's head for all that.

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Amory went to bed moodily that night, first trying to tell herself, and then trying not to tell herself, that her income was in all probability now reduced by a half.

She had begun, too, to be a little alarmed at the rate at which her hundred pounds of actual capital was diminishing. Excellently and cheaply as Cosimo had bought, she simply could not tell herself where nearly thirty pounds had gone. There had been her bed, her bath, her chest of drawers, her washstand, her this, that, and the other; and there had been "sundries." She had had the conception of sundries that they were quite small things, in paper packets and tins, that cost a few pence; it came rather as a shock to her that kettles and frying-pans and cups and saucers and scrubbing-brushes were sundries too. And tablecloths and blankets and sheets and pillow-cases seemed to be very considerable sundries indeed. Still—thirty pounds! She would have thought that thirty pounds would have furnished the Glenerne kitchens twice over. And at tea that afternoon, Cosimo had spoken of a carved wood frame he had seen in Marylebone High Street that it would be positively criminal not to buy for another three!...

Well, living would be cheaper at Cheyne Walk; that would be one thing. Tea and bread-and-butter and a chop or steak once a day would be quite enough for her; and when all these things were bought they were bought, and would not be to buy again. She had another shrinking as she remembered that, now that all her work had gone to Croziers', she had hardly a canvas or stretcher in the place, and that half her paint-tubes were mere flat metal ribbons with a screw-cap on the end, and that she badly wanted a complete set of new brushes. She tried to tell herself that five pounds would refit her, but she knew in her heart that ten or twelve would hardly be too much; artists' colourmen have their sundries too....

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And now she must reckon a whole pound a week as good as gone....

But the press-cuttings from the provincial papers were still coming in, and her courage revived as she remembered Mr. Hamilton Dix's newest article on her and her work. He was coming to interview her. The market for her twenty-eight canvases was already being prepared. Mr. Dix would hardly be doing all that unless it was intended that her show should come on in the autumn....

She went to sleep, once more resolved that when, presently, she should come into her kingdom, no poor artist, provided he were really deserving, should ask her help in vain.

Two days later she had cast her money cares almost entirely to the winds. Naturally it was not to be supposed that she could come into a hundred pounds and not buy herself at least one frock; as a matter of fact she had bought two. She hoped she had not offended Dorothy about them. It was one of the advantages of Dorothy's occupation that she was frequently offered clothes, not merely at cost price, but at truly absurd reductions. But then (Amory had thought) they were *such* clothes—inartistic and irrational in the extreme, conventional Paris and Viennese models, some of them actually resembling those excruciating drawings of Dorothy's, and hats that (to put it bluntly) Amory would not have been found dead in. Dorothy had offered to get her a number of these, and had said that it was a chance to be jumped at!... Why, even Cosimo, a man, had laughed and said, "Dear old Dot—she means awfully well, doesn't she?"... And Cosimo had chosen the two frocks Amory actually had bought. One of them was terra-cotta, the other green; both were exquisitely smocked at yoke and hips, and any of the Pre-Raphaelites (Cosimo said) would have gone half wild with delight over the drawing of the myriad intricate folds. He had made a suggestion or two in the shop itself, and when the things had been, delivered at the studio, Cosimo had not rested until he had seen Amory put them on. Amory had looked round the room; the curtain that was to enclose her new bed was not up yet, but she thanked goodness she was not one of your shrinking prudes.... "I don't suppose a girl's arms will shock you, will they?" she had asked, smiling.... So she had tried, first the terra-cotta, then the green. "Oh, I say, you do look stunning!" Cosimo had flattered her, lifting his fine dark eyes as she had turned this way and that; "but you ought to have a Portia cap, you know—" And that was only another instance of the way their minds jumped together; for Amory, without saying anything to Cosimo, had already got *two* of the Portia caps, one for each frock.... Then she had got back into the old frock again, and they had discussed the preparation of the studio once more.

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As Cosimo said, they had really got most of the work done. The furniture would not arrive until the morrow, but the walls were already distempered a light green colour, almost white, and the ceiling was done, and the floor was a wide frame glassy with boiled oil and paraffin and polish, only awaiting the square of Japanese matting in the centre. The shining brown border was not yet quite dry, and Cosimo had very cleverly built up a sort of gang-plank across it to the door. To see Jellies, herself of a yielding figure, crossing this yielding plank, was very funny indeed. The framing in *passe-partout* of the photographs of old masters went down as sundries; Amory, with Myers on *Human Personality* tucked under her arm, had spent half the day in setting the photographs each in the one and only place for it; and now, until the bed and chest of drawers and things should come, she and Cosimo were sitting cross-legged in the middle of the unstained part of the floor. A yard of casement-cloth was between them, which Cosimo deftly ripped up with a pair of scissors. He had brought his own little work-basket. He was as handy with a needle as a sailor. And as he measured the casement-cloth he talked.

"Steady a moment—you've got hold of the wrong end; that's the end, where I've basted it. If I were you I should buttonhole the eyelets.... Look out, you're giving me a finished pair to cut ... and I say, Amory, you want a fresh binding on that skirt—you'll be catching your heel and coming

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down; I'll put a stitch in it for you as soon as I've finished this.... I say you're quiet; a penny for your thoughts!"

Amory, as a matter of fact, had been once more hoping that Cosimo would by and by find some really nice girl to marry. In his case the wrong one would be dreadfully wrong; he had the woman's point of view so perfectly. That, in a sense, was why he was so exquisitely right in not wanting to marry Amory herself—supposing, that was, that Amory had not definitely decided never to marry at all. They knew one another too well; were too much alike, too beautifully "pals"; somehow they seemed almost to come within the prohibited degrees.... Still, if Amory couldn't marry Cosimo, she could keep, as it were, an eye on him. It would be dreadful if he fell into the hands of some jealous creature or other, worthy neither of him nor of Amory herself. Amory had long thought that it would be rather nice to be "Aunt Amory" to a number of eugenically-selected and rationally-clothed boys and girls, who were not told lies about where they came from, and had moral courage enough, when they were afraid, to say that they were afraid; but she wasn't going to be "come over" by their mother, and permitted as a favour to see Cosimo once in a while, and to be put off with a "Not at Home" when she and Cosimo wished to discuss her art.... So, when Cosimo said, "A penny for your thoughts," Amory was silent for a moment, and then, lifting her pretty brook-brown eyes over the yard of casement-cloth that united their hands, she smiled pensively and said:

"I was wondering, Cosimo, why—why you don't marry Dorothy."

Cosimo dropped his end of the casement-cloth and reached for a needle with black thread in it. He leaned forward.

"Here, let me stitch that binding while I think of it.... What's that? Marry Dorothy?... Why, you don't suppose Dorothy would have me, do you? Because I don't."

Of course, Cosimo was far too well-bred to say that he wouldn't have Dorothy. Still, she guessed what he meant. Dorothy (he seemed to say) was a perfect dear, but not in that way. Nevertheless, Amory, who sat in the light and could see herself ever so tiny in Cosimo's black-coffee-coloured eyes, looked a little doubtful, and said, "Are you quite sure of that?"

"Perfectly sure," Cosimo repeated, with the same beautiful tact. "Don't suppose she'd look at me if there wasn't another man in London. Besides, if I wanted to be absurd, I might ask you why *you* don't marry Walter!"

Amory straightened her back and the pretty bluebell-stalk of her neck. She gave a rich little laugh.

"Oh, just at present I'm having enough of marriage to last me for some time to come.... Cosimo," she added, in impressive tones, "Aunt Jerry's—*awful!*"

"How, awful? (Just pull the edge round a bit, will you?)"

"Ugh!... But you don't know her: I'll take you round and introduce you: then you'll see for yourself. What about next Wednesday? or no, I'd better have them here.... Really it seems to me to amount to a public gloating? Their engagement was announced in the 'Times,' and ever since they've had nothing but advertisements—advertisements for wedding-cakes, dresses, veils, flowers, furniture, houses, and I don't know what not. The most private things—you wouldn't believe! It's as if every tradesman in London was looking at them as those shopmen looked at us when we bought the bed! But the moment I ask a perfectly plain question, oh, the outraged modesty!... And what do you think her latest is? She hopes that if there are any children at all they'll be boys! Boys! Think of it!"

"Ah, the Feminist Movement was bound to tell," said Cosimo. "If we're doing nothing else, we're driving the reactionaries into the opposite camp and making them declare themselves."

"You think it's that?"

"Think, my dear! I'm quite sure. We're driving them to their last defence. They know that woman's man's equal really, and that's why they're afraid. Why, look at your own case. You needn't go further than that. What's the good of theorizing when one knows? Take the chromosome. If woman's got one and man hasn't, then she has something he hasn't, and is actually his superior. You've a chromosome and I haven't, and look at us.... Yes, that's why the stick-in-the-muds nowadays all want boys. The female disability's going to be removed. You're removing it in your work; the advance-guard are removing it by having girls. It's all right as long as we know who's for us and who's against us. I don't blame your aunt for a single moment. I'm sorry for her, but that's a different thing."

"Dorothy says she'd rather have boys, too," Amory mused.

"Of course she would; so would Jellies; and making allowances for accidentals, Dot and Jellies are intellectually on a par, you know."

("Here's a piece that wants a stitch too.) But oh, Cosimo, isn't that going rather too far? Dorothy—and Jellies—!"

"Not far enough," Cosimo averred stoutly. "The cases are exactly on all-fours. We know what Dorothy is, but we don't know what Jellies might not have been if she'd had the chance. You aren't allowing for Environment, you see...."

And only the arrival of the bed, the bath and the chest of drawers cut short (three-quarters of an hour later) the most illuminating talk about Environment that Amory and Cosimo had ever had.

By seven o'clock that evening the studio was practically ready for Amory to come into it. It certainly looked exceedingly comfortable. A fire had been lighted, more for the sake of decorative effect than from any need of one, and the smell of the excellent little dinner Cosimo had cooked filled the room with a delightfully homelike smell. Potatoes roasted in their jackets in the ashes, liver-and-bacon keeping warm on the two hot plates inside the fender, a pancake ready for pouring into the pan, cheese, fruit, coffee in a little lustre jug only needing the hot water to be

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poured upon it, and half a bottle of "Veuve Dodo" (an Australian burgundy) from the wineshop in the King's Road—Cosimo had seen to all. Mrs. 'Ill herself, coming in to give a last look round, had found nothing wanting.

"Well, nobody can say as 'ow you won't be snug—can they, Florence?" Mrs. 'Ill said, leaving it delicately in doubt whether she meant the pronoun to be taken as in the plural. "A prettier little 'ome, all things considered, I never see. I always says as it isn't riches as makes contentment; and you 'aven't far to go for your potatoes anyway, which is just downstairs, also apples and oranges. And eggs I can always supply, though my experience is as artists puts too much trust in eggs, which hasn't the nourishment of meat when all's said, and not cheaper when you take your 'ealth into consideration, as all of us must, young or old and married or not. Nor wrinkles, though I'm fond of 'em myself, but not to rely on. Bring the bucket, Florence, and I 'ope you've taken notice, so you can tell 'Orris when 'e comes out next week.... Oh, thank you, sir; I don't deny it would be acceptable, the smell of turps being that drying—and wishing you good night and sweet dreams...."

And Mrs. 'Ill and Jellies curtsied elaborately and left them.

"She *almost* said the Creek wasn't five minutes away!" Cosimo laughed when they had gone. "And that idea was a great success of yours, to put the slippers I'd been whitewashing inside the fender. Jellies's eyes nearly fell into them when she saw them! *Aren't* people funny!... Well, let's have the first meal in the new place...."

He put a pinch of salt into the coffee-jug and reached for the liver-and-bacon.

As they ate and toasted the new studio, in the Veuve Dodo, they discussed the house-warming that, of course, Amory must give. Including the carved wood frame, the two frocks, and more sundries, Amory's installation had cost her in all forty-three pounds. A fresh supply of materials for her work would bring the sum up to forty-eight or more—call it forty-eight, and to all intents and purposes forty-eight was fifty. A party by all means; one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. They talked of it. Laura would bring her guitar again, and—who was that new friend of Walter's, the one with the glasses, who seemed to know Nietzsche by heart?... They would get Walter to bring him. And Katie and Dickie, of course, and Phyllis Hardy, and Amory supposed they'd have to ask Dorothy. They could pull the bed from behind its curtain to sit on; and now, thank goodness, there were plates and glasses enough to go round! Amory's eyes rested on them where they stood in overlapping rows on the rack that Cosimo had put up where the little bookshelf had been. They shone brightly, and the cups twinkled on the new brass hooks below them; and there were tea and coffee in the tins, and milk in a jug, and butter in a little dish, and everything looked so spick-and-span that Amory had half a mind to paint it all. The flat wide kettle Cosimo had bought would boil on the oil-stove in twelve minutes. The bath was under the bed. Cosimo had marked the spare bed and table linen that was neatly folded in the chest of drawers. A curtain drew across the row of pegs on which Amory's clothes hung, and the reflections of the candle-flames in the polished floor-borders made simply ripping shimmers of colour. Amory was quite cross that she must return to Glenerne that night; it was such a long way for poor Cosimo to see her home. Well, she would be nearer to him soon—practically just round the corner. Then they would be able to see quite a lot of each other.

After supper Cosimo washed up, and then they drew up two chairs to the fire; and Amory turned back her new terra-cotta skirt so as not to scorch it, and they talked and ate apples. They talked of poor Herbertson's show (he had died), and Mr. Dix's articles, and Amory's own work; and it was long before Amory yawned sleepily. Then she rose. Return to Glenerne she must. She begged Cosimo, who had had a hard day, to let her go alone; but Cosimo would not hear of it. Then, as Cosimo was putting out the lamp, they both laughed together. The absent-minded fellow had actually been on the point of setting out with her to Shepherd's Bush in the slippers in which he had white-washed, leaving his boots by the side of her bed.

## VII

### THE VOICE THAT BREATHED O'ER EDEN

THE invitations were out for Miss Geraldine Towers' wedding, and the first acceptance Aunt Jerry received was that of Cosimo Pratt. For Amory had kept her promise and had brought them together. It had been at the studio in Cheyne Walk, which Aunt Jerry and Mr. Massey had come to see the very night before Amory had left Glenerne; and really there had seemed something to be said for Mrs. 'Ill's cautious practice of coughing as she ascended the stairs and tapping and waiting before she entered the room. Amory had held a candle at the head of the stairs when they had left, but had not descended with them, and she had re-entered her room to find Cosimo at his funniest and most solemn.

"I trust, Amory," he had said, looking gravely at her, "that my ears deceived me?..."

"Cosimo," Amory had replied, looking as gravely at him, "I greatly fear...."

"It *sounded* like one, Amory...."

"It *was* one, Cosimo...."

"You are sure?..."

"If an aquarium, why not a greengrocer's entry?... At their age!" Amory had burst out laughing. "Well, one thing's pretty certain now—you'll be invited to the wedding!"

At this Cosimo's gravity had become profounder and funnier still.

"You *don't* mean...."

Amory had clapped her hands.

"I do! Didn't you see it in auntie's eyes?... Cosimo, dear, you're approved of—quite an eligible young man!—So that makes Mrs. 'Ill (one), Jellies (two), Dorothy (three), aunt and uncle (five), and the plumber and the chimney-sweep (seven)—seven of these dear, quaint, obsolete souls...."

"All trying to marry you and me, Amory?"

"Yes, Cosimo."

"And I shall be asked to the wedding as—er—one of the family?"

"Quite, if I know anything about auntie."

"Then," said Cosimo, in a deep voice, "I can only say that I shall come."

"Oh, do!" Amory broke out. She clutched his arm. "And I'll make a bet with you, Cosimo! Our great pandjandrum will be there—'Mr. Wellcome Himself,' they call him, with a capital 'h,' almost like God—and I'll bet you anything you like he says, 'May all your troubles be little ones!'"

"You *promise* me he shall say that?" said Cosimo incredulously.

"Oh, you don't know the atmosphere I've had to keep my art alive in!"

"I shall certainly come," Cosimo had said. He added that he would have gone there barefoot if only Mr. Wellcome would say, "May all your troubles be little ones."

The wedding was to take place at St. Mark's, not far from Mr. Massey's bookshop, and the breakfast was to be given at Glenerne itself. It was to be sent in from Bunters', all but what Mr. Sandys, the baritone, of the Lillie Road branch of the East Midlands Bank, called "the wet." That was to be Mr. Wellcome's wedding-gift. He had vowed that unless he was allowed to stand just one little bottle with a bit of gold foil on it to two of the very best that ever stepped, he would never set foot in Glenerne again; and everybody knew that by "just one little bottle," Mr. Wellcome meant a case, if not two, not to speak of a liqueur for the sake of which an invading general might have sacked a monastery. Mr. Wellcome was also to give Miss Geraldine Towers away.

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The clear-eyed Weiniger, the ruthless Strindberg, the hypochondriac Schopenhauer himself—not one of these could have shed a more searching light of criticism on the whole apparatus of Aunt Jerry's wedding than did the bride's pretty and artistic niece. She reduced Cosimo to a state of mere respectful admiration. First there was the age of the contracting parties. It was not even (so to speak) a case of May and December; it was November and December—or, at any rate, October and November. If this was the outcome of young and musical society, what was to be expected of those who really were in the April of their lives? It was a very good thing indeed that Amory and Cosimo were able to set an example of restraint. If age must go a-giddy, youth must show itself sober and responsible. Amory put it fairly and squarely to Cosimo: was that not a Law? Cosimo agreed that it was a Law—the Law of Compensation.

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Then there was the Service itself. Amory had just read the Service again for the first time for a number of years, and really the claims it made could only be described as stupendous!... How could you *possibly* know that you were going to honour somebody until death did you depart? Suppose they turned out to be a different kind of person altogether from what you had supposed? Surely, then, it would be your clear duty, as an open-minded person, not to honour them! And how could you *possibly* know that you might not be doing a quite criminally improvident thing in promising to endow somebody, as to whose real character you were totally in the dark, with all your worldly goods? Of course, the sensible view was that that person should be endowed with the worldly goods who was best capable of looking after them. And how could you *possibly* know that you would cleave to one only, and so on? Not that anybody else was likely to take Aunt Jerry away from Mr. Massey, but suppose they *did* want to? Amory called that stultifying. It was not open-minded: it was a wilful and deliberate shutting of your mind, perhaps to some really wonderful revelation.... And what had Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebecca, and all these dead-and-gone Jews got to do with it all? Pretty records some of *them* had for that matter!... Oh no, the whole thing was simply fossilized. Strictly speaking, it ought to be looked on paleontologically, as a curious and interesting historic survival. For that matter, people seemed to have their doubts even in going into it, for they usually talked about "the silken cord of Love" in an apologetic sort of way—silken cord, indeed, with all those cast-iron regulations! Amory liked "silken cord!"... Oh no; the Service started out all right; it hit the nail on the head with "First it was ordained," and so on, but the rest, eugenically speaking, was mere—mere—

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"Obscurantism," Cosimo suggested, but rather diffidently. Even he had never seen Amory so astonishingly into her stride before. He could have listened to her all day; he did listen to her half the day.

"That's the very word!" Amory praised him. "Signifying darkness, where it's pretending to shed light all the time! If exploded ideas like those can be put into the Prayer Book, it seems to me that a Divorce Service ought to go into the Prayer Book too, instead of having to go to a court of law for it! And look, I ask you, at the position of woman in divorce to-day!" (Amory drove ahead as if it had been a question of Aunt Jerry's divorce already.) "Suppose she gets her decree: there's an odium attaches to her just the same whether it's her fault or not! I call it the fault of Abraham and Sarah, and their stupid old Service! Laws that are too harsh are *bound* to be broken! It's a duty to break them, so that we can get them altered. What we want is a rational tie, voluntarily entered into, and sweep all these archaic old penalties aside! Not that it's any business of mine; thank goodness I shan't marry...."

None the less, out of a noble love of abstract justice and a hatred of wrong merely because it was wrong, Amory found it intolerable.

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Then there was the minor apparatus. From the point of view of Eugenics, Amory would have thought that the worst possible preparation for the perfect race of the future was all this over-

eating of indigestible things, and over-drinking of things that were, medically speaking, poisons. "Healths" indeed! Pretty name for them!... And all these buffooneries of throwing rice and confetti, and flinging an old shoe after the "happy" (ahem!) pair. For the wedding presents, Amory conceded, there was something to be said. The present economic conditions made it difficult for the really splendid young people to get married at all, and so it was right that they should be in a sense subsidized by those who had wrested (principally by callousness) more out of the competitive struggle than they (of a more sensitive make) had managed to wrest for themselves. Indeed, Amory's only complaint against the custom of giving presents was that it did not go far enough. What really ought to be done was that the State should pick its best specimens, on the principles laid down by Galton and others, and pension them off for one understood purpose, putting them in the midst of beautiful surroundings ... a sort of Endowment of Motherhood idea, but on a scale of the first magnitude, and not by mere doles, ... and, of course, with everything possible done to ensure the birth of girls.... Science would soon be able to do that at the rate at which it was advancing....

"I say, Amory, you are wonderful!" Cosimo breathed, rapt....

Amory said, "Silly old Cosimo!" But she herself could not help thinking that her lips had rather been touched with the coal.

At Glenerne, nothing but the approaching wedding was talked about. Unhappily, however, the talk was all about those very accidentals that had the least to do with the propagation of a healthy and rational race. True, a knowing eye rested once in a while on the whatnot that contained the photographs of Miss Addams's "grandchildren," and a smile was hidden behind a hand or turned hurriedly into a cough; but for the rest the race was left to look after itself just as if Galton had never been born, and a Eugenic Congress had never been held. Very little whist or dancing went on in the large double drawing-room upstairs. Everybody flocked downstairs again into the dining-room, where the tablecloth and cruets were not now left for the next repast, as usual, but removed to make room for Aunt Jerry's heaps and heaps of linen. Miss Crebbin and Miss Swan marked; Miss Addams and Mrs. Deschamps folded and set all into orderly heaps; and M. Criqui and Mr. Edmondson wrapped the heaps in brown paper and wrote on each package a description of its contents. Mr. Massey was frequently taken by the shoulders by Mrs. Deschamps and turned out of the room, as being only in the way. He either retired to his bedroom and wrote cheques, or else, in the company of other smokers, sat on the garden roller in the little back greenhouse and lighted and threw away again Cubeb cigarettes.

Mr. Edmondson's case was generally commiserated. He had not been quite himself since Amory's departure. He had held rather moping discussions, on such subjects as the progress of illustrated journalism and the decay of respect in the attitude of the young towards the old, with Mr. Rainbow and stout Mr. Waddey, the timber-merchant; and he had more than once dropped a dark hint that he might soon be leaving Glenerne—young musical society becomes a little trying when you yourself are the young and musical society. And he took it rather hardly that he would not be able to be present at the wedding-breakfast, but must rise at five-thirty, clean his boots, make his cup of tea over his spirit-kettle, and lunch in the ticket-office as usual. Mrs. Deschamps told M. Criqui that she thought Mr. Edmondson had had more than a *penchant* for Amory; M. Criqui, who was in the Lyons silk trade, and had given Aunt Jerry a beautiful dress-length, had raised his brows and said "Si?" M. Criqui's politeness never forsook him. It was as if he asked Mrs. Deschamps where Mr. Edmondson's eyes could have been to have had a *penchant* for anybody when Mrs. Deschamps herself was there, to be admired almost whether her victim wished it or not.

But if Mr. Edmondson must be absent, a pretty full gathering of the others was to be present. Mr. Waddey, the timber-merchant, had put off the buying of a Gloucestershire wood for the purpose; Mr. Rainbow had put a red line round the date on the hanging calendar in his bedroom; and Mr. Geake and Mr. Sandys had promised to run in, the one from the Estate Office in Goldhawk Road, the other from the Branch Bank. Miss Crebbin, away in the city, was in Mr. Edmondson's case, but Miss Swan was turning her class over to the study of art for the afternoon (a subject in which one of the monitors could be trusted to take them), and Miss Tickell would close her milliner's shop from ten to four. As for five or six of the other ladies, their time was their own. There had been much discussion as to whether the olive-skinned Indians should be invited; finally, they too had been included. Two of them lunched daily at Glenerne. They could hardly be asked to move from their accustomed chairs and wooden napkin-rings; and then there was the solidarity of the Empire to consider. All three had been asked, and were coming. Mr. Massey's brother and his wife were to be the only outsiders, for Mr. and Mrs. Wellcome and the infant Master Wellcome could hardly be called outsiders. Or if there was another outsider at all it would be Mr. Cosimo Pratt, and he (Glenerne had been given vaguely to understand) might not be an outsider very long. Really the most outside of all was Amory herself. It was true she had lived in the house, but in the body only, not in the spirit, if press-cuttings meant anything. She had stooped on the wing from a brighter air. Her art was not the same kind of art as that to which Miss Swan had turned over her Board School class for the afternoon. It brought in cheques for ninety-five pounds.

The wedding was fixed for a Tuesday, and by the Monday night the Glenerne hall was almost impassable with trunks and bags and cases—the trunks and bags for the going away (to the Lake District), the cases containing nobody knew what until Mr. Massey and Miss Geraldine, who had gone to the Vicarage, should return. Two of them, however, were surmised to contain Mr. Wellcome's contribution to the morrow's breakfast, and it was a "wheeze" of the men to attitudinize in mock ecstasies before them and to make luscious noises as of drinking. Another case, a yard square but not very high, was so heavy that the porter had hardly been able to carry it in; and if one might judge from certain conspiratorial whispers, one or two of the borders

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guessed what that case also contained. Mrs. Deschamps had almost wept over Mr. Massey's special licence; Mr. Waddey, who was a widower, had remarked that it was strange, when you came to think of it, the meaning there might be in a bit of paper you could easily crumple up and throw into the fire. Mr. Edmondson, too, asked to be allowed to look at the licence. Later he was heard going about saying that it was strange, when you really considered it, how much bits of paper, that you could easily tear up into little pieces, stood for sometimes. "A railway ticket's nothing in itself," he said, by way of illustration of what he meant, "but just you try to travel without one...."

The wedding-day dawned. Mr. Massey and his brother (a red-faced, silent man who wore policeman's boots and seemed uncomfortable in his collar) had gone off arm in arm somewhere; and Amory and Mr. Massey's brother's wife were helping Aunt Jerry to dress. Mrs. Deschamps had lent her bedroom for the display of the wedding-presents. The heavy box in the hall had been opened, and had been found to contain, by stupid mistake, a second wedding-cake, all snow and silver, which Mr. Geake and Mr. Sandys had carried into the dining-room and set before the bride's place. You had to look twice at lavender bonnets and white veils and black coats and light gloves before you were quite sure who the wearers were; and the string of cabs outside, with nose-gays in the lamps, stretched away to the end of the road and round the corner. And Glenerne that morning was a school for waiters indeed, for six extra ones had come from Bunters', and, with their heads held high, looked as it were through their dropped lids at Glenerne's own Germans and Belgians and the little red-fezzed Omar K.

Then a loud "Hi, Squeegee—Lueegee—Guliulimo! Them things come?" was heard in the hall. Mr. Wellcome, with Mrs. Wellcome bearing a torrent of lace in which the youngest Master Wellcome slept, had arrived. "Brought her after all, you see, Nellie!" Mr. Wellcome cried triumphantly to Mrs. Deschamps, whom he met at the foot of the stairs; and then he spoke behind his hand: "Lucky ... always want one like that at a wedding!"... "Not again!" Mrs. Deschamps whispered back, half shocked, half as if such a man was indeed a creature to be dreaded. "Eh? Why not?" Mr. Wellcome blustered. "We don't adopt 'em at *our* house! Not while we have our health! Now, time we were off; where's this daughter o' mine *pro tem*?"

The arrival of the Wellcomes was all they had been waiting for. They set off, the line of cabs drawing up at the gate, stopping, starting, stopping again, until the last had driven off with a couple of urchins sitting on the back of it.

Amory and Cosimo heard every word of that preposterous Service from the front pew. The quick glances that passed between them from time to time only emphasized their rock-like gravity between whites. And after all, there is such a thing as tolerance. If this Sacrament was really the crumbling institution the pure beam of reason showed it to be, so much the less abolition there would be for Amory and Cosimo to do. You teach a lesson to those who do not respect your convictions when you deal gently with their manifest prejudices, and the fewer who shared the joke the more humour there would be for themselves. So Amory merely noted that her aunt made no bones about the word "obey," and wondered, as man and wife knelt, where Uncle George's brother, who was best man, got those extraordinary boots.

But she had promised Cosimo that the real humour should come afterwards, when the wedding-party returned to Glenerne; and her promise was richly fulfilled. There were heads at every window in the street, and they could hardly get in at the gate for the press of watchers about it. And when they had got in and mounted the front steps and passed along the hall, they could hardly get into the dining-room for the crowd of waiters, Bunters' and Glenerne's, who, making an international matter of it, covertly elbowed and shouldered one another and muttered words of contempt under their breath and exchanged malevolent glances. But when they had got in, and had found each his or her name written by Mrs. Deschamps on the half-sheets of notepaper with the silver-lettered Glenerne heading, it was worth coming miles to see and participate in. Regular boarders eyed the table, with its dishes glazed and its dishes garnished, its dishes frilled and crimped and made strange with icing and aspic and cochineal, very much as a man who knew a buttercup and a daisy when he saw them might peep, intimidated, into a house of rare and exotic orchids. These fantastic growths of the same kingdom as the dandelion and the dog-rose? These gemmed and enamelled comestibles food also, like Miss Addams's thin soups and strips of watery fish and semi-transparent slices of Argentine beef and New Zealand lamb?... Each resolved to let his neighbour tackle them first and to see what implement he did so with. For, while fingers might have been made before forks, they were no fewer in number than the bright plated objects of cutlery (including something that seemed to start as a pair of sugar-tongs and to end as a sort of cigar-cutter) that extended for quite six inches on either side of each plate. It might be going too far to say that one must necessarily be born to these things; nevertheless a fellow did feel a bit taken aback when he was confronted with them straight away.

(To anticipate a little: Nobody knew who it was who first discovered that here they had a tower of strength in Mr. Wellcome. But it was presently seen that Mr. Wellcome knew all about fish-knives and finger-bowls, and made nothing of them. Therefore all you had to do was to watch Mr. Wellcome. Then, no idea being so good but that it is capable of improvement, it was discovered that you were quite safe if you watched Mr. Sandys, who watched Mr. Rainbow, who watched Mr. Wellcome. Soon each *plat* was being attacked with grace and confidence at its proper remove from the fountainhead of good form, the movement passing down the table very much as the cabs had drawn up one by one at the door.)

To ask who occupied Mr. Wellcome's Chair were to ask who occupies the Throne at a Coronation. Mr. Wellcome Himself occupied it. Mrs. George Massey sat on his right hand, George Massey on his left. This arrangement was duplicated at the other end of the long table, where Miss Addams sat between Cosimo and Amory. These constellations of primary and hardly secondary brilliance were united, along either side of the table, by the lesser stars; and, just as a

hole appears in the Southern Heavens, so the three Indian students made a sort of Coal Sack among the whiter faces on Miss Addams's right hand. Amory thought it far better that she and Cosimo should not be sitting actually together. Apart, they would have all the more notes to compare afterwards.

Cosimo was gathering these already. As once he had taken the broom from the crossing-sweeper, so now he was talking across the corner of the table to Mrs. Wellcome. He was talking about the only person who breakfasted without taking his cue of deportment from anybody—the child; he got, as he said afterwards, “simply priceless things.” Amory, across the other corner, was engaged in a series of lively rallies with Mr. Rainbow. Mr. Rainbow always expanded when Mr. Wellcome came to Glenerne. If he became a little deflated again when Mr. Wellcome had turned his back, nobody thought the less of him on that account. To be able to play up to Mr. Wellcome at all was an achievement beyond the power of most.

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Not that Mr. Wellcome Himself showed himself immediately at the top of his form; he husbanded his resources better than that. He had almost reunited the two hostile camps of waiters and set them to make common cause against himself when he had asked which of them knew the top from the bottom of a bottle of G. H. Mumm, and, taking a napkin and a cutter, had shown them how to unwire one and to pour its contents out; and when all the glasses had been filled, and Mr. Wellcome had risen at the head of the table, dark against the bow-window with its indiarubber-plants in the mustard-yellow faience vases, those who rapped with the ends of their knives on the table and called “Order, order!” felt that it would be some minutes yet before he was thoroughly “warm.”

And yet he started at a more humorous level than anybody else could have attained. In the first place (he said) he must apologize for speaking at all. It was all Mrs. W.'s fault. As everybody knew, he was not allowed to get a word in edgeways at home (smiles)—led a dog's life, in fact (more smiles)—indeed, as he had said to his old friend Charlie Cutbush only the other day, Charlie Cutbush, who used to travel for Dwu Mawr Whisky and now kept “The Silent Woman” in the Borough, “Charlie,” he had said, “you ought to get that sign o' yours altered—it ought to be a man with his head cut off, not a woman!” (A little more laughter, and a gallant remark from Cosimo to the speaker's wife that at any rate Mr. Wellcome looked well on it). But to get on (Mr. Wellcome continued). As they all knew, there was a good deal of giving in connexion with weddings. In his own time at Glenerne it had always been a bit of a puzzle where Miss Addams put 'em all to sleep; but they all knew now where Mrs. Deschamps slept, and a pretty little room it was, and its occupant lots of time before her yet (quite a sudden outburst of mirth at this, and confusion and a cry of “Wretch!” from Mrs. Deschamps). Tut-tut!—What Mr. Wellcome meant to say, if they'd be quiet a bit and not jump down his throat like that, was that they'd all been into Mrs. Deschamps' room to see the wedding-presents. (Laughter.) Now Mr. Wellcome wasn't going to say they weren't, one and all, very handsome wedding-presents, especially Miss Addams's oak-and-silver biscuit-box and the embroidered quilt given by Mrs. Deschamps herself (but Mr. Wellcome would have a word to say to his old friend George Massey, about the comparative inefficacy of embroidered quilts when your feet were really cold, by and by.) (More laughter.) But what Mr. Wellcome was going to say, and he'd say it twice if anybody didn't hear it the first time, was that he'd been giving something away that morning that he hoped and trusted his old friend George would find worth more than all the rest put together—a bonny bride. (Loud applause, and an instant recognition of their error on the part of those who had thought that a humorist couldn't on occasion be serious too.) Mr. Wellcome repeated: a bonnie bride. Mr. Wellcome didn't mean that they didn't all joke about these things sometimes. He did himself, and so would George Massey be doing by and by. But he *did* say this about marriage, and he spoke as a man who had been married more years than he cared to remember: that there was nothing like it. (Cries of “Hear, hear!” from married and unmarried alike, and a noisy drumming of knives and hands on the table.) And while Mr. Wellcome was about it he was going to say something else. There seemed to be people about who thought themselves very wise nowadays. They wanted this changed and that changed; Mr. Wellcome didn't know what they did want, and he didn't think they themselves did either; sometimes it seemed to him that they just wanted something different—good or bad, but different. In fact he, Mr. Wellcome, called 'em grouzers and grizzlers—a pack o' frosty-faces. Now nobody expected the world to stand still. No doubt there was lots of things could be improved on. There was off-licences, for instance. Likewise Clubs. But (here Mr. Wellcome shook a fat forefinger warningly and impressively) Marriage wasn't one of 'em. If an Englishman's house was his castle, Marriage was what Mr. Wellcome might call the front-door key of it! (Applause far more loud and sustained than any mere humorous sally could have called forth.) Now he kept his front-door key on the bunch. (A “Go on with you!” from Mrs. Wellcome.) If the law allowed him two or three wives (and he had only to look round that table to wish ... but that was neither here nor there, and no doubt if he could he'd soon be wishing he hadn't—much laughter)—what he was going to say was that if he had twenty wives he'd keep 'em all on the bunch too.... “But instead o' that one of 'em keeps me on a bit of string,” said Mr. Wellcome, dropping his voice so comically and despondingly that the whole table roared with laughter....

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“And now,” said Mr. Wellcome, beginning to pat his pockets in search of something, “let's cut the cackle and come to the horses.... Where is the dashed thing? Ah, here it is!...”

And, as if his gift of champagne had not been enough, from the bottom of his breeches-pocket he drew forth a gold wrist-watch, ordered Aunt Jerry to hold out her hand, and snapped the chain about her wrist.

It was, too, a “coming to the horses” in a sense quite other than the figurative one in which Mr. Wellcome used the expression. They were real horses to which he came. What else (Mr. Wellcome wanted to know) could be expected of him when Toreador had come in at twelve to one yesterday, and all the money on the favourite, and the bookies' pockets simply spilling gold and

notes?... Nay, Mr. Wellcome described the scene. He set himself in an attitude, and his voice dropped to a hush. "I don't know how ever Sammy did it!" he confided to them. "He seemed to pick her together, then ... *hoooosh!*—Short head, and a hundred-and-twenty o' the best for W.W.!... 'Who give *you* the office?' Dick Marks says to me when I goes to touch; 'if it hadn't been for you, Old Knowall, it'd ha' been grand slam; *you* know a bit, *you* do' ... So now, ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Wellcome concluded, raising his glass, "in asking you all to drink the health of Mr. and Mrs. George Massey, I'll do so in the words of the poet:

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What is there in the vale of Life  
Half so delightful as a wife,  
When friendship, love and peace combine  
To stamp the marriage-bond divine?...

I ask you to join me, ladies and gentlemen...."

Then was begun the writing of a page unparalleled for brightness in the annals of Glenerne. Health after health was drunk, and it was Mr. Rainbow who proposed that of the youngest bachelor present—the infant Wellcome. Yesterday, he said, had been a fine day for Toreador's race, but no finer than to-day was for another race—the Human Race!... Such a roar as went up! Nobody had supposed Rainbow had it in him. Aunt Jerry blushed; Mrs. Deschamps, who was sipping champagne at the time, had to have her back slapped by M. Criqui, and did not recover for several minutes; Cosimo's laugh rivalled that of Mr. Wellcome himself. And then Mr. Rainbow rounded on Cosimo likewise.... For nothing succeeds like success, and Mr. Rainbow, having scored once, immediately scored again. If little birds were to be believed, he said, giving the discreetest of glances at Cosimo and Amory, they might be having another jollification before long. He mentioned no names. He would merely say that one of them was not unknown to fame, fame of what he might call an artistic sort; and all he would say, in the words of a song that used to be sung when he was a good many years younger, was, "That's the time to do it—while you're young!"

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Then Mr. Rainbow made his best hit of all—he sat down in the perfect moment of his triumph.

"The cake, the cake!" everybody shouted; and one of Bunters' waiters handed Aunt Jerry a knife.

Then there were fresh shrieks of merriment, for when Aunt Jerry tried to cut that formidable cake it was discovered to be of solid plaster-of-Paris—a white grindstone tricked out with silver-paper cupids and spurious sugar-work.

"Beats Mrs. Deschamps and the Kissing Bee hollow!" roared the authors of the imposture.

And so the real cake had to be brought and cut.

They rose from the table and ascended to the drawing-room, and there the merriment became more furious still. For Mr. Wellcome's eyes fell on the whatnot with the photographs of Miss Addams's "grandchildren," and the seed of an idea sprang into being in his mind. It grew; it blossomed; it spread into the Rose of Eugenics itself. Mr. Wellcome approached Amory and Cosimo. He was perhaps just slightly drunk. His fingers moved lovingly on Cosimo's biceps, and passed to his pectoral muscles: his other hand was out, almost as if he would have done the same to Amory: and then he gave them, so to speak, their certificate of physical fitness. Noisily he bade Cosimo kiss Amory there and then.

"Be a man ... kiss her, damme!" he cried, a forcible hand on each; and Amory dropped her lids....

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But Cosimo, who was there to see others make exhibitions of themselves but not to make one of himself, hung reluctantly back. But the irresistible Wellcome dragged them both forward again. There was no help for it, and so, knocking his head against Amory's, he gave her a stage kiss only, which, of course, in this tale of Two Kisses, does not count.

"That's the style!" cried Mr. Wellcome heartily, deceived by appearances. "*Hoooosh!*... Short head!—Hi, Bonzoline ... what's your name ... Lorenzo! Hurry up with them liqueurs, and then go downstairs, and feel in the right-hand pocket of my overcoat, and you'll find a bundle of toothpicks—and hi!—see whether my Missis has changed the boy yet ... I want to show 'em his legs, tell her.... Talk about 'legs'!... But you'll see...."

They had seemed to be merry up to then; but all agreed afterwards that only with the bringing up of the coffee and liqueurs and toothpicks did what might be called the *real* merriment begin.

At six o'clock that evening Amory and Cosimo took tea in the studio in Cheyne Walk and compared notes of the events of the day. Cosimo was ecstatic. He had not believed such things existed. Amory's utterances, too, were as breathless and explosive as his own, but seemed somehow to lack ring. A close observer might have supposed her to be acting a brightness. Then for the twentieth time Cosimo guffawed.

"But you lost your bet, Amory—he *didn't* say, 'May all your troubles be little ones!'"

"But he showed us the baby's legs."

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"I admit he did that. That was rather beyond rubies."

"And he handed the toothpicks round."

"So he did. I shall keep mine—die in defence of it. And you'll find that horse's name written on my heart. A horse-race at a wedding!—Oh, oh, I'm not complaining! It was all you promised, and more!"

"I thought perhaps you were disappointed," Amory remarked.

"Good heavens, no! I wouldn't have missed it for worlds! (But, of course, your aunt was charming.)... *Isn't* Mr. Massey fond of the police sergeant!"

"Sickly sentiment, I call it," said Amory abruptly.

"Oh no, not if you take it as part of the general show," Cosimo explained. "Damon and Pythias, I

suppose; not having a brother, can't say. But the thing can't be taken to bits. It was a perfect whole. I wonder what there *is* about a perfect whole that makes it far more than the sum of the parts?"

"Eh?... Oh yes, it is more," said Amory.

"More?... Rather! Why, take it in art...."

"Don't talk about art to-night, Cosimo, please," she said. "You always give me so much to think of when you talk about art."

"Tired?" said Cosimo solicitously, bending over the back of her chair.

"A little."

Amory could not have told why she was tired. She only knew that, to-night somehow, Cosimo did not seem as intuitive as he usually was.

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## PART II

### I

#### PENCE

AMORY was not the only one who was grumbling at the weather. Even Mrs. 'Ill, who was usually of an imperturbable temper, complained. The clothes that she hadn't had out, no, not half an hour, had been drying that lovely it was a treat to see 'em; and of course in running out quick to take 'em in she must go and drop an armful—her most partickler gent's shirts too—and what with the babies and the hens carrying the dirt in and out and one thing and another, it really was enough to try anybody. Cheyne Walk! Rainy Walk more like—

Indeed, it must have rained an inch or more during the morning. It overflowed so from the roof-gutter overhead that as Amory stood by the casement window she might as well have been looking through a Bridal Veil Waterfall. Not that there was anything to look at beyond it. The park had gone; the Jelly Factory was blotted out; the Suspension Bridge was vignetted into nothing half-way across the river. Gurglings came from underneath the sink in the corner. Whether it was the rain or not, the smell of cabbage-water had returned.

Amory was sure it was raining harder in Cheyne Walk than it was anywhere else; harder than it could possibly be in Oxford Street, for example. And she had wanted, yet not wanted, to go to Oxford Street that morning. She had wanted to go because she wanted money; she had not wanted to go because the only means she knew of getting it was to borrow from Dorothy. Cosimo was away; his uncle had died a week before; Cosimo could not possibly be disturbed. And she had seen Mr. Hamilton Dix, and—thank you! It would be some time before she troubled Mr. Hamilton Dix again!...

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Overfed animal!...

October, and still no Show. More, Mr. Hamilton Dix hardly took the trouble now to promise one immediately. But Mr. Dix need not think that Amory didn't now see perfectly clearly the trick that had been practised upon her. She knew now why he had come so hurriedly to her that morning and dazzled her with his offer of a hundred pounds. Angiers', a far better firm than Croziers', had wanted her; that was why. Croziers' had bought her merely in order that Angiers' should not have her. "Dishonest," Amory called it, and she had told Hamilton Dix so to his face. And his reply had been to take her hand and try to pat it.

Wasn't it dishonest? she had cried hotly to herself any time this past month. If it wasn't, she would be glad if somebody would tell her what honesty was! And Mr. Dix in his most odious and soothing voice, had said that she really mustn't talk like that. "Dishonest?" he had repeated. Why, Miss Towers talked as if Croziers' had anything to gain by deliberately suppressing her work! Nothing (he had assured her) was further from the truth. Croziers' were in the hands of circumstances, too, the circumstances that made one time ripe for a particular exhibition and another not.... Messrs. Angier? Mr. Dix knew nothing about Messrs. Angier and their arrangements. They *might* be all right; Mr. Dix *had* heard it said that Messrs. Angier were rather in the habit of promising more than they performed, but that was only a rumour, and Mr. Dix wouldn't give it currency. But he could assure Miss Towers that such "options" as that which Messrs. Crozier had obtained on her work were matters of everyday business.... Come now: would she tell him, as her friend, exactly what the trouble was? Was it money? If so, there was perhaps a chance that Messrs. Crozier might be willing to take over a certain quantity of her more recent work on the same terms as before....

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Another "option," in fact....

Then, successively had come the stages when Mr. Dix had told her that in his opinion she was injudicious to change her style so frequently as she did ("Versatility's all very well, but it puzzles your public," he had said, as if it had not been precisely the ground of Amory's complaint that Croziers' were seeing to it that she had *no* public at all)—when he had told her, that, if she really thought Angiers' could do better for her, Croziers' might be willing to release her from her obligation on repayment of the sum advanced plus a trifle for the accommodation—and when he had ceased to say anything at all. A pretty "option!"—Amory supposed that other man had called it an "option" when he had run away with her godmother's fifty-two pounds a year.

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And of course this was exactly why she didn't want to ask Dorothy for money. For Dorothy would be able to say—perhaps to say it as if she was crowing over her a little—that she had warned her about that contract. Not that Dorothy had warned her one bit, really. Dorothy had not

known any more than herself that her Show would be put off and put off and put off; and if the Show had *not* been put off, all would have been well. But Dorothy was so—peculiar. Her ways were peculiar. She *had* ways, in fact, not principles. Amory didn't want to be severe on Dorothy, but some of the things she did seemed positively *unprincipled*. Not to go any further, there was Dorothy's undignified way of regarding her own sex. She seemed to concur in that view of it that made it merely the plaything of the other sex. Of course (to be quite fair) it wasn't to be supposed for a moment that Dorothy would have let Mr. Hamilton Dix kiss her, as he had wanted to kiss Amory. Amory was sure she wouldn't. But for all that there would have been—something—not a kiss—not even a “leading on” perhaps—Amory couldn't have said what it would have been—but there would have been *something*.... Put coarsely, it was a sort of exaggerated sex-consciousness in Dorothy—that and lack of principle. Amory ought to know that exaggerated sex-consciousness by this time. Glenerne had been full of it. The world seemed to be full of it. It seemed an odious domination; Amory could not understand it at all. Why, Cosimo did not want to kiss her....

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Because, of course, that sham gesture at her aunt's wedding had not been a kiss.

Cosimo quite understood that she was wedded to her art.

Amory could not conceive where the money had gone. Less than six months ago she had had nearly sixty pounds, not counting her regular pound a week; now she had a few shillings only, and quite a number of small debts. She supposed it was because she was not really familiar with the prices of things. Yes, it must be that, for she remembered how surprised she had been at the cost of the little studio-warming she had given when she had first come into this hateful little room. She had not provided anything at all out of the way. There had been a rather nice Greek wine Walter Wyron had told her about, not to be bought in very small quantities, but of course they had not drunk the whole of it that night—indeed, it had lasted for weeks. And there had been cold sausages and salads from a German charcuterie, in glass, not in tins—it was not true economy to run the risk of ptomaine poisoning. And there had also been a few boxes of figs and candied fruits—she admitted those had been rather dear. And so on. Nor, if the party had been a great success, would she have minded a little extra expenditure just for once; but, somehow, it had not been a success. Laura Beamish had had a cold and had not been able to sing; Dickie Lemesurier had wired at the last minute that she was not able to come; Cosimo had done his best, but Dorothy had turned up in an evening frock and had said she could not possibly stay more than an hour; and Walter's friend, who could quote Nietzsche, had proved to be domineering and had done nothing but wrangle with Walter the whole of the evening. In fact, the party had fallen miserably flat.

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But that, after all, was only one evening, and if Amory had been a little extravagant that time, she had more than made up (or so she should have thought) since. Eggs, sardines (in tins), cold boiled ham (at half a crown a pound), bread, butter, and lots of nice hot tea—it was not possible to live much more cheaply than that. At first Mrs. 'Ill cooked her an occasional joint in her own oven at the Creek, but joints are not cheap when you throw a large portion of them away from sheer weariness of the sight of them. She had spent rather a lot on canvases, nothing on clothes. And twice she had been away with Katie Deedes for weekends. Oh yes, and there had been one other party, a river-party just before everybody went away for the summer, which had been Amory's, all but the railway-fares and the claret and lemonade. That had been quite a success.

Except for these things Amory had not the vaguest idea where the money had gone.

She only wanted to borrow until the Christmas quarter; indeed, it was not so much an advance on her allowance as an anticipation of the Christmas present she was sure to receive from her uncle and aunt. Then she would be straight again, and would know how to spend more wisely for the future. And Dorothy could well afford it, if one might judge of her fortune from her unhygienic but expensive dresses. If only the rain would stop she would go to Dorothy at once. She knew that Dorothy's position had improved, and, if the world chose to regard its art as a parasitic thing, the artist could hardly be blamed if he spoiled the Philistine whenever he had the opportunity. In one sense she would actually be doing Dorothy a favour. A loan would put Dorothy into the honourable position of being a patron. Many a Philistine name lives on the formal page of an immortal work that otherwise would have been forgotten.

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Amory continued to watch the flounces of water that spilled from the eaves and to listen to the runnings and gurglings of the West London drainage system.

But all at once a merry “*Cooee!*” came from below; a flapping as of shaken garments sounded in the entry; and a step and a call of “Amory!” were heard on the stairs. It was the voice of Dorothy herself. The door flew inwards, and Dorothy Lennard stood there, a pair of blue eyes and the tip of a nose visible, the rest of her a shimmer of some greenish-yellow material, thin as goldbeaters' skin and trickling rivulets of water. She shook herself on the landing in a haze of water-dust, like a dog that comes out of a pond, and then cried—

“Quick, Amory, and certify me—you shall take 'em off yourself and feel—Mr. Miller said Sloane Street, but it was so near I thought I'd come in—how are you?—No, I'll unbutton them, then your hands will be quite dry to feel—”

She took from her head a sort of poke that fitted like a bathing-cap, allowed the long garment to rustle in a small close heap to the floor, and cried, “There! Now feel me!”

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She seized Amory's wrist and patted herself with Amory's palm.

“That damp isn't the rain come through,” she went on. “Quite the other way; that's my warmth that did that, they're as impervious as that! And of course they're rather dear. But it's a perfect day for it! There'll be a column of floods and rainfall in all the papers to-morrow, and we're setting all the telephones on the jump now getting the space next to it. You do certify me? I said to Mr. Miller, ‘What *is* the good of sticking a piece of the stuff under a tap in the window? What *does* it convey to anybody? They only think there's some fake somewhere (advertisers have faked so much, you see), and besides, it's been done.’ So I said, ‘Why not let somebody go out in this

rain in 'em? If they'll stand this they'll stand anything. Then get some known person to certify that at such-and-such a time yesterday (the wettest day for eighteen years) so-and-so arrived as dry as a bone at such-and-such a place, having walked in Ararat Extra Light and Japhet Boots—but you must feel my stockings too."

She sat down in one of Amory's basket-chairs, began to unlace her boots, and presently thrust out for Amory's examination, one after the other, her grey silk-stockinged soles.

"So they're mine," Dorothy cried jubilantly, "and if you'll give me your signature I'll get you a set, not to speak of the advertisement for you—can't do without that nowadays—I, the undersigned, Amory Towers—if they've never heard of you they daren't say so when they see that.... Those Cosimo's slippers? I'll put 'em on.... I say, you have let your fire down! No, I'll set it going—you fill the kettle—I *have* enjoyed my walk!"

She began to potter about the black fire, gabbling without stopping as she did so.

Amory was almost disinterestedly glad to see Dorothy; on such a day she would have been glad to see anybody. For inside the studio was more desolate than the streets without. No longer did that room over the greengrocer's shop shimmer and twinkle as on the day when she and Cosimo had sat down to their first little supper there. Half the plates that had overlapped so prettily, half the cup that had dangled from the bright hook, were broken; the sink was full of articles awaiting that dreaded washing-up; and in the cupboard forgotten condensed milk tins and brick-like half-loaves turned yellow and green. Amory had cut off Mrs. 'Ill's daily visit; she now came on Saturdays only, and Cosimo had not been there to give her a hand. By the time Dorothy had drawn up the fire, and, going for the tea-things, had found plates with sardine-tails on their edges and cups with graduations of brown about their rims, she might have been pardoned had she thought tea hardly worth troubling about; but she merely bustled cheerfully about, scraping things into a bucket, clearing the table, sweeping the hearth. All the time she chatted about the Ararat Extra Light and the photograph of her that would appear in the papers on the morrow. Amory had been shocked to hear that Dorothy had actually consented to this.

"Why not?" Dorothy had demanded. "It won't have my name on, and by the time the machine men have finished with it, it won't be either like me or anybody else! My dear, you're as bad as Aunt Emmie. Hang my family! Would any of *them* buy me a pair of Japhet Boots? My dear, I *have* to dress myself well: I can't afford to go about in rags! You don't suppose I buy my clothes, do you? Why, you couldn't get these stockings for thirty shillings! I don't mean that I get photographed for every stitch I have on, but I have to get things one way or another!"

Amory sighed to be the possessor of a relentless intellect. It was a heavy burden. Far, far happier were they, the simpler ones, whose nature it was to laugh lazily and good-humouredly while others shouldered the responsibility of the world. They did not even know that in order that they might dance somebody else must weep. Dorothy had condemned herself. All sorts of people could put forward that plea of hers, "I have to get things one way and another." Amory wanted to know what Dorothy *gave* the world in return. She, Amory, gave her art; but Dorothy would surely hardly claim that those fashion-drawings of hers could not quite well be got along without. Therefore it was even a little sorrowfully that Amory asked Dorothy how she was getting along at the studio.

"*Please* don't tread on my new Ararat!" Dorothy cried in fright. "Sorry; my fault for leaving it there.... The studio? Oh, I'm under Miss Benson, of course; it would be a shame to turn her out of a job, and Miss Umpleby would come next anyway; so I just potter along. As a matter of fact, I'm only in the studio about half my time; it's much more fun downstairs, talking over ideas with Mr. Miller. You wouldn't suppose, would you, Amory," she said suddenly, both earnestly and excitedly, "that as I stand here now, filling this teapot, I've got an idea worth—I don't know how much, but certainly Doubledays' would give me a thousand for it, if Hallowells' won't take it, and I should want a pretty stiff contract even then?"

With her hair all rumpled by the Ararat cap and her feet in Cosimo's old slippers she certainly did not look worth a thousand.

"Sorry I can't tell you what it is," she went on, setting down the teapot, thumbing a hard half-loaf and selecting a softer one. "I haven't told Mr. Miller yet. We have to choose our time for these things; wait for the ripe moment. Wait till Hallowells' get their last storey up and the roof on, then we'll see. Mr. Miller thinks I'm just a person who makes a useful suggestion now and then, and I let him think so; but wait a bit. Something better than Benny's place for me!"—

"But—but—I don't understand. Is this fashion-drawing?" Amory asked.

"Oh, dear no!" Dorothy replied, drawing up a chair to the table. "Let it stand a minute first—stir it with a spoon.... I don't mean fashion-drawing now. You see, Hallowells' are going to wake London up. Mr. Miller's pretty good at his job—waking London up—in other words, advertising, and I'm only a fashion-artist a long as there's nothing better going. It will probably come off next Spring—depends how they get on with the building; and I'll buy a picture from you then, Amory."

Amory had smiled. Oh, advertisement! She had thought that Dorothy could hardly mean that she was going to make all this money out of fashion-drawing! Advertisements—those funny things that Aunt Jerry was getting! Amory smiled again.

For Aunt Jerry had lately been showing her more of them—advertisements now, not of caterers and wedding-cake makers, job-masters, and house-agents and furnishers, such as she had had at the time of her wedding, but of quite other things. Amory had thought she had never seen anything so funny—and nauseating—funny and nauseating both at once. Really, the things were an outrage! She supposed that somebody—Mr. Miller perhaps—read the top left-hand corner of the front page of the *Times* and *Morning Post* day by day, carefully counted the weeks, felt (as it were) Aunt Jerry's pulse, asked her how she was feeling each morning, penetrated into her hidden thoughts, anticipated her desires, and then sent the things along—descriptions of layettes

and perambulators, of cribs and pens and patent bottles, of foods and clothes and schemes for insurance. "*Baby will Soon be Cutting his Teeth*," Mr. Miller, or whoever it was, began, whispering (so to speak) confidentially behind his hand; or "*Of course if you WANT your Wee One to have Wind!*"... That, Amory thought, was the funny aspect; the nauseating one came when you remembered that, properly diffused by this same means, really valuable information about Eugenics and the Chromosome might have been given to the world. That, if Aunt Jerry and Mr. Massey must have children, would have been, not immediately perhaps, but ultimately far more to the purpose. But Amory supposed it would be a waste of time to look for ultimate purposes to Dorothy. Possibly she not only devised the advertisements, but drew the layette too.

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But Amory had not forgotten that she wanted Dorothy to lend her ten pounds. The minutes were passing, and no doubt Dorothy would soon be putting on the Ararat again, and going back to Oxford Street and Mr. Miller. Amory turned over this and that "opening"; none of them seemed very promising. Dorothy was already lacing up the Japhet Boots; she was going to make her advertisement a "cinch" by walking back also in the downpour. But suddenly Amory remembered her pride. There was no need for abjectness. Therefore it was with a certain offhandedness that, as Dorothy rose and stamped one Japhet boot after the other, she suddenly said, "Oh, I say, Dorothy, will you lend me ten pounds?"

It is astonishing how rich everybody else appears when we ourselves are poor. For a moment Dorothy's eyes opened widely, then she broke into a humorous grimace.

"My dear!... Where from, I wonder?" Then she added, "Really? I mean, you really want it?"

"Yes," said Amory shortly. She wondered whether Dorothy thought she would ask for it if she didn't want it.

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"I haven't ten pounds in the world," said Dorothy. Then she considered for a moment. "If it's really urgent—I mean if you really *must* have it—I might—I never have yet, but I *might* be able to get it—"

There seemed to Amory a certain lack of delicacy in the pause. It was as if she gave Amory an opportunity of saying what she wanted the money for. Amory was sure that some day, when those poor and deserving artists should come to her, she would neither ask questions nor break off into pauses that came to the same thing. She did not deny Dorothy's right to refuse; she did deny her any other right. If Dorothy's fashion-drawing or advertisements or whatever it was could not provide ten pounds, then absolutely the only thing that could be said for these absurdities disappeared.

"You see, I should have to borrow it myself—"

Then, however, it seemed to strike even Dorothy that she was not behaving very well. Suddenly she said, "All right, I will borrow it; will to-morrow do?"

"I should be awfully obliged," said Amory, helping Dorothy on with the Ararat Coat.

But Dorothy relapsed from the right attitude again immediately. Without stopping to think that the Ararat sleeve was wet and Amory dry, she suddenly passed her arm about her. She held her close, making her horridly wet, and began to say a number of the so-called sympathetic things that, when they are not impertinences, are banalities.

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"I *am* sorry, dear," she said. "I see how it is; of course you aren't cut out for this sort of life. I saw that the moment I came in. Now, look here, what you ought to do would be to give Mrs. 'Ill a sum every week, and to tell her that she's got to do you, all in, for that. Not too much, either; *you* can't buy, but she can. That's the way I do. I saw how you'd been living when I washed up; eggs and sardines and pressed beef; and you're really run down. You ought never to have signed that contract, but I'll tell you what you perhaps can do about that. Tell Croziers' that you won't go to another dealer, but that you *must* have leave to sell things privately, and that you'll pay them commission just as if *they'd* sold them. If they won't—well, just you sell without their permission, and let 'em sue you if they like. They won't sue you. They can't afford it. I'm seeing business men every day, remember, and I'm sure that's what Mr. Miller would say. And if my thing comes off I'll buy a picture from you next Spring. Will you promise to do that, Amory?"

Even Amory saw the sense of it, but that did not alter the fact that to all intents and purposes Dorothy was lending her money on the condition that she did as she was told with it. Not *exactly* that, of course, but rather indelicately like it. And she had all but told Amory that her place was disgracefully dirty and herself underfed. Amory wasn't sure that Dorothy wasn't simply one mass of pose. She could come here and speak her mind plainly enough, could talk in quite a grasping spirit of the money she intended to get; but Amory could imagine her with Mr. Miller—anything but plain; sly, wheedling, not helping in the emancipation of her sex at all, but actually doing all she could to rivet their chains the faster upon them; neither forgetting, nor allowing Mr. Miller to forget, that she was rather a personable young woman. Amory called it the next thing to—well, she wouldn't say what. She would be kind, merely say that they were in opposite camps, and let it go at that.

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Therefore she was not giving Dorothy one for herself, but was merely showing herself staunch to a high ideal, when she said, effusively, but still with dignity, "Oh, thank you so very, very much ... if you *could* possibly get me the money.... Perhaps I haven't managed very well, but as you say, I've other things to think of; and about what you say about Croziers', I hardly think—"

But Dorothy cut bluntly in. "Rubbish! They've just taken advantage of your ignorance and inexperience. I should tell 'em they could make kite-tails of their silly old contract! Look here, shall I see Mr. Dix for you?"

Amory hesitated. She did not want to see Mr. Dix again herself, firstly because she felt that an artist ought to be spared these sordid matters, and secondly because she always wanted to wash herself when Mr. Dix had covered her with those galantined eyes. But Dorothy was not an artist,

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and apparently didn't mind a glutinous look more or less. To the coarser nature the coarser task. One didn't chop firewood with a razor....

"What'd be the good?" she sighed. "I signed the thing."

"Leave that to me," said Dorothy briskly. "I'll talk to Mr. Dix for you. At least I'll get permission for you to sell things privately, and then you can reckon the ten pounds off the price of the picture I'll buy—for my scheme's bound to come off! So we'll call that a bet. And now I must fly. Do try my plan with Mrs. 'Ill. When's Cosimo coming back? Yes, I saw about his uncle. Good-bye, dear.... And oh, dear, now I'm forgetting the very thing I came for! You will sign that advertisement, won't you?"

"What advertisement?" Amory asked. She had forgotten all about the Ararat Coat. But now she remembered.... "Oh, that waterproof thing! Oh, you don't want me to sign that!"

Dorothy turned quickly. "Oh, Amory, don't be so silly!" she broke out. "Of course it doesn't matter a button to us whether you sign it or not, but I thought you might as well. Nobody need sign it for that matter, but we have our space, and it's a pity to waste this rain. And I really could get you the complete outfit, boots and all. As well as getting your name before the public. But don't if you don't want."

Amory lifted her shallow (but penetrating) eyes.

"Well, dear—if it were *really* necessary—especially after all your kindness—but as you say it isn't—if you wouldn't very much mind—I think my signature looks better on my pictures——"

"All right. It doesn't matter," said Dorothy. "I'll let you know how I go on with Mr. Dix——"

And she was gone, once more to put the Ararat and the Japhet Boots to the test of the heaviest rainfall for eighteen years.

No sooner was her back turned than Amory, flinging aside the curtain on its little rail, lay down on her unmade bed. She had the promise of her ten pounds, but it had cost its price. It had cost it in forbearance. Still, that was no more than all the poets and seers and souls dedicated to art had had to suffer before her, and she, like them, had kept her ideal unsullied.

But she was disappointed in Dorothy.

## II

### A DAMSEL ERRANT

MORE and more as she thought it over, Amory was glad that she was not going to see Mr. Hamilton Dix again. Excepting always Cosimo, who was different, she had begun to have a poor opinion of men. And as this opinion was based, not on her reading of Association books, nor on anything Laura Beamish or Katie Deedes had told her, but on her own unshakable and inalienable experience, it is perhaps worth a moment's examination.

By no means, then, did she now think men the efficient, capable creatures they appeared to consider themselves to be. Amory knew men; she knew two of them, no fewer. One of these two men had inveigled her into an all-but-fraudulent contract; the other, definitely fraudulently, had absconded with the funds that had provided Amory Towers with an income of a pound a week, and was not very likely ever to be heard of again. We all speak of the world as we find it. This was the world as Amory had found it; and, since the total sum of the world's wrong and cruelty was admittedly enormous, what more natural than to try to gauge its enormity by a process of multiplication?

Amory, sternly and deliberately setting her painting aside until she should have come to some really basic conclusion on these points, began to multiply.

And the day on which she did so was an evil day for those impostors—men. How should it not be an evil day for them? For men, who had had the world's affairs entirely in their hands in the past, still had them almost entirely in their hands to-day; and what had they made of things? Plainly, the best system they had been able to devise was a system in which it was possible for trustees to abscond with funds entrusted to them by godmothers. And not only that. Forgetting that a real man, Blake (unhappily now dead), had said that the sight of a robin in a cage set all heaven in a rage—totally ignoring that spiritual aspect of the matter—men, when asked for redress, callously weighed the cost of prosecution and the chances of securing a conviction, shrugged their shoulders, and (in Amory's case) apparently proposed to do nothing at all. Men, in a word, actually approved (though they pretended not to) of the organized robbery of poor girls.

Next, whether they liked it or not, men must shoulder the responsibility for a state of things that permitted iniquitous contracts to be fluttered in the face of necessitous people, and that (in effect) ground the face of the poor because he (or in the present instance she) was poor. Males, as males, could not escape the onus of Mr. Hamilton Dix. Amory might have been more merciful had they made any attempt to do so, but they did not. They spoke of such things as everyday matters of business. They said that no humanly devisable system could be perfect, and told her, with their hypocritical "niceness," that the whole fabric of society could hardly be pulled down merely because a self-seeking individual here and there crept in and took advantage. But Amory knew that it was not a question of individuals. It was the underlying spiritual principle that was the whole point. That was radically wrong. Even men saw this, a few men, and called themselves Radicals, which was really a Latin word, meaning that they affected to go to the radix or root of the matter; but Amory knew where the root of the matter really lay. It lay in this artificial sex-distinction and in that frightfully laughable masculine theory of the "natural dominance of the



male."

But this was only a part of it, and not the finer part. It was in the finer part that the whole evil came to a head. How (to put the thing in a nutshell) did men (with the honourable exception of Cosimo and one or two others) treat art (namely, Amory's art)? There you had it!

Here Amory was on her own ground, and could speak once more from that astonishingly useful thing, experience. How had the world, under male dominance, treated her art?... Well, Amory would be fair, even generous. There actually had been a period of a few months, a sort of lucid interval, when Mr. Hamilton Dix's articles really had given the impression that Mr. Dix knew what he was talking about. They had been written about the time Amory had signed her contract, and had been copied by provincial papers. But oh! the downfall after that. The adulation Dix had lately been spilling over that Harris girl, who (as Amory could demonstrate, absolutely and up to the hilt) had simply stolen Amory's own subjects and carried one or two of Amory's own tricks of handling to simply screaming absurdities! More than once Amory had wondered whether Miss Harris let Mr. Dix kiss her.... And when Amory had pointed out the theft to Mr. Dix, and had said that in her poor opinion an action for infringement of copyright might lie (or if it mightn't, then it ought to), had Mr. Dix done anything but ogle her and insult her with his sticky smile? Not he. He had merely asked her whether she wished to make her demonstration before a jury of matrons!... No doubt he had thought that smart, but even a fool may sometimes tell the truth by accident and unawares. A jury of matrons—that was to say an appeal to a court that did not condone embezzlement and smile at thievish contracts—was exactly what *was* needed. But had men, during all the centuries in which they had ruled, ever founded such a court? Were they ever likely to do so until they were absolutely driven to it? Not they! And it was probably too late now. The women had seen through them, knew their real nature. At last they had seen the thing to be the sex-war it really had been all along. Amory could have named, offhand, quite a dozen of her old companions of the McGrath who had put the whole question far more clearly than the so-called statesmen. And even among men themselves there was the clear-eyed Otto Weiniger—that notable exception.

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For what had Weiniger said, if the dull world would but take the wool out of its ears and listen? Why, what but that the classification by sexes was nothing but the roughest of approximations after all? Because the chromosome didn't actually *show*, illogical folk had got into the habit of saying "This is a man" and "That is a woman," largely by force of hearing it repeated time after time. But what of the masculine qualities in woman, the feminine qualities in man? What about Cosimo's exquisite perceptions, Amory's own strong art? Oh no; this rough guesswork really would not do for a generation that at last, in spite of bandages and blinkers, had begun to see the light! Amory knew—by herself and Cosimo, to go no further—that the sexes *did* intermerge and graduate. The best women to-day had brains that pierced ruthlessly through shams (which was what brains were primarily for); and the best men were Feminist in their sympathies. No doubt it would take a little time for this truth to force its way into the Glenernes of the land. No doubt Mrs. Deschamps would continue to flirt with M. Criqui, and the unspeakable Mr. Wellcome to boast that he was wholly (not partly) the father of his own offspring and his placid wife entirely (and without qualification) their mother. But nobody on the look-out for signs of the true progress turned their eyes Glenernewards. Glenerne had never heard of the chromosome. Ten to one it would have thought it was a mechanical piano-player. That was why Amory had left Glenerne.

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And how had the world treated its Weiniger—its Nietzsche—its Strindberg? "Mad as hatters," it said, merely because they had shot themselves, or died in the madhouses to which it had driven them!

Yes (Amory thought), if that was the best the men could do, it was time the women took hold!

Hungrily, hungrily she wished Cosimo was back, so that they might discuss these things together!

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But Cosimo not only remained away; he did not even write very frequently. He appeared to wait until he had received three letters from Amory, and then to "answer" them together, obviously with the letters before him. Amory understood that business in connection with his uncle's estate detained him; he was in Shropshire: and a phrase about "running up to town presently" had read as if, even when he should come, he would go back to Shropshire again. But he had not given up his studio near the Vestry Hall; Amory knew that because he had sent her the key of it and had asked her to forward his letters; and Amory went there daily. Once she had even tried to work there, but without much success. She had hardly expected it would answer. She had only tried it because she had come to hate her own place so.

Indeed, there had been days when she had approached her easel as reluctantly as if the instrument had been a guillotine with a basket behind it to receive her severed head; and there had been other days when to contemplate the daub on the canvas had almost made her wish it had been one. For she now found her own work execrable. And yet she could not summon the courage to take a knife and scrape it out. Each afternoon she hoped it would appear better in the morning, but it never did. It seemed as if Croziers' carrier, in fetching away those twenty-eight pictures, had taken away also whatever talent had gone to their painting. On one canvas only that she had produced since then could she bear to look, and that was neither study, sketch, nor picture. It showed the group, all red with firelight, that had sat about her hearth when Laura Beamish, with the coloured ribbons of her guitar falling about her, had sung "The Trees they do Grow High."

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She knew that the reasons for this wretched falling off lay close at hand. In the first place, she badly needed a change. Next, she was making far, far greater attempts than when she had been content to state (as it were with a "Something like this—you know—and this—you've seen these things"), the results of her Saturday night wanderings in the streets and of her Sunday mornings in Petticoat Lane or where the Salvation Army gathered to sing. She told herself that she had

acquired knowledge more quickly than she had been able to assimilate it. Next, the lean years were always followed by the fat, the fat by the lean: it was a Law.... But she had gleams of hope too. Broadly considered, discontent was no bad sign. Only fatuity could regard its work with unvarying complacency. Despondency might not be in itself a guarantee of genius, but genius and despondency were no strangers. Her work was in a stage of transition. She was in mental and spiritual labour, and a new style would emerge. To the old one she refused to return.... And so on. The more she groped the more she read, and the more she read the more she groped. They are lucky who are merely required to love the highest when they see it: let us sorrow for those who are condemned, not only to love, but also to attempt to realize, the highest when they do not see it.

And let us sorrow especially for the artist who has no choice but to sacrifice, to the vast and thunderous things he cannot do, the frail and small and comfortable things that he can. [167]

Amory's refuge from herself at that time was to walk the streets until she was ready to drop with fatigue. North, south, east, and west she went, numbing herself with mechanical movement, exhausting herself with speculations that even for herself had no interest. Faces passing, passing, for ever passing, seemed to lend her a stupor; they seemed, not individuals, but aspects of one general, horrible human phenomenon. Sometimes, in this multiple beast of a crowd, her heart palpitated as the heart of a bird palpitates before a spinning, fascinating snare. Sometimes for an hour at a time she would see nothing but eyes—eyes various in shape and colour as the pebbles on a beach, sometimes looking into hers, sometimes looking past her, sometimes tipped with arrowheads of white as they turned, sometimes only to be seen under their lowered lids as a finger-nail is to be seen under the finger of a glove. She wondered how many of them, like her own, were seeing nothing but eyes too. She wondered on what pillows they closed, within what walls, behind what doors and windows, with what other eyes sealed by their sides.... And at other times she saw nothing but doors and windows. As if she had been paid to keep a catalogue of these things, she counted and classified the fanlights of Lincoln's Inn and the Bloomsbury Squares, the high-railing balconies of the tenements behind Victoria Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, the numbers on Soho doors, the window-boxes of Mayfair. Then there would take her the fancy that everybody she saw knew everybody else, as the bees of a hive may be supposed to know one another, and that she alone was an intruder and unknown. And for a time she rather liked that. It gave her a sense of specialness. But presently it began to frighten her a little. The specialness turned to an intolerable loneliness. Her elbows touched theirs, but they were remoter from her than the stars. If she could have stopped one of them and asked it what name it bore it would have been rather a relief; to know even a name would have been something; it would have helped in that frightening blankness, and she would have been quite willing to tell her own name in return. But she knew nothing about them—nothing, nothing. Even their sex (if Weiniger was to be believed) was a matter of presumption. Of course some had beards and some had not, but that was a shallow, superficial view. No doubt with the advance of knowledge (she fancied Galton had said something of the sort) beards might be bred on every face, or bred out of existence entirely. Amory hoped the latter. Mr. Jowett, at the McGrath (she remembered), had once lifted his moustache to show her the growth and construction of the ornament, and it had not struck her as a pretty sight; and she could not have endured Cosimo with a beard. It would have been a contradiction of all she found most sympathetic in Cosimo. That nice, friendly other girl Amory was ready to choose for Cosimo should certainly not be a girl who would allow Cosimo to grow a beard.... [168]

Amory went into Cosimo's studio one night, after a long walk through Wandsworth, past Clapham Common, and back through the Old Town to the bus at Victoria, in order to see whether there were any letters for him. There were none, and she sat down on the edge of his bed, where she had sat that morning when she had come to tell Cosimo that she was moving into Cheyne Walk at once. Cosimo's studio was on the ground floor, at the back of a block. Amory had not lighted the gas. Somewhere away across a yard somebody was going to bed with a blind up, and the distant incandescent shed a raw ugly light. It shone through a narrow side-window of Cosimo's studio, making quite a bright patch on the floor at the foot of his bed. Amory watched it dully, trying to summon up force to get up and go home. [169]

Aching as she was for Cosimo's return, she was still a little displeased with him. To be sure, he told her, in those rather perfunctory letters, how horribly he missed her, but somehow she did not feel that his sense of loss was quite as great as her own. She resented his staying so long away. It hardly rose to her conception of their past beautiful friendship. Of course his uncle was dead, but his uncle would still be dead if Cosimo stayed away another couple of months, making four in all, and Amory still waiting and waiting.... Well, he mustn't think that she was going to ask him to come back, though he never returned at all. She would continue to forward his letters, adding a patient little note of her own once in a while. Indeed, had it not been that Cosimo understood her art, she would hardly have done as much as that for him.... [168]

Then, still sitting on the edge of Cosimo's deserted bed, she remembered the richly comical interpretation that Dorothy and the plumber, the chimney-sweep and Glenerne, had put upon Cosimo's wellnigh perfect understanding of her art. And that recollection led to another—that of the "stage-kiss" Cosimo had given her when Mr. Wellcome had thrust them into one another's arms. She remembered that she had been—she hardly knew how to put it—say a little disappointed in Cosimo about that. Hitherto she had not asked herself the reason of this, but she thought she saw it now. Cosimo, for once, had not done the proper thing at all. The proper way to fool those inquisitive, stupid people to the top of their bent would have been to give her a *real* kiss, not a mock one. As likely as not that clumsy caress had seemed the shyness of a real lover. No; the proper way to throw dust in their eyes would have been to take her face deliberately between his hands, turn it up, and plant the ridiculous emblem fairly and squarely on her mouth. [170]

Then, when they had found themselves alone again, they could have laughed together at Glenerne and its folly. Cosimo had not played the game.

And she felt the slight disappointment in him that night especially, for, reaching North Side an hour or two before, she had suddenly left the pavement and struck across the Common towards the "Plough." It was a coldish night, and not, from the point of view of the phenomena she had passed on the Common, to be compared with any warm evening in the Spring; nevertheless she had seen enough to give an exquisitely ironical point to this obsession of bodily contacts that seemed to engage the world. Simply, they had been kissing everywhere, and Cosimo certainly ought to have been there to exchange with her humorous Olympian comments on the screaming absurdity of it all. Perhaps—Amory was not sure—but perhaps, merely as part of the general joke—as a sort of recognition of their surroundings—a sort of politeness (if you cared to put it in that way)—as a doing in Rome as Rome does, and on Clapham Common as Clapham Common does, Amory might have let him kiss her too.... And then they would have come back here or to Cheyne Walk, to laugh together as he cleared supper away and she braided her inordinate hair. To taste the full savour of folly you yourself must have been a fool too—just once. Perhaps—Amory was not quite certain—it was a Law....

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But Cosimo had not been a fool even once....

But Amory was almost too fagged out even for resentment. She could only weakly wish, as she rested her aching back on Cosimo's bed, that even with his few imperfections he was there. For one thing, twice that very night she had been frightened on the Common by the approach of men. Hating herself for doing anything so unmasculine, she had clutched her skirts and almost made a run for it. To the turning heads of women in the streets, who apparently found something amusing in her demonstratively serviceable Portia hat and her obviously sensible square-toed, flat-heeled shoes, she had long been accustomed; but such alarms as she had felt when Mr. Jowett had turned up his moustache to show the growth of it were only the beginning of her instinctive shrinkings from the rough physique of men. They were not Antinouses on Clapham Common. She preferred masculinity sublimated, so to speak—purified by the processes of art. Anything else—a caress of Cosimo's, for example—would have owed its bearableness largely to the philosophic or ironic meaning behind.

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She continued to wish that Cosimo was there. Then they would have talked quite a lot about those things.

She had not noticed that the glaring incandescent across the yard had been extinguished and that the studio was now pitch-dark. She wished that before he had left Cosimo had not removed the linen cases from his pillows; the striped ticking tickled her cheek. But she was too tired to move. Some time ago a clock had struck a quarter-past something; a quarter-past eleven she supposed; she decided that when it struck half-past she would get up. That would not be for five minutes yet. She closed her eyes.

She did not immediately realize what it was that caused her to open them again when she did. She only knew that some sound had caused her alarm, and that, a moment later, she was sitting up with a fluttering heart on Cosimo's bed. She would have called out, but suddenly, at a repetition of the sound, she dared not. Nor dared she move. She put her hand to her breast. Her tiny face had gone white.

Somebody was fumbling softly at the door.

Never in her life had Amory fainted, but she wellnigh did so now. She knew that there were other men in this block of studios; had she been observed to come in and not seen to depart again? It was possible, and burglars also were possible. Instantaneously it had flashed into her mind that the latch was an ordinary one and that it had closed of itself behind her—she remembered to have heard its click—otherwise she would have been defenceless. Terror seized her. It was not her own restraint that prevented her from giving a shrill scream. She had no voice with which to scream....

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Then suddenly whoever was at the door was heard to depart again. As the sound of steps died away Amory fell back on Cosimo's bed.

And as she dared not go out, there was nothing for her to do but to remain where she was.

She simply dared not go out now.

So she lay, hardly closing her eyes once, until the side window became a leaden oblong. Then, slowly and laggardly, Cosimo's chest of drawers, his washstand, his little bureau, and his row of boots crept into dim shape out of the shadows. The sheet over his arm-chair ceased to be a grey crouching figure, the easel with the duster over it to be a criminal hanging in chains. Soon the milk-carts would be coming round, and the postman—

But she would not wait to see whether any letters came for him—

Cold and stiff, at last she rose. Her feet were leaden, and she neither knew nor cared what anybody might think who saw her coming out into the street at that hour of the morning. She groped for the latch of the front door, and closed the door behind her. Ten minutes later she reached her own studio, dead-beat.

But there, too, somebody—the same somebody—awaited her. She had cast herself wearily into the low window-seat and was watching the sullen day-break over the river, when from behind the curtain that enscreened her bed there came a creak and a heavy sigh. For all her fatigue she sprang up as a skip-jack springs up when its piece of cobbler's wax yields. It *could* only be one person.

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She ran across the room and flung the curtain aside.

At the same moment Cosimo opened his eyes.

"Urro!" he grunted.

Then he sat sluggishly up.

"Hullo! It's you. Wherever have you been?" he muttered.

"However did you get in here?" Amory demanded almost sharply.

"Put my hand through that stupid old door and slipped the latch, of course. You ought to get that door seen to, Amory; anybody could get in. But where on earth have you been all night? I came for my key, and then went to my place to see if you were there—went twice, in fact—but I thought you'd be coming in, so I waited and went to sleep. What time is it? By jove, it's cold."

Cosimo had lain down dressed on her bed, but his hair—this was the first thing Amory noticed about him—was less disarranged than it might have been. It no longer clung about his head in tendrils. He had had it cut quite short. But Amory did not comment upon the change. She had come to a sudden resolution. She did not intend to tell Cosimo that she had spent the night lying on his bed. So when presently he asked her again where she had been she assumed a brightness that, haggard as it was, was still a feat when her exhaustion was considered. She laughed.

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"Oh, I've been out looking for subjects. I've found one—a ripper—Covent Garden Market. But oh, I'm *so* tired!"

"But surely you haven't been there all night, my dear girl?" Cosimo expostulated.

"There and other places. Why not?... Do be an angel and light the fire, Cosimo."

And as Cosimo rose, stretched himself, and took off his coat, she stole a covert look at his cut hair again. It seemed to her to be not impossible that that might be an index of other changes also.

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### III

#### "BUSINESS AS USUAL"

VALUABLE as were the qualities that had placed Dorothy's friend, Mr. Miller, high in the estimation of Hallowells', they entailed one defect that was more valuable than all of them put together. Resolution, hard work, and singleness of purpose had given him an enviable position in the most humorous job of the age; but these would have availed him comparatively little had there not been in that part of him where his sense of humour should have resided, a void that approached as near to a vacuum as nature permits. It was to that void that Mr. Miller really owed his success.

For you simply cannot do these things with your tongue in your cheek. Had Mr. Miller not been able to make, with perfect belief in them, statements that anybody else would have had to laugh in the middle of, he would not have been the Man of Ideas he was. In the ordinary run of his business smart young men came to Mr. Miller with notions and devices for this and that; he bought them, paid for them at the current rates, merely because he had to have them; but they were not what he really wanted. What he really wanted let him explain for himself.

The moment you were shown into his room you were aware that you were in the presence of no funny man. Suppose you had the good fortune not to be "turned down" at once as a mere "smartie," Mr. Miller would take trouble with you. He would frankly admit that he and his fellows had only themselves to thank for the disrepute into which their craft had fallen; and bold would have been the advertising freebooter or mere space-broker who had held up his head before Mr. Miller's righteous anger.

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"We've overdone it," he would sorrowfully admit. "We want noo blood—noo blood, noo ideas, and belief in the reel dignity of our work. If you've got them, sit right down and let's have a look at them; if you haven't, you're a busy man and so am I, and I keep my door plain inside and pretty in the passage where it looks best from. Now show."

Let us assume that you showed and that Mr. Miller found you worth still more trouble. He might then address you as follows:—

"Too smart. Smartness took the full count the fall before last; we're pushing these funny stunts underground where they belong. And that other idee—too noisy. Shouting don't go any more today. N. G.— Now you're an Englishman, and can't be expected to see these things in their reel perspective; but you've assets right here in this country without these vodeville acts. It ain't my business to put you wise, but I'll tell you this: neither noise nor smartness is good enough for Hallowell and Smiths'. Look out o' that window. You see that edifice. That edifice isn't going up to be run like the one next door to it. It's a noo edifice, and it's going to be run on noo methods. You think your methods are noo. You think again. You think quite a lot. Then when it's hit you good and hard, ring me up and I'll make another date with you. You got the right look, and there might be business done between you and I yet. The door closes itself. If you hear a hiss that ain't me, but the piston. I hope you found the elevator-man courteous in his manner. You did? That's one of the things there's going to be at Hallowells'—etiquette. But unobtroosive. Not sticking out a foot on each side. You didn't observe it sticking out, did you? So. Good morning."

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Mr. Miller had looked up in an etymological dictionary the meaning of the word "gospel," and had found that it meant "good tidings"; and that, he said, was exactly what advertisement meant too. He had looked up other words also—Valour, Hero, Dignity, Gentleman—and he was for restoring their dimmed lustre. And since he saw things in their true perspective, he saw also the only way in which that could be done. To cut the cackle and come (like Mr. Wellcome) to the horses, he proposed to do it by a putting of the founts of honour to purposes of irrigation. Commerce had vulgarized itself; dignity must therefore be restored to it from where dignity was to be had in quantities sufficient if necessary to throw at the birds—from above. One day Mr. Miller, passing a more than usually ingenious advertisement in a shop window, had stated his

point of view in twenty words. "Look at that!" he had exclaimed to his companion. "Now I say the man who invented that was a live wire. He connects. You feel the man. But what does the British public know about him? If he'd rescued a comrade under fire he'd have got your V.C. for it, and everybody'd have known all there was to him; but you stop a hundred people on this sidewalk and ask 'em his name, and if a single one of 'em can tell you then the drinks are on me!"

It is true that Mr. Miller did not say that he wanted the Cross bestowed (as it were) For Value instead of For Valour, but that was the direction in which his thoughts strayed. Before his perspective had become quite so clear he had tried to get permission for the Royal Standard to float over Hallowells' new premises (the Union Jack having become common trade property, and so of no more value to one emporium than to another); and though he had failed, it was still better to have failed in such an attempt than to have succeeded in the funny stunts that had been pushed underground the fall before last. It remained an ideal for commerce to lift up its eyes to.

In the business sense, though in none other, Mr. Miller had paid a good deal of court to Dorothy Lennard—or perhaps less at first to Dorothy than to Lady Tasker's niece. Nominally Dorothy was still "third hand" in the fashion studio; but Miss Benson had been wise enough to leave her free to do pretty much as she liked (without that freedom the studio would never have got Hallowells' catalogue, nor have become what to all intents and purposes it now was—one of Hallowells' departments), and Dorothy's intimacy with Mr. Miller had ripened quickly after the famous buying of Glenister's picture, "Sir Walter and the Cloak," at the Academy more than a year before. Dorothy had gone round the Exhibition with Mr. Miller, and had seen him stop long before the picture and presently return to it.

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"Now that's what I call a picture, Miss Lennard," he had said at last. "A reel thoughtful bit of art. I don't care whether you call it pre-Raphaelite or whatever you call it—you as a lady-artist can put it all over me there—but speaking as a plain man of business I say that picture just appeals to me. It calls me. I feel it. It's got meaning. There's your Raleigh, look. And there's your Queen Bess. And I ask you to observe the chivalrous spirit of it. That's the reel old-world English courtesy. That's the thing that hasn't got to be let die. Hallowells' has got to pitch its key up to that. It's got to be as if there was a puddle in front of the Grand Entrance every day, and every lady-shopper was a Queen, and Hallowells' was"—Mr. Miller had made a low, sweeping gesture with both his arms—"spreading its Cloak. That's the deportment I want for our Hosts. Where do they keep the Sales Department here?"

And, that an object-lesson should be ever before his Departmental Hosts' eyes, Mr. Miller had bought the picture.

How Hallowells' had contrived, during the past two years, with an army of painters and gilders, carpenters and shopfitters, plasterers and electricians and inspectors and engineers swarming all over the place, that business should be "carried on as usual during rebuilding" was nothing short of a modern miracle; but so it had been. And the gradual rising of the visible edifice had been accompanied, course by course and tier by tier, by bright palatial uprearings in Mr. Miller's busy brain. If the weather should hold for another month, all was expected to be ready for the Grand Inauguration in the spring; and even if the weather did not hold, the impression had somehow got about that the weather must be a mightier power even than had been supposed to be able to postpone an event of such magnitude.... But all this is ancient history now. London knows its Hallowells' and the wonders that the man who held its Portfolio of Publicity (for surely he was entitled to a seat in the Cabinet of the World's Commerce) called forth. It has accepted the Hallowell touch. It knows that its shopwalkers rank as Marshals and its head-salesmen as Hosts. It knows that the employé who would win his spurs at Hallowells' must fast and keep his vigil before the picture of Sir Walter and the Cloak. The funny stunt *has* taken the full count. Mr. Miller *has* corrected the perspective of things.... Therefore pass we on to how Dorothy Lennard had now and then a voice in certain of the tertiary wonders of the organization and how into the vast complexity she had contrived to drag the name of Mr. Hamilton Dix.

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Mr. Dix had come into the concern over the pictorial advertising. Of Dorothy as an ex-student of the McGrath Mr. Miller had presently come to think almost as much as he did of Dorothy the niece of Lady Tasker; and he had taken her word about Mr. Dix. "Couldn't your posters and things be made somehow a bit more—important?" Dorothy had suggested one day. "Tell me how," Mr. Miller had instantly replied—"tell us how; you've grasped the idee! You don't suppose we could enlist the patronage of our president of the Royal Academy, do you?" (Mr. Miller had lately begun to speak of "our" Royal Standard and "our" House of Peers.) Thereupon Dorothy had given a light, rapid sketch of Sir Edward Pointer, not so much disdaining as debarred by his official position from superintending Hallowells' pictorial advertising; and she had suggested Mr. Hamilton Dix instead. "Is he a live wire?" Mr. Miller had demanded. "No push about him, I mean, no noise, not always forcing himself forward, but the reel solid dignity? If he ain't exclsosive and hard to get, he's no good to us! He ain't a 'Sir,' is he?"

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"No."

"Nor an 'Honourable,' with a 'u' in it?"

"No, he's just plain Mr. Dix."

"And what place does he take among our critics of art? Is he a one-cent paper man or two cents? I ain't calling your friend down at all, Miss Lennard, but we can't afford any but what he's the very top-tip-top."

"I think he'd do really well."

"Then let him name his figure and buy him in.... And now tell me what's the difficulty about Mr. Stanhope Tasker."

For a moment Dorothy's composure was a little shaken. She smiled and blushed both at once. Mr. Stanhope Tasker was her second cousin, and Mr. Miller's next words explained how Lady

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Tasker's nephew had come to be at Hallowells'.

"I hope he ain't afraid he won't be able to hold the job down. Between you and I, Miss Lennard, it don't matter a rusty nail whether he do or he don't. He's here to *look* good; if he does that he fills the bill from A to Zee. Why, walking up our Bond Street only this morning brought it home to me good and hard. 'Here they are,' says I, 'ten of 'em in as many minutes, the reel high-grade goods, with centuries of blue blood in the very way they wear their pantaloons—Sir Walters from 'way back, all with their names spelt one way and pronounced another—the genu-i-ne all-wool article; but can I get 'em? I cann't. And that's what Mr. Stan is, if I might call him that without familiarity. Now just you tell me, Miss Lennard, what's the bother?"

Again Dorothy had bitten her lip, grown pink, and laughed. "Leave him to me. I'll keep him for you if I can."

"But great snakes (pardon me) what *do* these gentlemen want? They fix their own honorarium (has that got a 'u' in it?)—a captain in our army don't get as much by a half—we don't ask 'em to get shot—they don't handle goods—they just stand around—it would cipher out at a dollar a smile and a few "This way pleases"—*and* the rank of marshal."

"But you just said that if they weren't hard to get they were no good to you."

"Hard—hard's the word! That's a fact! But we got to have 'em. Selling ladies' goods has got to be made just as noble as killing their husbands and sweethearts on a field of battle. It *is* as noble. In a properly organized community there ought to be a Distinguished Salesmanship Order just as there's a Distinguished Service Order for our military classes. And Mr. Stan's only asked to graduate for the Distinguished Smiling Order, if I may take the liberty of saying so."

"Well, perhaps he'll do better after the Inauguration."

"You think that?" Mr. Miller had questioned eagerly. "You think he'll be all right on the night, so to say? Well now, if I thought that it would be a weight off my mind. I hope you'll assist me, Miss Lennard. And thank you very much for your assistance about Mr. Dix. It's a fact that if these people were easy to get everybody'd be getting 'em. Pardon me, after you——"

And they had parted, but not before Dorothy had wondered whether Mr. Miller's intelligent look, when he had asked her to help him in the difficulty with Mr. Stan, had meant anything.

If you had asked Dorothy Lennard how it was that her Cousin Stanhope had come to find himself at Hallowell and Smiths', she would probably have answered you only half candidly. You would have had to guess (as the chances were that Mr. Miller had guessed) the rest. Poor Stan, she would have told you, so far frankly, was a perfect darling, but he had no brains. Successively he had been ploughed for the army, had tried six months in the city, had spent a year in Canada, three months in a motor works, two months more in hawking from club to club a really brilliant idea for a weekly comic paper, and finally, when at the end of every natural asset he possessed, saving only his good looks, had come upon a piece of Mr. Miller's own publicity—a column article in an evening paper on "The Disappearance of the Slur of Trade." Stan had been much impressed by the new field thus thrown open. Chancing to meet Dorothy at about that time, for the first time since they had been children, he had spoken of the new opening, and Dorothy had offered there and then to introduce him to the writer of the article. From the first moment Stanhope had shown a willingness to be introduced to anybody whomsoever by Dorothy; and perhaps Mr. Miller had less hope than Dorothy supposed that Mr. Stan now hung about the premises for any reason at all except that Dorothy was to be seen there.... It was a case of love among the ruins, or whatever the upset may be called that is the result, not of demolition, but of rebuilding; and now, when the two were not meeting one another in halls full of trestles and plasterers' buckets or on passages down which they had to retreat as counters and glass screens and heavy fittings came along, Dorothy, in Miss Benson's absence, was fighting with Miss Umpleby for possession of the telephone, and talking with the bewildered marshal through a hundred and fifty yards of party-wall and fireproof floor, ceilings and lift-wells and cornices and plate-glass.... Unless an aunt or somebody died, Dorothy supposed that when they got married she would have to keep him.

Having decided that Mr. Miller's solemn articles on the "Art of the Poster" and the "Academy of the Hoardings" might as well be written by Mr. Hamilton Dix as by anybody else, Dorothy Lennard was not such a fool as to receive that handy critic in the fashion studio on the upper floor. Instead she asked Mr. Miller when he would be out, and borrowed his office—his fourth office since the building had been in progress, and, though not yet his permanent one, still an oasis of upholstery and quietness in a waste of concrete and ladders and new paint and half-hung walls. She also ordered cut flowers, whisky and soda, and tea. She had not forgotten her promise to Amory, that she would, if it was possible, obtain some mitigation of the Crozier contract.

Mr. Dix, for his part, accustomed to shedding the lustre of his name at ordinary space rates, was prepared to be as lustrous as anybody liked when money was flowing as it flowed about the new Hallowells'. He knocked at the door that was plain inside but ornamental without at four o'clock of a Friday afternoon early in January, and Dorothy had all in readiness for him. Before showing Mr. Dix the proofs of the posters on which for many months past Hallowells' had been spending money like water (they were bound together at the top edge and set, like a huge book of wallpaper patterns, on a special easel so as to be conveniently turned over), she gave him an outline of the general scheme and the part it was hoped he would consent to play in it; and from the outset Mr. Dix liked this young woman's attitude. For Croziers' he was not much more than a pen; at Hallowells', if the bashful and deferential manner in which he found himself received meant anything, he would be a Berenson or a Cavalcaselle at the very least, and really well paid for it at that. She was a comely young woman, too, and appeared to know what she was talking about.... Ah! She had been at the McGrath! (Dorothy had negligently dropped the name of Toulouse-Lautrec.) That explained it! Mr. Dix had thought she spoke with some inside knowledge! A good school, the McGrath. Mr. Dix knew Professor Jowett quite well: a capable master, very, but shockingly given over to a habit of cynicism, especially about the poor critics.

By the way, had Miss Lennard ever known a Miss Towers there?...

Dorothy had only mentioned the McGrath in order to give Mr. Dix an opportunity of mentioning Miss Towers; but Miss Towers could wait a bit. It would be better to get Mr. Dix to commit himself to magnanimous generalities before coming to a specific case. Therefore as she gave him tea she told him how lucky Hallowells' thought themselves to be able to get his services. When (she said) Mr. Miller had first asked her whether she thought he would be approachable about mere posters she had shaken her head; but now that she had seen him (Dorothy slowly lifted her great blue eyes) she was glad she had asked him. Wasn't it odd, how afraid you were of the pretentious and mediocre people, and not at all of the really big men? (At this point Mr. Dix had begun really to bask.) But of course nothing but the best was good enough for Hallowells'. Not (she went on) that they pretended for a moment to be anything but tradespeople, with no views on art at all; but they *did* believe this, that while an inferior writer might *seem* to be just as good, only one thing really paid the best, and that was—the best. That was why they had sent for Mr. Dix. They wanted the incorruptible man. As for what Mr. Dix would see fit to do now that they had got him, that rested entirely with Mr. Dix. It was not for Hallowells' to say what they wanted, but for Mr. Dix to give them what he thought best for them. And as for the posters themselves....

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"But suppose we look at them," said Dorothy.

They looked at the posters, and Dorothy gave Mr. Dix a whisky and soda and a cigar. And at that point the curtain went down, so to speak, on the first act. Mr. Dix declined for the moment to commit himself; with an hour or two in which to think the matter over he might (he said) be able to come to a conclusion. He understood that time pressed; it was half-past five now. *Could—could* Miss Lennard possibly dine with him at eight o'clock? He might perhaps say at once that he thought the subject a fascinating one. As Miss Lennard had so truly said, only the mediocre mind thought these things beneath its dignity; in fact— But if Miss Lennard would give him the pleasure, they could talk about that later. She would? That was charming of her. He would be round with a taxi, then, at twenty minutes to eight.

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For the second time the scene was set in the Trocadero Grill. Mr. Dix pointed out that the decoration, garish in detail, nevertheless took its place in the *ensemble*; and Dorothy's eyes widened, and she said that she hoped he would say that, in those very words, in one of his articles—she had thought that very thing so many times herself, but had lacked the knowledge to express it: she supposed that was where the genius came in. Didn't Mr. Dix think (she wanted to know) that genius *was* just that—the power of expressing what everybody had thought in terms they had never thought of? Given genius as a text, he is a poor critic who cannot talk for an hour without a break; and, as Mr. Dix slowly consumed liqueur brandy as he talked, Dorothy became very beautiful to him. He became tender, not to say mushy. He vowed that the sentimental point of view was something to be proud, not ashamed, of. He spoke of the struggles of poor artists, of the temptations that beset poor critics when they were asked to sell the truth for gold; and Dorothy said that it must be awful, but that it would be a comfort to her thenceforward, whenever she heard such dreadful tales, to know that one man at least understood. Was the Miss Towers of whom he had spoken one of those unfortunate ones? She had heard (she said) of a *Mr.* Towers, a painter, but that could not be the same....

"The same—the very same!" Mr. Dix laughed, while the curls shook on his head; and he told the story of his early mistake....

"And she has actually signed a contract with these hard-hearted dealers, whoever they are, and can't sell her own work?" Dorothy sighed meltingly. "Poor thing! And can nothing be done to help her?"

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"What a large soft heart you have, Miss Lennard!" murmured Mr. Dix, squeegeeing her, so to speak, with his gelatinous eyes; they really might have been of the same substance as printing-machine rollers.

"Poor child!" Dorothy sighed compassionately. "Really, I feel like going round and seeing these horrible people myself! They couldn't eat me, could they?"

Mr. Dix looked as if he could have eaten Miss Lennard, without sugar.

"Poor dear! But, I'm sure they couldn't resist *you*, Mr. Dix—not if you said the beautiful things to them you've been saying to me—"

If they could, they could have done more than Mr. Dix could Dorothy.

"*Do* help the poor child!" Dorothy pleaded. "Half the trouble in the world seems to me to come of goodness and power being in the wrong hands, Mr. Dix."...

Again she lifted the large baby eyes....

"I'm sure you will...."

And the worst feature about the whole immoral transaction was that she did not ask, but conferred a favour—the favour of showing Mr. Hamilton Dix what a sympathetic, chivalrous, and large-hearted person Mr. Hamilton Dix could be.

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#### IV

"IL FAUT QU' UNE PORTE—"

**N**OW that Cosimo was back in town again for the second time (he had stayed a week the first time, and had then departed again for Christmas, coming back the first week in the New Year) his manner puzzled Amory a little. Sometimes he seemed changed, sometimes (barring the

hair) exactly as before. Sometimes he told Amory all about his business, and sometimes seemed more than ordinarily interested in hers—almost as if he had her a little on his mind and would have liked to be rid of some responsibility. Then, hardly more than three weeks after the previous cutting, he got his hair cut again. It was cooler so, he said—this on a distinctly raw January day.

The cutting altered his appearance surprisingly. Amory thought the change very much for the worse. The tendrilled clusters had “massed” so beautifully before; she had sometimes given them a light touch or two with her fingers, taking an æsthetic delight in the way they “came.” He had reminded her a little of the Antinous. But now he reminded her of nothing save of a young human animal of the opposite sex. He wore starched white collars too, and went about in a hat.... On the other hand, he mended Amory’s door so that it was no longer possible to intrude a hand and to slip the latch. It wasn’t the thing, he said. What did it matter? Amory asked; but Cosimo only replied that he didn’t like the idea at all.

The door, however, gave way again; and this time Cosimo made a thorough job of it, taking it from its hinges and laying it on the floor while he screwed a stout batten on the back that remedied its warping once for all. This was late on a Saturday evening; in order to bring the bent door flush with the batten Amory had to sit down on one end of it; and the lamp stood on the floor between them as Cosimo, kneeling, screwed. The lamp was not so near, however, as to be a source of danger if Amory (as she had so often done before) took down her hair. She did take it down. Cosimo, the top of his cropped head turned to Amory, continued to screw.

“There!” he said at last. “I think that’ll make you safe, Amory.”

“Thanks most awfully, Cosimo,” Amory replied quietly.

“I’ve intended to do that ever since that night you were out at Covent Garden,” Cosimo continued. “If I could have got in, anybody else could, of course. Anyway, you’re all right now. You can get up.”

“Thanks,” said Amory again.... “I’m sure I don’t know what I’m safe from,” she added. “Jellies’ young man might burgle me, I suppose; but he’s ‘in’ again.”

“No! Really?” said Cosimo, so eagerly that Amory wondered whether he was glad to change the subject. “I say! What is it this time?”

“Oh, they found no fewer than ten bicycles in his place, all bright green, newly enamelled. And he isn’t a cycle dealer. I suppose they drew conclusions.”

“By Jove!” Cosimo exclaimed. “When was that?”...

Amory was quite sure that that too was part of the change in Cosimo. He wanted to be on a topic that was—like the mended door—“safe.” He had risen on his knees and straightened his back; Amory had thought he was about to rise altogether; but she herself did not move, and he sat down again, cross-legged, on the other end of the door. He asked further questions about Jellies, Orris, and the ten bicycles. Amory, shaking back her thick, raw-gold mane, answered him quite freely; and then Cosimo returned to the subject of the door again.

“It ought to have new hinges too, really,” he grunted, “but I suppose it’s too late to get them to-night. Look how rusty that one is.”

Amory leaned forward, and together they inspected the hinge. Then she gave a little laugh. It was almost a reckless little laugh.

“Oh, it will do,” she said lightly. “I shouldn’t bother about it. Leave it till to-morrow. You can just prop it up for to-night.”

“Prop it up!” repeated Cosimo. “Oh no. Wouldn’t do at all.”

Then, all at once, apparently, Amory saw. She laughed again.

“Oh!... Good gracious, Cosimo, how ridiculous you are! Why, I thought you were joking at first! As if anybody but you ever came up here nowadays—and even you only once in awhile!” Then, with another reckless little laugh, she added, “Why, what difference could a door make?”

“A good deal, or else why have ‘em?” Cosimo retorted. He did not seem comfortable.

“Quite so: why?” Amory replied. “What a strange idea! Really, I never knew you confuse Accidentals and Essentials so before! Why, if a person’s made up his mind to do a thing, how will a door stop it? And if it won’t, why a door? You know as well as I do that these things happen *within ourselves*. Besides, I thought we’d arrived at our conclusions.”

“Of course, so we have,” said Cosimo apologetically. “I know we’ve got quite down to fundamentals. Still, there’s no actual *harm* in having a hinge.”

Amory shook her head slowly. The lamp on the floor shone tiny in either brook-brown eye. Somehow Cosimo felt as uncomfortable as a guilty dog under those eyes.

“You’ve changed, Cosimo,” she said. “Something’s changed you.... Why,” she suddenly made a soft little appeal and held out both hands—“why don’t you tell me what it is?”

Cosimo appeared not to notice her hands. His own fumbled with a screw.

“I haven’t changed, Amory, really—really I haven’t,” he protested.

“You have, Cosimo,” Amory replied, her head critically a little on one side. “You mayn’t know it, but you’re becoming—ordinary.”

“Oh!” Cosimo broke out, revolted. “Ordinary—Cosimo!—”

“I’m not reproaching you,” Amory continued. “I suppose that if you examine it, it’s nothing to be ashamed of—I mean that ‘ashamed’ isn’t quite the word. But words are only symbols after all; it’s the thing that matters.”

“Of course,” Cosimo agreed quickly. “You don’t think I’ve changed my mind about that, I hope, Amory? We came to the conclusion that words were only symbols years ago.”

But again Amory made her tender little appeal. Her fingers touched Cosimo’s hand lightly for a moment.

“Won’t you tell me, Cosimo? You see, it’s purely a matter of our intellectual identity. That’s

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been such a beautiful thing. Hasn't it been a beautiful thing?" The fingers rested on his hand.

"Don't say 'been,' Amory—it is," Cosimo interrupted.

"Such a precious thing. Isn't it Emerson who says that at bottom all friendship is based on equality of intellectual understanding? It's a mingling of minds, Cosimo. When we use the same words we mean the same things by them, and—oh, how rare that is! Of course, I know your uncle's dead, and that may have upset you, and you've all sorts of business about property and so on on your mind, but I can't believe that accounts for all of it. I know you too well, you see! Or is it"—she gave a little start, as at a quite new surmise—"I don't believe it can be, but is it—that you find *me* changed?"

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Cosimo protested that Amory had not changed in the least. Neither of them had changed. A person might change from prejudice and intolerance to the larger view, but nobody in their senses thought of changing back again.

"Because if we have, either of us," Amory continued, looking fearlessly before her, "I think we ought to face the fact. There can't be two opinions about that. Whatever else we do, Cosimo, don't let's muddle. I simply couldn't bear to sloven along, keeping up a pretence of friendship that was simply an intellectual hypocrisy. Either we still think the same about the great basic facts of Life, or we don't; but don't in either case let's be cowards about it. If I'm to go forward alone, I'd much, much rather know it. No doubt it'll be strange at first, but I shall get used to it, I suppose."

She might have found it a little difficult to tell Cosimo exactly what it was she was so brave about, but unflinchingly brave about something she certainly seemed to be. With both hands she cast back her hair, showing her dauntless brow; her chin was held high above the bluebell-stalk of a throat, the lids were dropped over the shallow, gold-flecked eyes. As if she saw before her the bleak prospect of years to come without the intellectual companionship of Cosimo, the corners of her mouth gave a momentary twitch, but were instantly courageous again; and she reopened the eyes. They were full of sorrow and resolve. Cosimo *had* changed....

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"Amory," he pleaded, "don't look like that." This time he touched her hand.

"Like what?" she asked, without emotion.

"As if—it's so ridiculous—as if it wasn't all your fancy. You're a bit run down, that's all that's the matter with you."

"I have felt better," she admitted, closing the eyes again and passing her finger-tips over the lids.

"Look here—can I get you something—knock a chemist up or anything?"

"No, thank you, Cosimo."

"But—but—I'm really worried about you, dear—"

"You mustn't worry, Cosimo. These things have to be faced."

"But, my dear girl!... *What* things? I assure you it's pure fancy! Look here," he said resolutely, "tell me what you've been doing with yourself this past week, and I'll bet I can tell you what's the matter with you! In the first place, have you had proper meals?"

"All I wanted, thank you."

"That means eggs, I expect. You haven't a headache, have you?"

"Only quite a slight one. No, please don't brush my hair; if you wouldn't mind getting me a drink of water instead—"

"But," said Cosimo presently, bending solicitously over her with the water he had fetched, "I used to be able to stroke your headaches away. Do let me try—"

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"No, thank you so awfully much, Cosimo—I don't think it would do this one any good—and I really think you ought to be going now. I shall go to bed."

"Is it made?"

"I don't know. Would you mind giving me a hand up? I expect I shall be all right again in the morning—"

He helped her weary but enduring form to the curtained corner where the bed lay. Then he looked anxiously at her. He stood irresolute.

"I'll put you a jug of water by your side, shall I?"

"Yes, please, and Tchekoff—the little book there—"

"Oh, come, reading in bed's the very worst thing you can do!"

"Perhaps Tchekoff'll buck me up. He *is* stimulating. You haven't read him? You should. I feel I need him to-night. Thank Heaven, one can always have the companionship of these men through their works.... When are you going away again? I suppose you'll be giving up the studio in March? I shall go out for a long walk to-morrow by myself. I'll prop the door up after you, but it really didn't matter; there's nothing anybody would come for. Thank you so much for mending it, though, and for the glass of water. I'm quite all right now. Good night, Cosimo—"

She had crossed the floor again. They held the tottering door up between them. "Stupid not to have waited till Monday," Cosimo was muttering; "look here, shall I try to fix it up again as it was? Afraid the screwholes wouldn't hold, though; they'll have to be plugged.... Then put something heavy against it inside—your chest of drawers or something—won't you?"

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"Oh, very well, if you wish."

"I was a fool not to wait till Monday.... You're all right?"

"Perfectly."

"I shall come round in the morning to see how you are.... Good night." He was peering round the edge of the door.

"Good night."

Cosimo left slowly. He felt a brute. He couldn't have told why, but it seemed to him that, by

comparison with this brave girl, who preferred the sharpest pains of knowledge to the lethargy of ignorance, and would have the truth though it were a blade in her lonely breast, he was inferior and a coward. But for all that, Amory had been quite wrong in thinking he had changed. He had not. He still thought Amory splendid. And not only that: he hadn't quite realized before how very pretty she was. He had known she was pretty, but not how pretty; perhaps she hadn't been quite so pretty before?... And now Cosimo came to think of it, he had been noticing lately whether girls were pretty or not. Somehow Pattie Wynn-Jenkins had got him into the way of it. Pattie, whose father's plantation adjoined the western boundary of the grazing that was now Cosimo's own, was pretty herself, and seemed to raise the question.... Still, Cosimo had *not* changed. He could admire Pattie without in the least taking away from the devotion he owed to Amory. And as for anything else than mere prettiness, Pattie wasn't in it. Pattie would never have dreamed of reading Weiniger and Tchekoff. Just at present she cared for nothing in the world so much as how she should reduce her golf handicap. It was hard to call a girl so pretty as Pattie a fool, but, not to mince matters, that was about the long and the short of it....

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And, on the whole, Cosimo was rather glad that Amory didn't suspect there was such a girl as Pattie in existence.

Cosimo half expected to find Amory still in bed when he went round to Cheyne Walk at ten o'clock on the following morning; but she was dressed and ready for going out. He was lucky, she said, to have caught her; she would have been off in another five minutes.—“Off where?” Cosimo asked. Oh, Amory didn't know.—“All right, come along,” he said.

But when she turned her eyes slowly round to his he saw that the night had only set higher their clear courage. Again he could not have told why he felt guilty.

“Do you think it would be wise?” she asked gravely.

“Why not?” he asked, taken aback anew.

“Oh, very well,” she answered indifferently. “I'm ready.”

Many times they had walked together in the direction of Earl's Court and Brook Green, but never in such a silence as this. Yet on Amory's part it was a calm and cheery silence. It was so calm and cheery that uneasily Cosimo fell to wondering whether Amory had not been right and he had not, after all, changed without knowing it. These geniuses were terrible people: there was never any telling what they did not see. As they passed through Hammersmith, Cosimo longed to break out, “I *haven't* changed, Amory—you'd *know* I thought more of you than ever if you'd seen the pretty but awfully stupid sort of girl I've been seeing while I've been away—everything we've agreed a self-respecting woman can't be any longer: a mere man's toy, a chattel, property, on sale just as much as if she was in an Oriental slave-market, economically dependent, hopelessly apathetic to everything that's fine and feminist and new—” He knew that Amory would have called that “facing the facts.” But something, he knew not what, held him back. Oh, it was none of the things you might have thought—that Amory might make more of it than there had been (indeed, there had been nothing), nor that he realized that the whole truth can never be told, and that the more you explain the more there remains still to be explained, nor that hypocrisy and lack of candour are not without their poor uses when all is said and done. Cosimo would have denied these obsolescent propositions one by one.... So he concluded that he could not be very well either. That must be the reason for his reticence. Pattie's company must have put him a little out of accord with the finer things. Pattie in Shropshire, too, seemed a thought less pretty than did Amory by his side that Sunday morning. If Amory were only a little differently dressed she might be incomparably pretty, as she was already incomparably clever....

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But suddenly Amory broke the silence. It was as they approached Ravenscourt Park.

“Cosimo,” she said slowly—“I've been wondering again—”

He waited for her to continue. As she delayed to do so, he said, “What, Amory?”

“I've been wondering again—why you don't marry Dorothy.”

When Amory had said this same thing before, Cosimo had laughed, and with beautiful tact had replied that Dorothy would never have married him: but there was something of the still, of the rapt, about Amory that morning that would have made a laugh an offence. Instead, he said, almost reproachfully, “Oh,—Amory!”

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“Why don't you?” she continued dreamily. “I hope it's not that mere settling down of opinion that is fatal to real vitality of thought. An *idée fixe* isn't an *idée* at all; it's a Law that in course of time thoughts become petrified. Then they've got to be got fluid again. Are you sure that you haven't got Dorothy wrongly classified?”

She looked earnestly at him.

“But—” he began, but Amory interrupted him gently.

“Let's face the facts about Dorothy without prejudice,” she said. “First, I know she's mixed up with perfectly impossible people, but you mustn't forget that she was with us at the McGrath. Her work's impossible too, poor dear Dot, but search where you will, Cosimo, you won't find a better *appreciator* than she is. It would only need a little encouragement of that side of her nature and a little suppression of the other and Dorothy would be an almost ideal wife for an advanced and fine-thinking man. It's merely her Environment that doesn't give her a chance. Of course, from the point of view of Eugenics, those people of hers may be a little *epuisées*; intermarried too much: but she doesn't show it—she may be a throw-back. And it isn't a drawback any longer that Dorothy's rather fond of her own way. Equality of Opportunity is admitted nowadays, and in another ten years the conception of woman as property will be quite dead. And think how much worse you might do, Cosimo! Suppose you got hold of a mere doll!... Cosimo,” she added earnestly, “it would be—hell!”

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Cosimo quailed inwardly, nor could he, in the face of Amory's earnestness, dissemble his quailing with a laugh. “But,” he protested by and by, “I—I don't *want* Dorothy, Amory!”

"I only ask you to ask yourself whether that isn't an *idée fixe*."

"I really don't think it's an *idée fixe*," Cosimo returned, after further examination of it. "And besides, *you've* rather spoiled me for the companionship of—of anybody who comes along—"

"It has been beautiful," said Amory, with a detached air, "and it will be more beautiful still to look back on. I don't conceal from you, Cosimo, that quite the most precious and significant part of my life has been shared with you."

He broke out almost angrily—"The past tense again, Amory! Really, I—I don't know what's come over you!"

"You mean that you'd miss me a little too?"

"Miss you!——" This time he did give a little mirthless laugh.

"Then," Amory went on presently, "there's something else to remember. Dorothy's used to me. We are friends. Another girl might not be. You see how much I care who you marry, Cosimo, and why."

"But—but—whatever's put it into your head that I want to marry at all?" Cosimo cried, stopping and looking blankly at her.

She, too, looked at him; then she moved slowly forward again.

"Ah, you're at the very heart of the feminist Movement there, if you only knew it, Cosimo," she replied. "A man has only his intelligence; a woman has intelligence *and* her intuitions as well."

"You mean you've an intuition I want to get married?" Cosimo broke out. "I swear—"

"Oh, Cosimo, what's the good of swearing? That's merely like that antiquated old Service again, when you promise to love and honour and all the time you're absolutely in the dark. You may not want to at this moment. But you don't know that to-morrow somebody may not want to marry you. I only want it to be the right person—chum of mine," she added softly.

As she put her hand on his arm Cosimo had a little brotherly warming.

He was not aware—or if he had been aware, he had forgotten—that Amory's Aunt Jerry and Mr. Massey lived on Chiswick Mall, hardly a stone's-throw from where they were. They were passing the "Doves" when suddenly Amory exclaimed, "Why, we're quite near to Aunt Jerry's. Shall we go in to lunch?"

Her quick tone seemed a change from the past tense and broodings about his marriage, and he welcomed it eagerly. Moreover, to call on the Masseys would recall enlivening thoughts of that merry wedding day when Mr. Wellcome had got slightly drunk and had passed round the toothpicks. It would be the very thing to take Amory out of herself.

"Ripping idea!" said Cosimo enthusiastically. "Which is the house?"

"The one you're walking past now," said Amory, putting her hand on the knob of a tall wrought-iron gate. "I don't suppose Aunt Jerry's been to church."

They walked up a narrow flagged path and Amory rang an old bell by the side of a torch-extinguisher. Already Aunt Jerry had waved her hand from the drawing-room window of the first floor. The door was opened, and they were admitted.

"We've asked ourselves to lunch, Cosimo and I," said Amory, kissing her aunt where she sat by the window. "May we stay?"

Aunt Jerry affected a severity.

"I'm not so sure, after the disgraceful time you've thought fit to stop away," she replied. "I'm very cross with both of you. If you'd left it one week longer, Cosimo—you see I haven't forgotten I was to call you Cosimo—I really don't think George would have had you in the house. But I forgive you now you are here. George will be back from church presently. Go and take your things off, child, and Cosimo will talk to me. You know the little room—or is it so long since you were here that you've forgotten?"

There were hyacinth bulbs in the glasses of Aunt Jerry's rounded bow-window, and a canary in a white and gilt cage; and to Amory the house seemed furnished consonantly with the age of its owners, that is to say, its chairs and tables were not old enough in style to be antique and not new enough to be anything but what doubtless some of them were—second-hand. But the panelling was pleasant, and the airy view up the river delightful. Aunt Jerry pointed out the view to Cosimo at once; she sat there all day, she said, but it was almost as good as being out of doors. There was no need to ask why she sat there, watching her swelling hyacinths and listening to the trilling of her bird. Amory expected to be made a cousin early in April.

"I'm so glad you've come," said Aunt Jerry to Cosimo. "Mrs. Deschamps is coming; George will meet her after church; and Miss Crebbin (do you remember Miss Crebbin?)—she's bringing *her* young man. But I ought to say that our lunch is really our dinner on Sundays because of the girls' afternoon off. Well, and now tell me how you are."

She was fresh as a rose, and talked as if she and Cosimo had been old friends. Cosimo remembered the joke of Mrs. 'Ill, the plumber, Mr. Wellcome, and the chimney-sweep. Only for a moment had Aunt Jerry glanced at Cosimo's suit of tweeds. She had heard of Cosimo's bereavement, but, after all, a loss can be felt as deeply in tweeds as in anything else, and the glance had seemed to admit that perhaps it wasn't altogether a bad thing that the old custom of extravagant funerals, often at the expense of the needs of the living, was dying out. "We must all go sometime," her short silence seemed to say, "and those who follow us must take up the burdens we leave." Perhaps it was not all burden either. Aunt Jerry had forgotten the precise number of acres, but she remembered that Cosimo was now "eligible."

Aunt Jerry was telling Cosimo how all at sea Amory had seemed during the past weeks, when Mr. Massey arrived with Mrs. Deschamps. They were followed a few minutes later by Miss Crebbin and *her* young man, a Mr. Allport. And Mrs. Deschamps, too, greeted Cosimo as quite an old friend.

"I shall never, never forget that wedding day, Mr. Pratt!" she exclaimed vivaciously. "That cake—the wretches! But they're always up to something, scaring you out of your wits with a jam-splash on the tablecloth or a spill of ink on your book—you've seen them, Mr. Pratt; they're a penny, and I've had dreadful turns with them! But I simply *cannot* call you 'Mr. Pratt.' It isn't like Glenerne here. I admit it's best to be on the safe side there, but at Oasthouse View we're a family party—aren't we, George? And don't I come on Sundays till you're sick of the sight of me and say, 'Here's that nuisance of a Nellie again?' He needn't shake his head," the bright little widow continued to Cosimo; "Geraldine thinks we go to church together, but really I'm making love to him—aren't I, George?"

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"Yes—yes, yes, yes," Mr. Massey hissed softly over his teeth, entering into the joke and smiling amiably about him.

And Mrs. Deschamps confided to Cosimo in a stage whisper that it was already arranged that she was to be "Number Two."

They lunched in the panelled room beneath Aunt Jerry's drawing-room, Amory and Cosimo on one side of the table facing Miss Crebbin and *her* young man on the other. Cosimo presently became aware that this was a quite amusing variation of the joke of Jellies, Dorothy, the plumber, etc. It lacked the boisterousness of that day when Mr. Wellcome had thrust him into Amory's arms, but it had a subtle flavour of its own. Cosimo had only one uneasiness, which was that Amory was perhaps not well enough in health to extract the last particle of savour from all this taking-for-granted. She sat next to Mr. Allport, but said little. She ate hungrily of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and quite agreed when Mr. Allport said what "an A1 little pitch Oasthouse View was." Then Mr. Allport talked water-rates and gas-fittings to Mr. Massey. He could be seen making mental notes of fixtures and furniture against the day when he and *his* young woman should set up together for themselves. He seemed, too, to be advising Cosimo also to be picking up wrinkles in good time. Cosimo was secretly glad that Mr. Wellcome was not there. His robustiousness would have spoiled the quiet and artistic character of the comedy.

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And again he hoped that Amory was not missing anything.

Then the ladies ascended to the drawing-room again, and Mr. Massey, who knew perfectly well everything that the sideboard did and did not contain, pretended to be in doubt, and "thought there *ought* to be a little port somewhere." He found it, and the three men sat, Mr. Allport again talking of cupboards and drains, but obviously thinking that ... but let Cosimo and Amory tell the rest.

"My—dear!" Amory broke out when, at half-past three, they passed the "Doves" again. "Did you *ever!*"

Cosimo's light fears that Amory might have missed the delicate comedy had been wasted; Amory was quite her old self again. That, Cosimo thought, was the good meal of roast beef. She bubbled freely, and caught at Cosimo's arm.

"My—dear! If *only* you could have heard the priceless things that were said upstairs!"

Cosimo was wondrously bucked by the change in her.

"Oh, this is torture—do tell me!" he implored.

"Oh, it's beyond words—I don't know where to begin! Aunt Jerry—and that incredible Deschamps woman—and that doll of a girl who's going to love, honour, obey, and all the rest of it!... Have the poor dears an *inkling* of what it all really means?"

"You mean—?" said Cosimo tentatively.

"Of course I do—the stupid institution of the Family again! Did George say anything to you? No, I suppose he wouldn't; high-and-mighty man again; quite too superior; hopes that as long as he says nothing he'll be taken for wise, as somebody says. But Aunt Jerry's got it all—oh, perfection hardly describes it!" Lightly she threw up her hands and allowed them to drop again.

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"*Not* the old conceptions, of the father as the head of the Family and so on?" Cosimo said incredulously.

"*Yes!*"

"*No!*—Parental Despotism?"

"Despotism!"

"*Not* corporal punishment!"

"Cor-por-al punishment!"

"No Justice for children?"

"Love and Authority instead!"

"And woman as the mere plaything of man?"

"The mere plaything of man!"

"Property?"

"A chattel!"

"Woman's place at home with her children?"

"*C'est ça!*"

"By—Jove!"

Cosimo whistled.

"Yes, I thought I should surprise you," said Amory, with quiet satisfaction.

"Surprise!—I'm thunderstruck!"

"You didn't know you'd been lunching in a regular museum of it all, did you?"

"A museum? A catacomb!"

"You wouldn't suppose that we lived in this Year of Grace, would you?"

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"About 1100, I should have said."

"Oh no," Amory interrupted, "under Feudalism it would have been all right. It would have been

proper to their stage of development. But—to-day! Or rather next April, I should say——!”

“The hands of the clock are to be set back in April?”

“So the doctor says. I dare say his rule-of-thumb carries him as far as that.”

“Awful impostors, doctors.”

Then Amory spoke slowly and impressively.—“What I want to know is, how much longer *can* Individualism last? We heard that American lady last year; would you have thought it *possible* that the system could have survived such a slashing attack? When *will* people begin to have even a rudimentary conception of the function of the State in these matters? When *will* they see, for instance, that when a dispute arises between a parent and a child the case is exactly like any other dispute, with the plaintiff on one side and the defendant on the other? If the parent’s the plaintiff, how can he speak for the defendant as well? Why, it’s making him judge and executioner and all the lot!... And those, Cosimo,” she went on, with still deeper gravity, into which contempt crept, “are my aunt’s and uncle’s ideas! Violence, harshness, and repression. Russianizing the Home, instead of abolishing it altogether, or only allowing it under the very strictest inspection, in such cases as when a parent has really proved his fitness for Child-culture! The Home!... Oh, when *will* the dawn come?” She turned up the pretty eyes to the sky; she spoke passionately. “Aunt Jerry fit to be a Mother of the Race! Why,” she broke out witheringly—“has she (to begin with the very elements) a notion of what to feed a child on? Does she know what a proteid is? Does she know what albumen is? Has she as much as seen a bit of yeast under the microscope? (I have; a girl once showed me.) Doesn’t she choose her very feeding-bottles out of these awful circulars of Dorothy’s or whose ever they are? And the clothes she showed us!... Ribbons, pink if it’s a girl and blue if it’s a boy! This hateful insistence on sex from the very beginning! From before the beginning!... And the pride of these people in their ignorance and conceit! Bursting with it!”...

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Cosimo was awed. But he was glad, too, that there was no more talk about the end of their friendship. Amory was incomparable. Never had he honoured her so. It was almost a pity she painted, so magnificent a lecturer was lost in her. Not that just at present she was painting very much. She was doing better than painting. With all the strength of which she was capable she was resolutely *not* painting. She was laying strong and enduring foundations. There would be time enough for pinnacles by and by.

“And then,” Amory continued, more quietly, but even more stingingly, “in what spirit do they undertake this enormous responsibility? From the highest motive known to Ethics you’d think, wouldn’t you—the sense of Duty to Mankind? Yes, you’d think so. You wouldn’t think they’d regard it as a mere personal gratification, would you? You wouldn’t think they thought they’d accounted for it all when they said they were ‘in love,’ would you? But it is so, Cosimo. That’s exactly their mental development. They are exactly as advanced as the animals. Neither more nor less.... Mind you, I don’t deny what’s called ‘love’ altogether. I suppose it does serve some such purpose as the perfume does to the flower. The perfume attracts insects, and insects do fertilize some flowers. So love has its place. But what I want to know is, is it going to be allowed to supplant plain reason and common sense? I say no. There ought to be a State Mating-season. They can do it about fishing and game; why not about love? Because everything’s in the hands of men, and men think more about fishing and game than they do about these things. Oh, if only a Woman would arise! We should soon see all this altered!”...

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“Well, you know I’m heart and soul with you about that, Amory,” Cosimo said, a little uneasily, as if he personally might be included in her arraignment of his sex.

“You!” said Amory, with an intellectually affectionate look of her golden eyes.... “If it weren’t for you, Cosimo, I should despair altogether. Nobody else understands me—nobody. The others—well, take a man like Hamilton Dix, who might be supposed to have higher interests: really, it’s as much as I’ve been able to do sometimes to keep him from pawing me! And once he did kiss my hand.... Cosimo”—she lifted the golden eyes almost bashfully, and then dropped them again—“I said last night that there ought perhaps to be an end of our friendship. Not an end, I mean, because I should always respect you and honour your views. And I still think it might be best. But—I don’t know whether I should have the strength to do it, Cosimo. I ought to, but—I’m only a woman in some things. I know they aren’t the real things, and it’s only because my sex has been downtrodden and we’ve been denied our opportunities; but we do have transmitted fears from those barbarous times when you used to drag us about by the hair. So I don’t know whether I should really have the strength, Cosimo——”

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She was even nobler in her confession of weakness than she had been in the strength and rush of her outburst. Again, for no reason that he could have explained, Cosimo felt a brute.... He paw this bright little creature, as the odious Dix had done? He sully a thing so radiant as their relation with—pawing?

Suddenly Cosimo found himself disliking Mr. Hamilton Dix more intensely than he had ever done before.

Amory, for her part—though she did not know whose—rather fancied that she had put a spoke into somebody’s wheel.

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THE truth was, Amory presently began to tell herself, that Cosimo's life was in danger of becoming rather an aimless sort of thing. Few people knew the perils of aimlessness so well as did Amory Towers. She knew them because for a time she had suffered them in her own thought and work. But that was all past now. She had begun to work again. The foundations of a real picture were being laid at last. This was the famous canvas, "Barrage," that afterwards made her name. None knew better than Amory herself its shortcomings as mere painting, but she had learned in bitterness that issues greater than those of painting were at stake to-day. To-day or never was the time to do all the things that had never been done. Accordingly, her picture was partly a painting and partly a sociological symbol. It was, as far as it was at present designed, a medley in which, before a series of guarded cave-mouths and dropped portcullises and defended doors, women of the various stages of civilization were grouped with men. Now they were in the attitude of menials at their feet, or hewing their wood, or drawing their water; anon, set on high pedestals, before which men made mock reverences, they stood wreathed with roses from beneath which iron fetters peeped grimly forth; and later, in apotheosis, Womanhood herself walked by man's side, equal, sworded, flashing and free. If something of a likeness to Amory herself was to be traced in all these figures, every artist who works in a single room knows how frequently, for lack of pence, he must use himself as a model. It was this picture, of which more later, that enabled Amory to see so clearly the peril that beset Cosimo.

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Of course Amory recognized that Cosimo was not absolutely aimless as long as he had Amory's own art to admire; but that was a narrow and selfish way of looking at it. Amory didn't want Cosimo to admire her art for any personal glory she might get of it. She wanted him, not for herself, but for a Cause. In her picture he posed as the champion who had stricken the bonds from the belted and sworded and flashing and free young woman (who was quite frankly Amory herself), because that was the *rôle* she wished to see him in; but she knew how easy it would be (Cosimo was so good natured) for any designing and retrogressive young woman to get hold of him and to enlist his support for the forces of conservatism and the night. That (Amory's pretty lips compressed and her eyes shone with a cold and opal-like fire) *must* not be. In order that it might not be, Amory had made use of Dorothy's name; not that she really wanted him to marry Dorothy, but that even to marry Dorothy would be better than to marry somebody more benighted still. It was a mere *ruse de guerre*, justified by the larger issue. These things have to be done when the fiends of ignorance and the angels of knowledge contend. Amory called these fiends and angels the Anabolic and the Katabolic forces in human progress. It didn't matter what you called them. Two principles always had contended and always would contend. It was a Law.

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Therefore Amory wanted Cosimo on the side of the angels and victory. Ever so much more she wanted him on that side now that he was a man of some substance. For money is the sinews of Anabolic and Katabolic warfare also. Cosimo with his money and Amory with her new art—what might they not accomplish, working together? A whole Promised Land of endeavour lay shining before them. For Amory herself (for example) there were all the possibilities of symbolic painting—a style of painting which (actual draughtsmanship being admittedly her weak point) would suit her genius the more exactly for that very reason. Nobody can dismiss a symbol because it is badly drawn; any old drawing will do for a symbol. For the holy purposes of social regeneration the novelists thought any old writing good enough; and so it was. So it should be for Amory too. She had half a mind to let drawing go altogether. Then, with drawing out of the way, she saw her task. "Barrage" would be followed by a picture (perhaps a newer word than "picture" would be necessary to describe it) that would symbolize Labour Unrest; she was thinking it out in her spare moments already. Then there should be another, a slap in the face for Militarism. After that should come canvases dealing with Education, and Disestablishment, and the Triumph of Sentimental Government and the establishment of the New Matriarchy. Oh yes, Amory saw her task though twenty lifetimes lay before her....

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And Cosimo? She could guide Cosimo too. No doubt at his own doors in Shropshire there lay wrongs to be righted—sites for village halls waiting to be built upon, libraries and communal kitchens and wash-houses to be founded, greens for morrice-games (Amory vetoed archery, as coming dangerously near to Militarism and the miniature rifle-range), societies for the study of folk-song, ethical societies, lectures on economics, bands for the exchange of foreign picture postcards (that the spirit of brotherhood among the enlightened of all nations might be fostered), and so on.... Oh, with Amory to direct him, there would be plenty for Cosimo, too, to do. And he had the money with which to do it.

And if Amory shrank from the cost to herself—the cost, namely, of conforming to the outworn institution of marriage—it was but for a moment. What was she, to attempt to stem the River of the Race? She must bear the burden cheerfully. And after all, with a little thought she ought to be able to ensure it that Cosimo as her husband should not be very different from Cosimo as he was now. By keeping his eyes constantly uplifted to the shining peaks of their joint duty, mere personal thoughts of self could be kept in their place. He would hardly want a wife when he possessed the heroine of a Feminist Crusade, she hardly a husband when she had an ally placed by his sex in the fortress that, whether by beleaguering or by assault, must be won. Yes, she would strive to bear even this. The glory of a campaign would supplant the private self-seeking of a courtship. They would mingle, not love-sick sighs, but the aspirations of their souls. No doubt when they were both old, and looked back, it would seem well worth the cost....

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Amory herself would have been the first to confess the weakness that set her wondering how many bedrooms the Shropshire house had, and whether there were rose gardens and fruit trees on the southern walls. Even from thoughts of duty weak mortals must sometimes stoop. Besides, if there was not a village green with a maypole on it, some arrangement would probably have to be made. Amory didn't think she would want morrice-dancing on the lawn in front of the drawing-room windows, except, of course, on birthdays and festival days and the days when the tenants

paid their rent. The people themselves would probably prefer to have their merrymaking to themselves. Very likely they would only be shy before their betters. She would show the tenantry (she did not insist on the name) every consideration, as she should expect them to consider her.... And if there was a lily garden as well as a rose garden, she would send lilies as well as roses to the cottages quite frequently.

But Cosimo must be saved for the Cause quickly, for he was giving up his studio in March, and once he got away again he might fall into the hands of the designing woman whose existence Amory had suspected. She knew those designing women. She knew them by the simple process of inversion of everything that was noble within herself.

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Amory had only seen Dorothy Lennard once since the afternoon when Dorothy had promised to see what she could do about Croziers' contract. That had been when Dorothy had come to tell her of the mitigation of its rigour she had secured from Hamilton Dix. But, finding herself in Oxford Street one afternoon, she sought Hallowells', and tried to find her way upstairs to the fashion-studio. "Tried," one says, for nearly twenty minutes Amory was hopelessly lost in the wilderness that seemed to grow ever more and more complicated as the time fixed for the opening drew nearer. It was during her wandering through this labyrinth that Amory received a shock. Passing along a corridor of such vast length that she seemed to be looking at it through the wrong end of a pair of opera-glasses, she entered a large apartment where three women on their knees polished the floor. There she saw a large historical painting. It was the picture of Queen Bess, Sir Walter, and the Cloak.

Her first impulse was to fall back; her second one, which she obeyed, was to stand her ground, to put her head back and a little on one side, and to smile defiantly, indulgently, truculently, all three. It was as if she said to the picture, "We meet unexpectedly, but since we are here we may as well have a few words together, you and I!"

A certain amount of skill, manual and ocular, had gone to the making of the picture—enough, as we have seen, to "hit" Mr. Miller "right there." Perhaps that was the reason why it hit Amory right there too, though in the contrary sense. She stepped forward and examined it near; then she stepped back and examined it at a distance. As she did so, a man in an astrachan-collared overcoat and an indented grey hat hurried past, dropping his cigar and uncovering his head as he found himself in the presence of a lady, even one he did not know; and then Amory continued her gazing.

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The picture struck her as incredibly funny. First, there was the subject—"Our old friend Chivalry," Amory mused. Oh yes, Chivalry in other words, those garlands of roses in her own picture beneath which the iron chains peeped forth. Chivalry! Oh yes, Amory knew—any feminist knows—the toils men impose on women when they talk about Chivalry! Amory became cynical.... Let them amend the Divorce Laws, and *then* Amory would listen to what they had to say about Chivalry! Let them give women equal opportunities with men, and she would excuse the lifting of a hat or the offering of a seat in a train! Chivalry might have had its place in the social organization of the Year Dot (see "Barrage"), but things had moved a bit since then, and woman to-day *would* walk through puddles if she wished, though twenty cloaks were outspread for her to step on! Thank you very much for your Chivalry ... and *now* will you give us a little Justice for a change?... And then the complacent handling of the thing! There was really nothing to be said! Nobody could say it wasn't "finished"; that was just it; it was fatally "finished"; the man had done exactly what he had set out to do, and—there it was. No unseizable desire, no unattainable dream, no Promethean attempt, no suspicion that here was not the last possible word on the subject; and *this* in a new and straining and eager age, when men were just beginning to know that they knew nothing, and to put off their past boastings, and to take the cave-dweller into their counsels as their equal, perhaps their superior, in knowledge! Here, actually to-day, was a man who truly thought that he knew a thing or two more than the cave-dweller! Oh, the smugness, the self-satisfaction! Really, Amory would not dare to show such a man her "Barrage"; its pure heart of fire, shining even through all its shortcomings, would have shrivelled him and his conceit up! For surely there, in "Barrage," was the true impulse of the arts to-day. Some called it "propagandist," but what, Amory wanted to know, had all these Virgins and Children, all these Crucifixions, all these Holy Families of the past been but propaganda? The arts had been shackled to the propagation of superstition and dogma, and of the tenets of a religion that had found its expression one day in seven; but in the Newer Day all days were going to be equally holy, with the abolition of the Sabbath as a first step to the consecration of the other six. To the Virgins and Children of the future a proper comprehension of the Rights of Woman and the Responsibilities of Parentage would be brought. Eugenics would have a word to say about the Holy Families. The Crucifixions would probably be cut out altogether.... To bring that day nearer was Amory's mission. If she could only sell "Barrage"—and she thought she could now, for the Women's Manumission Guild had approached her about it, and an Executive was further considering it....

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And she would ask a good price for it, for the labourer is worthy of her hire, and she really must study her dress a little more....

Amory turned away from the picture and resumed her search for Dorothy.

But she had hardly left the room where the women polished the floors (showing how, even in physical strength, women were not the inferiors of men), when she received a second shock. She was backing out again from a room where a telescopic ladder rose to a sagging sheet under a skylight when she saw, beyond an oval section of redwood counter, the fair head of Dorothy herself. It was now luncheon time, the workmen had left, and Dorothy appeared to be eating her lunch amid the smell of shavings and varnish and plaster. Amory advanced.

But once more, she started back. She saw that Dorothy was not alone. And not only was Dorothy not alone, but she was sitting with a good-looking but ridiculously smart young man on a

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box so narrow that from mere necessity the young man had passed his arm about Dorothy's waist. They were eating sandwiches from a paper bag, and if they were not sharing the same glass of lemonade, the second glass was certainly not visible.

Then, with his mouth full of sandwich, the young man kissed Dorothy, who performed the same idiotic gesture on him in return.

Now no really sensitive person likes to see other persons in the act of an embrace, and Amory was exquisitely sensitive. And in this hard world it is the sensitive person who suffers for the dull. Further, even suffering takes a keener edge when you are seen to suffer. Therefore the least that Dorothy and her smart young man could have done, when, turning, they became aware of Amory's presence, would have been to spare her the gratuitous pain of looking at her. But they did not. Having outraged her, they stared at her. They stared at her almost as if they asked her what she meant by stealing upon them like that. It struck Amory as it had never struck her before that Glenerne would have been Dorothy's proper place. If this was the way she carried on during lunch time at Hollowells', nothing at the boarding-house would have shocked her.

"Hallo!" said Dorothy, not (Amory thought) exactly welcomingly.

Still, if Dorothy had no tact, that was no reason why Amory should not act up to her own finest instincts. The truest delicacy would be to let it be supposed that she had noticed nothing. Therefore she too said "Hallo!" very brightly. They must not guess that they had caused her pain.

At first Amory thought that Dorothy was not going to introduce her friend, but when Dorothy did so, in three words—"My cousin Stan"—she was able to guess that even Dorothy was not quite without some sense of shame and confusion. Her cousin! Such unfertility of invention would have done discredit even to Jellies! But of course Dorothy was embarrassed, and had said the first thing that had come into her head. Amory bowed with reserve to "the cousin," who, for his part, seemed inclined to laugh. Very rudely, he pulled out his watch.

"By Jove, a quarter to two! I must cut, Dot. Dusty'll be looking for me. See you at tea-time? Right, I'll ring you up. So long."

And with scarce a look at Amory he was off.

No sooner had he gone than Amory broke into voluble speech.

"My dear, *what* a place! I've been looking everywhere for you this last half-hour—upstairs, downstairs, everywhere! I was almost sure I remembered the way to the studio—wasn't it past a square room that has a painting in it now?"

"It was, but they moved us two months ago," Dorothy replied. "Did you ask for me?"

"Do you mean how did I get in? I just walked up. Nobody stopped me. Is it against the rules?"

"It doesn't matter, as it happens. But I'm afraid I've had lunch."

"Oh, thanks awfully, but I always go to one of those Food Reform places now; I feel ever so much better for it. I was only passing, and thought I'd look in."

"Good of you," said Dorothy, and there was a longish pause.

Amory thought it was not very clever of Dorothy not to be able to conceal her chagrin. Amory herself always tried to behave better than that to people who went out of their way to call on her. Probably what was really the matter was Dorothy's conscience; one cannot hold aloof from the noble movements of the day without at times feeling a little uneasy about it. But Causes can afford to be magnanimous. If Dorothy wanted to out-pause Amory, Amory would let her; and, that absurd picture being uppermost in her mind, she gave a little laugh and spoke of that.

"It's easy to see *you're* not the art-adviser to Hollowells', Dorothy," she said. "*Must* they buy such things? And what are they going to do with it? Get it lithographed, I suppose, for a supplement or something?"

When the subject of painting was raised Dorothy was still a little afraid of Amory and her superior knowledge—but less so than she had been. Twice in the course of its production she had seen "Barrage," and had stood apologetically silent before Amory's picture. At another time she would not have excited herself one way or the other about Sir Walter, but new forces thrust some of us into conservatism whether we will or not, and "Barrage" had made Dorothy almost ready to swallow Sir Walter holus-bolus. Therefore she said a little defensively, "What's the matter with it?"

"The matter!" Amory exclaimed. She was smiling. If Dorothy meant this for a joke she was quite willing to enter into it.

"Well," said Dorothy, more defensively still, "everybody isn't trying to do nothing but the greatest things all the time, after all."

"Oh, ça se voit!" Amory returned, rippling outright into a laugh.

"And," Dorothy continued, hating herself because Amory seemed to be driving her into a defence even of the absurd and solemn Miller, "we're only a business concern, not an Exhibition, you know."

"Oh? The wonderful thing isn't for sale, then?"

"No; and anyway, Mr. Dix didn't laugh at it." (This was true. Mr. Dix did not laugh at his bread when Hollowells' spread it with an extra thick helping of butter.)

Amory kept a straight face.—"Dorothy," she said, "what's happened to you?"

"How, happened to me?" Dorothy returned, a little tartly. That confounded "Barrage" had put her into an altogether false position. "Nothing's happened to me. Never mind me; tell me what's fresh with you. Has anything happened about your own picture yet?"

The fact that Dorothy was evidently rather cross was enough to make Amory aware of the superiority of cheerfulness. Besides, it might not be amiss to show Dorothy that, high and ideal as the Cause was, it was not quite without its mundane and practical side. That at any rate would not be beyond Dorothy's comprehension. Therefore Amory told Dorothy how the negotiations



stood between herself and the Manumission League for the purchase of "Barrage."

Dorothy listened attentively. When Amory had finished she paused....

"Two hundred pounds, you say? Would that be for a sale outright?"

"Yes."

"And they'd be able to do whatever they liked with it—reproduce it or anything?"

"I suppose so. Do you mean it isn't enough?"

"I wasn't thinking of that so much. I was thinking—but of course I don't know all the circumstances."

"I'm not keeping anything back from you, Dorothy," said Amory. Indeed she wasn't. She knew that Dorothy's advice on such a point would be well worth having.

"Oh, I don't mean that at all," Dorothy hastened to say. "I only mean that it's hard to form a judgment without having seen for yourself. I don't like the idea of selling anything outright. If it was only a nominal royalty, in case they wanted to reproduce or anything of that sort—"

"Oh, that! As for that, I should be only too glad to let them reproduce if they wanted."

"Of course you would get the advertisement, but I don't see why you shouldn't have a small royalty too."

Amory smiled. The advertisement! Wasn't that just like dear old Dorothy! As if all the costly things that had gone to the making of "Barrage" could be valued and bartered like that! Amory explained gently.

"I don't think you quite understand, Dorothy. You see, it isn't like those other things Croziers' got. Those were just knocked off. I don't want to be conceited about 'Barrage,' but it has rather taken it out of me, in thought and emotion and those things. I've been feeling a perfect rag after a day at it. Of course, there were heaps of things I should like to do to it, but 'No,' I said that morning, 'you've expressed yourself, and if you began tickling it up here and there you'd only take away from the fierce meaning of it.' So I threw my brushes down, and then collapsed—perfectly limp."

"Oh!" said Dorothy deferentially. She herself had once collapsed during a spring rush, but that had been a quite inferior collapsing, from too long hours simply, not from any emotional strain. But Amory misinterpreted her mild and respectful "Oh!" She spoke rather sweetly.

"Of course I must live, and nobody can say I don't live frugally. But that apart, I don't do this for money at all. I do it because of my beliefs."

"Oh!" said Dorothy again, this time very much as some gallant monarch might have protested that he never meddled with the beliefs of ladies.

"I know," Amory continued firmly, "that there are some things we don't agree on, and of course I think I'm right and you're wrong, or I shouldn't believe what I do. But I do think that that picture in there," she made a little vague pointing movement, "preaches—well, a perfectly damnable lesson—from the feminist point of view perfectly damnable."

"I—I don't think it's meant to," Dorothy ventured to say. "I don't so much mind it really—not that it pretends to be very much—but parts of it are quite like something, and I think painting has to be like things when all's said and done—I mean—certain sorts of painting—"

It was rather a tickling experience for Amory to be schooled by a fashion-artist on "sorts of painting," and she wished Cosimo had been there to hear. And on these lines she knew that she could play with Dorothy as a cat plays with a mouse. So she was beginning, "Oh, why must painting necessarily be 'like' things, as you say? Is it a Law? Do tell me!" when suddenly Dorothy took her back altogether. For all the world as if both of them had been talking about one thing and thinking of another all the time, Dorothy boiled up.

"Oh, Amory, you do make me so cross!" she cried. "Really, to hear you sometimes, nobody would think an awfully pretty girl was talking! Who cares a button about your opinions, with looks like yours? I could understand it if you were plain! I do wish you could manage to be a bit more like a human being; why don't you put on some clothes like other people's, instead of always dressing as if you were going to have a baby? Can't you take an interest in things, instead of always moping the way you do? Why, you might be a superfluous woman yourself!"

For one moment Amory fairly lost her composure, but only for one moment. The next moment she had seen what was the matter. By "taking an interest in things" Dorothy meant forsaking her principles; by "putting on clothes like other people's," she meant abandoning her velvets and corduroys that took the light in such lovely broken bits of accidental colour, and dressing like one of her own impossible fashion-plates; and by being "a bit more like a human being," she meant sitting with a young man on a box and kissing him with a mouth full of sandwich. It was almost too funny to laugh at. If Dorothy would only ask her outright what she evidently had in her mind to ask her—why she didn't marry Cosimo—it would be perfect. Poor old Dot! She had been fairly caught only a few minutes before, and naturally would still feel rather sore. Amory waited for her to go on.

She did go on. "I've wanted to say this for a long time," she said. "Look here, Amory, why don't you marry Cosimo and have done with it? You're lovely—he's quite good-looking—you seem to understand one another all right—I'm sure you ought to by this time—and it would be ever so much more sensible! It seems to me you could drag on like this for ever!"

Amory's golden eyes seemed to dance with mirth. Of course that accidental discovery had forced Dorothy's hand beautifully. Dorothy was pleading with her as earnestly as if she had just been seen, not "canoodling" under a counter (that Amory believed was the word used in such cases), but lifted up on a plinth, in a heroic pose, with an archangel by her side, grouped with their faces towards the east or in whatever quarter the sun of Feminism might be expected to rise.... Amory had not even to say anything. All she needed to do was to stand smiling at dear old Dot and to watch her grow redder and redder. Obviously there was no need to accuse Dorothy

when Dorothy was accusing herself.

In another moment, too, Dorothy was defending herself. Her eyes, in the surrounding flush of colour, seemed bluer than ever. And in jumping straight at Amory's thought she skipped a stage.

"I don't care anyway," she blurted out. "Some things *are* understandable, but you and Cosimo—well, who's to make head or tail of *you*? You're always together, early and late, sometimes in your place and sometimes in his—of course *I* understand, dear, but really I don't see how you could blame people who didn't if—if—"

Already Amory had drawn herself up to her full five foot against the redwood counter and had tossed back the bright nasturtium of her head.

"If what?" she asked, the brook-brown eyes looking full into Dorothy's blue ones.

"Well, if they draw their own conclusions, if you must know," Dorothy blurted out.

As a wet cloth wipes chalk from a blackboard, so the smile had gone from Amory's face. Most decidedly she wasn't going to stand this—at any rate not from Dorothy.

"Oh!" she said. "What people? And what conclusions?"

"Well, people do. You can't expect to have no conclusions drawn but your own."

"You mean conclusions about me and Cosimo?"

"I'm not saying *I* draw any, Amory. I understand perfectly, of course. I mean I know there's nothing wrong. But you can't stop people talking."

Amory became still taller.

"May I ask who's been talking?" she added. "I won't say besides yourself, but this is the first I've heard of it."

"Amory!" said Dorothy, deeply wounded. She lifted her eyes almost humbly. "Do you really think that of me?"

"What am I to think?" Amory replied loftily. Yet she was glad that Dorothy had the grace to be ashamed. By twisting and turning and a shameless use of her charms Dorothy might contrive to get her own way with men, but she must not think she could come it over one of her own sex in the same way.

"Oh dear, I'm sorry I said anything at all!" Dorothy wailed.

"Oh, I'm glad, I assure you!" Amory replied quickly. "I don't believe in driving these things underground and then pretending they don't exist! If a thing is, I want to see it *as it is!*"

"I know you're ever so much braver than I am, dear—I know I'm a dreadful coward at a push—you're worth twenty of me—but still, Amory, people *do* say things, and not very nice ones, and it could so easily be avoided—"

"Avoided!"

"I know there isn't anything—I only mean the appearance to people who don't know—"

"And what," said Amory slowly, "do you suppose *I* care for people of that kind, and what they think?"

"Yes, you always were splendid and brave—still—"

"Have you heard anybody talking like this?" Amory demanded.

"I said it was a wicked lie—"

"Ah, you *have* heard somebody!"

"Not really saying anything—only wondering—you know how people wonder—"

"Then please tell me at once who it was," said Amory with dignity.

But Dorothy only grew more confused than ever.

"Oh, Amory, I can't do that—it was nothing that wasn't fair in a way—you oughtn't to ask me to do that—"

"Be so good as to tell me at once."

Dorothy was silent.

As a matter of fact the people who had been speaking of Amory and Cosimo were Walter Wyron and Laura Beamish, but Dorothy did weakly hope that if things were driven underground they might at least be forgotten.

"Aren't you going to tell me?" Amory demanded.

"No," Dorothy mumbled.

"You refuse?"

"Yes," Dorothy mumbled. And then suddenly she broke out almost passionately—

"I don't blame you in the very least, Amory, but I do blame Cosimo! I do, and it's no good saying I don't. A man's no right to be always about with a woman, getting her talked about, and doing things for her, and always in and out of her place! I do think he might know better!"

Amory was smiling again now, but not very pleasantly—"Oh!" she said. "So when you said you thought I ought to marry Cosimo, you meant that things had gone so far that I might as well?"

"I didn't, Amory. I didn't, I didn't!" Dorothy cried appealingly. "I really think you do seem to hit it off together somehow. And as for what people say, *you* say what *you* think about people, and they've a right to do the same, and anyway you can't stop them, and you can't expect to have the world to yourself. Why, I thought you were always talking about 'equal rights.'"

"I don't know whether you know that just at present you're talking about a very precious and beautiful friendship!" said Amory proudly.

"Yes, I do know—I mean I suppose so—you really are such chums, I know—"

"And I hope and trust the day's coming when such a thing can be without nasty prurient minds 'drawing their own conclusions,' as you call it, Dorothy!... Perhaps," the golden eyes were sidelong now on Dorothy's, "perhaps there was some particular—compromising situation—your friend objected to? Or was it merely the whole scandalous relation?"

Suddenly Dorothy, for her part also, did not much like the tone of this. She felt as if that sandwich might still have left crumbs upon her mouth. There might be a good many things to be said about her cousin Stanhope, but at any rate he did not compromise her on principle, nor did he discuss with her some of the rather astonishing subjects that seemed to come into this precious and beautiful friendship of Amory Towers and Cosimo Pratt. She would bow to Amory's superior knowledge when it came to matters of art, but she wasn't going to have even Amory's foot on her neck if Stan was to be dragged into the dispute. And if Dorothy again skipped a step in the chain of processes, she thought she had reason.

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"I suppose that's because you caught me out a few minutes ago?" she said, rather challengingly.

"I'm not sure that I quite follow you. I'm sorry if I'm dull."

"Very well, if you want it more plainly, you said 'compromising situation' because you caught us just now. I've always stood up for you, Amory, but I'm not going to let you talk like that."

"Sorry," said Amory offhandedly.

"Well, you needn't say so in that tone either; we don't expect everybody to go about whistling, or knocking at doors and then waiting, like that charwoman and her daughter. I'm sorry if we shocked you."

"I don't think I mentioned—what you seem to be talking about, Dorothy. If I did I don't remember."

"You were thinking about it, though."

"Oh!..."

As if people might say what they liked about Amory and Cosimo, but Amory might not even think what she liked about Dorothy and Stan!

There was a rather hostile pause. Probably either felt that the particular male of her preference was being subjected to criticism.

"Well, we needn't quarrel about it," Dorothy resumed.

Amory brightened remarkably.

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"Quarrel? Of course not, dear Dorothy—what an absurd idea! And of course, as you say, I *was* thinking.... Are you—you know—may I congratulate you?" she asked softly.

Again Dorothy reddened. She would dearly have liked to fling a triumphant "Yes, we *are* engaged!" into Amory's pretty face, but she and Stanhope had their pact about that. They were not officially engaged. Once more Amory had her at a disadvantage.

"No," she said shortly. It cost her a struggle not to add the mitigating words "Not yet."

"Oh ... I beg your pardon," said Amory, instantly apologetic. "You see——" she hesitated.

"Well, what do I see?" Dorothy Lennard demanded. Against her wishes she felt herself getting angry again.

"Well, dear, you *did* ask me about Cosimo——"

"You're not engaged to him, are you?"

"No—but then——"

"You mean you don't let him kiss you?" sprang from Dorothy's lips.

Amory thought it crude—revolting....

Then for the second time Dorothy boiled up and over.

"Well, it seems to me you might just as well!" she cried. "Better, I should say—it seems to me you do everything else! I think I've given up trying to understand you clever people; you're beyond me entirely. I *like* being a man's plaything—*there!* I don't mind one little bit being a chattel—*there!* And I think it would be perfectly ripping being property, as long as you belonged to the right person! And I *do* believe in one law for the man and another for the woman. They *are* different—they *are*, Amory! They're—they're—*ever* so different! And I'm glad!... And it seems to me that if you and Cosimo lived in the same house you needn't kiss one another if you didn't want to, and anyway it would save a good deal of walking about! That alone might be worth getting married for—you could talk about the State quite undisturbed then! I know it's no business of mine, but you shouldn't look at me as you have been doing for the last ten minutes all on account of nothing! I'm sorry if I seem angry, because I'm not bad-tempered really, but dash it all, I do think it's the one thing a woman can't afford to be impracticable about, and sometimes you really do seem hopeless, Amory!... Unless——" she checked herself instantly.

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But it was too late. She had said the word. Amory knew what it was that she had cut off so short—"Unless you *do* know your business after all, and think that always sitting in his pocket, and letting him play with your hair, and talking about Heredity all the time, is the way to get him!" That was the peck that Dorothy measured her out of her own bushel! Those were the very methods by which Dorothy herself got round her Mr. Miller, and her Mr. Hamilton Dix, and this smart young man, whoever he was....

She meant that between herself and Amory there was not at bottom a pin to choose....

And since the Cause of Progress did demand that Amory should marry Cosimo, even had it all been true the end would still have justified those or almost any other means. There precisely lay the rub. What are you to say to a person so blind to true meanings as to accuse you of doing what, quite inessentially, you do merely happen to be doing? You cannot admit that they are right—they are so hideously wrong: you cannot tell them they are wrong—they cling so stupidly to a certain appearance of being right. What *are* you to do?

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One thing at least Amory did: she hated Dorothy in that moment. And because she herself wished to be merciful to Dorothy she did not take up that fatal "Unless——" Instead she said, very gently indeed:

"Aren't you rather taking the lowest view of things? *Must* this physical side always be dragged

in?"

Nor was Dorothy very much disposed now to mince matters. The word had popped out, and she was not going to run away from it. If Amory wanted to talk about physical sides, she might; Dorothy's own physique overshadowed Amory's as a ruffled swan overshadows a duckling. She turned, her bosom high, her hands stroking down her waist.

"But it's *you* who drag it in!" she cried. "If only you *weren't* always talking about it! But you only pretend you're only talking about something else; it seems to me you *never* let it alone! What's your Eugenics, if it isn't that, and your Balance of the Sexes, and your State Nurseries? You aren't a snuffy old man writing learned treatises about it all; you're a pretty girl, and I dare say you're quite right, but I don't see the use of pretending——"

"Do you mean that I'm pretending to be something I'm not?" Amory asked sharply. "Say what you mean. Perhaps you mean virtuous?" [240]

Dorothy stamped. "Oh ... need we?"

"Because if you really care to know——" said Amory proudly.

"Oh ... I'm going. Good-bye."

"You *can't* go now," said Amory significantly. "Think for a moment and you'll see that you can't go now. People can't make charges and then run away. It isn't done, Dorothy."

"How absurd! Who's made charges?"

"I understood you to say that I was a pretender?"

"Don't be so ridiculous! You know very well what I mean!"

"Then you should be more careful about your expressions, Dorothy. Expression is all people have to go by, you know; expression's precisely art, in fact. But I should like you to tell whoever it is who's been talking about me and Cosimo something."

"What's that?" Dorothy grunted over her shoulder.

"You can tell them that they could be present at every one of those dreadful meetings and hear every word we say, if that's the idea. They wouldn't take any harm; in fact, it might take them out of themselves for a bit. And even if it was as they supposed, I don't admit that that would be as important as they seem to think. An altogether false importance is given to these things, Dorothy. My friendship with Cosimo wouldn't be one bit less beautiful whatever the 'conclusions' were people drew. Nor one bit more. I'm not a pretender, Dorothy. I don't pretend to be any wiser than I am. But I do think I'm rational. I—object—most—strongly" (she gave each word its special emphasis) "to this really secondary matter of sex being made a thing of the first importance. I hope that's all going to be changed before very long, and that more enlightened views will take its place. And, really, the brave women of the Movement are the very last people who ought to be talked about in that way. They haven't time for such things. They've far, far too much to do. I know some are married, but they have the true conception of marriage; it's the rational conception, not mere legalized tyranny on the one hand and submission on the other. So though we don't admit that what's commonly called virtue has anything to do with it one way or the other, we give you the virtue in as a sort of present. I think I shall have to lend you John Stuart Mill, Dorothy; he'd clear your ideas on the subject. I'll lend you *Subjection*. It's all in there, art and everything. If you read only a quarter of an hour every night you'll soon feel the benefit. Do read him.... And now I must go. I'm sorry if our talk has seemed a bit of a wrangle, but I have to state these things fearlessly, you see. At whatever cost we have to avoid false positions. The world really doesn't matter *that* so long as we have the Right on our side. Do try to see it, Dorothy.—Good-bye."

She touched Dorothy's hand and turned away to the door; but, for all her serenity, one thought and one thought only occupied her as she plunged into Hallowells' labyrinth again and wandered through rooms and corridors in search of the way out. The more she thought of it the less it bore thinking of. It was the thought that Dorothy had to all intents and purposes told her that she allowed Cosimo to admire her and to help her to take down her glorious hair for the same reason that Dorothy sat on a box eating sandwiches with her own unenlightened young man, and that when young men came into the question there was not a pin to choose between them after all. [241]

"Poor, dear, dull old thing!" she muttered as she left Hallowells'. "And it's she who pretends, for she'd have given anything to have heard me coming. All the same, if it *had* been me and Cosimo...." [242]

It would have been irrational, but she supposed she would have resented an intrusion too. Inherited prejudice is very strong.... [243]

### PART III

#### I

#### THE LEAGUE

OTHER grounds of complaint against the Manumission League you might have, but you could never, never say that they minced matters. As they themselves declared, they could not afford to. Woman had been told for so long that she was a creature of impulse and caprice, not to be depended on for a judgment uninfluenced by personal considerations, that the eagle itself was not clearer-eyed than it now behoved her to show herself to be. Therefore the League's members were rigorously rational. They saw opposing principles in stark and irreconcilable conflict. You

agreed with the League and all its ways, or you did not; you subscribed to its funds, which were considerable, or you identified yourself with the White Slave Traffic. You were for Manumission or Immorality. It was because woman had not seen so piercingly and ruthlessly in the past that she had got the name of an illogical and non-political animal; the League had changed all that. True, a weaker member did now and then hint in private that the League demanded more than it expected to get, so that the basis of a bargain might be established, but these admissions were looked upon with disfavour as a drag of darkness and the past. All or nothing: and he or she who was not for the League was against it.

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It was for this reason that the barb that Dorothy had planted in Amory's breast so galled her that there would have been no getting rid of it without cutting out a portion of her heart also. She, on a point of sex, no different from anybody else! It was monstrous. Why, who in such matters was spotless if Amory was not? Who, unstayed by an exalted and pure ideal, could have behaved as Amory had behaved? Oh, these worsen meanings, and the glee with which a world, base itself, seized upon them! Amory would have given anything to know the name of the person who had been talking about her; not that she hated any person, but oh, she hated, with a hatred that set a red spot glowing in either cheek, a slanderous tongue! She and Cosimo, her dear, brave old pal! Forked tongues had been at work on a relation so heavenly-pure as theirs!... Well, at any rate Cosimo must know. She would have felt a traitor to her chum had she kept this from him. "The world draws its own conclusions!" Cosimo must be told that without loss of time. It would be in the highest degree unjust to Cosimo to allow him to remain for another hour in a position so damnably false!

And Amory had been told this by a blue-eyed fashion-artist, whose wiles had no doubt corrupted a young man who, for all Amory knew, might have been one of Hallowells' shop-walkers!

With the red spots still burning in her cheeks, she sought Cosimo that very afternoon.

Until March Cosimo still had his studio, but he no longer lived there. He had taken a bedroom and sitting-room in Margareta Terrace, the short right-angled street off Oakley Street that runs into Oakley Crescent. Amory gave her soft treble knock at his door at a little before five o'clock. The knock had been arranged between them. The landlady in the basement was deaf, and if, after waiting for a minute, Cosimo did not descend, Amory always went away again.

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Cosimo was at home, and even as he opened the door he was aware of Amory's perturbation. He followed her upstairs to his sitting-room on the first floor, and the moment he had closed the door asked her what was the matter. She pulled out her enamel-headed hatpins and threw the hat into an arm-chair; but when she turned she was a little calmer.

"The matter? How the matter?" she said. "I'm dying for some tea. Have you got some? I've been to see Dorothy, but I suppose it was a bit early for tea when I left."

Cosimo had tea; he made it for himself in his room. As he lighted his spirit-lamp and filled the little kettle from the jug in the next room Amory listlessly tossed over the magazines on his little round table; but there was nothing new in them. She had grown suddenly dejected. There seemed to be nothing new in the world. She was as tired of Cosimo's little furnished sitting-room as she was of his studio in the King's Road or of her own studio in Cheyne Walk. She was tired of her work; she was tired of her friends—especially when they spread gross reports about her; for the moment she was even tired of "Barrage" and the League. And she was not sure that she was not tired of herself. Although Cosimo was back in town, she was plunged again into the mood in which she had wandered the streets during his absence, looking into eyes strange and various as the pebbles on a shore and thinking that the solitude would have been less frightening had she known as much as the names of their enigmatical possessors. She wanted a change; "Barrage" had taken more out of her even than she had supposed; she was petulant with herself. She was also exceedingly sorry for anybody of brilliant gifts on whom the world presses so harshly as to make that person petulant with herself. Self-contempt is ever the artist's blackest despair.

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"Well," said Cosimo cheerfully, taking cakes from a square biscuit-tin which he had produced from a cupboard, "and what had Dorothy to say for herself?"

Amory did not hesitate. Though Dorothy could not keep her tongue from repeating a slander and then running away from it by refusing the slanderer's name, Amory respected herself a little too much to give Dorothy or anybody whomsoever away. So she lay back on one of Cosimo's sofa-cushions and put her cheek on the sofa-end.

"Oh, quite a lot," she answered dully. "She seemed to be enjoying herself. She asked after you."

"Really, awfully kind of her. She's still at the Juperies, of course?"

"Oh yes, still there."

"I say, you look fagged out. But tea won't be a minute. No, don't get up to help; all's ready when the water boils.... Nothing wrong, is there?" he asked, as Amory sank wearily back on the cushion again.

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"Oh, give me some tea first."

"Then there is?" said Cosimo quickly, catching at the last word. "Not about 'Barrage,' I hope? They haven't cried off, have they?"

"No, it's nothing about 'Barrage.'"

"Then what ... but I'm worrying you, poor dear. I'll give you some tea and you can tell me then."

And, the water boiling, he made the tea and carried Amory a cup where she lay. He packed a cushion in the small of her back and made her put her feet up; then, sitting down on a little square hassock by her side, he patted her hand.

"No, don't talk just yet," he murmured. "Will you have a phenacetin? Well, perhaps the tea will set you right. Close your eyes and I'll try to take it away."

And, rising from the hassock, he drew a chair to the sofa-end, sat behind Amory, and began

gently to draw his fingers over her closed lids and back towards the roots of her hair,—“Don’t talk—give yourself quite up to it,” he murmured....

Amory, relaxing totally, did so.

Sympathetic in all things as Cosimo was, in nothing was he so sympathetic as in his touch of an aching head. Softly as a woman, he changed from stroking Amory’s lids, and began lightly to draw his sensitive tips along the angle of her jaw and up the sides of her bluebell-stalk of a neck. And he knew when she felt better, for he whispered “Sssh—I can feel it passing into my fingers and wrists—keep your eyes closed—” and continued to stroke. Amory could not have borne to let anybody else touch her so; it was only because of their intellectual affinity that she could bear Cosimo’s long fingers upon her lids and cheek and neck. Mr. Hamilton Dix she must certainly have struck; and as she lay back, with Cosimo’s silky tips passing over her face, she remembered, apropos of nothing, the only other male contact she had ever experienced—a brutal kiss, snatched years ago under the dark portico of the McGrath, with a knocking together of crania, and a smell of tobacco, and a horrible stiff little moustache.... She could not have endured even Cosimo with a moustache....

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And Dorothy talked about the world and its “conclusions!”

By and by her fingers softly touched Cosimo’s, in token that she felt better. Slowly she opened her eyes again.

“Ah!” she said.... “Thanks, dear. I don’t know why I should come all over like that.”

“By Jove, you had got it,” said Cosimo, stroking his hands and wringing, as it were, the numbness from them. “I feel it all up my forearms.”

“So now you’ve got it.”

“Oh, it’s rather pleasant; only like your foot going to sleep. It’s going already. Now have some more tea and you’ll be quite all right. I expect you’ve had too much on your mind, that’s what’s been the matter with you.”

“I have, rather. And I’ve been upset to-day, too.”

“I knew you had. What was it?”

“It was something Dorothy told me. Perhaps I’ll tell you in a few minutes, but I don’t in the least want to. Yes, I will have some more tea, please. Cosimo—”

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She spoke so shortly that Cosimo started and almost dropped the teacup. There was that in her tone which suggested that, though she had only that moment resolved that what she had to tell him might be told by and by, it was torn from her now by something stronger than herself. Cosimo had turned.

“What? Good gracious, how you startled me.”

“I want you to tell me something, Cosimo.”

“What?” said Cosimo. The golden eyes were glittering on his. Evidently Amory was fighting hard to keep in check some powerful emotion.

“I want you to tell me this, and truthfully, please, and without any false modesty: Do I strike you as the kind of girl decent people might wish not to know?”

Cosimo was thunderstruck. He could only look at her incredulously. Was something worse than a headache the matter with her?

“Do you strike me—” he repeated.

“Yes,” she interrupted. “Am I a—peculiar—sort of person?”

“Peculiar—?”

“Yes. I’ll tell you why I ask in a minute. I want to know how I strike you first. You wouldn’t call me an immodest girl, would you?”

Still Cosimo was all at sea.

“Do you mean—I mean, has somebody been shocked because—well, because you have brave and enlightened views?”

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“I don’t mean anything about my views. I mean about myself. To put it brutally, would you think that anybody had the right to say I led—a horrid life?”

Cosimo had been standing gaping, with the cup in his hand. This time he did drop the cup. He gasped.

“Do I understand—”

“Answer my question,” Amory commanded. “Do I give people that impression?”

“You—!” was all that Cosimo could say.

“Do I give *you* that impression?”

“Amory—!”

But she put up her hand peremptorily and continued.

“So that if anybody *does* think that, you’d say it was just the vileness of their own minds?” (Amory herself could not help noticing that somehow it sounded worse when put in this way than it had when Dorothy had talked about “conclusions.”)

“My dear girl—!”

“Mere unconventionality apart, you wouldn’t say that?”

“Wouldn’t ... why, anybody who’d say that must be mad!”

Amory straightened her back and nodded. “Thank you. That’s all I wanted to know,” she said. “I was a little afraid to trust my own judgment, that’s all. Thank you.”

But apparently it was not all that Cosimo wanted to know. Of course such a subject was always interesting quite apart from its personal application; many times he and Amory had discussed that kind of thing in the abstract by the half-day together; but now that was not all. His face was quite grimly set. Slowly he drew up a chair to where Amory sat, bolt upright and robed in her

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consciousness of rectitude, on the sofa.

"This," he said slowly, "is interesting. May I hear a little more about it, please?"

Amory had more than half expected him to take that attitude. Since Cosimo had had his hair cut he was still to be counted as "one of them," one of the enlightened ones; but, like Samson, he had lost perhaps a little of his strength in the process of shearing. He still saw the light, but sometimes it dazzled him a little—that was another reason why he needed an unflinching pair of eyes always by his side. Now his grimness was almost the ordinary conventional thing. The male behaved like that in most novels and in all theatres. Taken properly in hand, Cosimo would not be very difficult to manage.

"Need we go into it?" said Amory quietly. There was withering disdain of her traducers in the single glance she shot at him.

"I think we've got to," Cosimo replied, with the same slightly histrionic quietness. "I really think we'd better, don't you know."

"As regards myself, I don't consider it worth it," Amory replied proudly.

"I know you don't," the still strong man pursued doggedly. "That's because you're so high-minded and scornful and wonderful. You're so high above it all that really it's difficult for you to understand. But I think I'll make this my business, if you don't mind. Please tell me."

"Don't you think that by touching pitch you'd only be defiling yourself?"

"It isn't a question of me. It's you. I really think you'd better tell me."

"But what could you do?"

"Leave that to me. If it's a man who's been talking——" Cosimo left the sentence significantly unfinished. "Is it a man?"

"I don't know. Dorothy wouldn't tell me."

Cosimo half rose. "Oh, she wouldn't, wouldn't she? Perhaps she'll tell me, though! Will she have left that place of hers if I take a cab?"

Amory put up her hand rather quickly.

"Oh, Cosimo, do treat it with the contempt it deserves! You'd get nothing out of Dorothy. You know how obstinate she can be."

"Well, tell me what she said; then I'll consider whether I'll go or not."

"No, Cosimo, I'd rather not."

"But you must!"

At that Amory once more broke passionately out. She hit at the sofa cushion with her tiny white fist.

"Oh, it's—I *know* I've not deserved it! That ought to be enough for me, and I do try to look at it in that light, but I'm not always so high-minded as you think, Cosimo, and it does hurt when they spring a thing like that on you without warning! And the way she did it!... Listen. I didn't mean to tell you, but *she* seems to have been talking *me* over, and there does come a point when the truth has to be told! I went up when she was having her lunch; she was having it with somebody or other, I forget his name; and—Cosimo—but I'm sure I needn't tell you——"

"Not——?" The golden eyes and the black-coffee brown ones were crossed as it were like swords for a moment, as if either had started into an attitude of defence against some monstrous meaning—the meaning that, Dorothy had said, was always between them.

"Yes," Amory sighed as if in disgust.

Cosimo stared, frowning.

"You *do* mean kissing, don't you?"

"If you must have the horrid word."

"And it was *after* that that she said——?"

"Yes. Rather unbelievable, isn't it?... And that," Amory broke out anew, "is what made me so angry. In a room where the workmen might come at any moment, too! And then to talk about *me*!... Listen, Cosimo, I'm going to make a confession. I know it isn't necessary with you, but I want to make it. I want you to know exactly how much and how little I have to reproach myself with; then you'll see. An awful man did once kiss me, at a dance at the McGrath—and once I did give a kiss—I'll tell you——"

Cosimo made a little protesting movement.

"Oh, Amory, do you think you need defend yourself to me——?"

"But I want to tell you. It wasn't to a man—it was to a beautiful object—the Antinöus in the Louvre. I dare say it was foolish, but I thought it so beautiful, and anybody with any understanding at all would have regarded it as—don't think me silly—as a sort of dedication—to my art—and I have been faithful to my ideal ever since——"

Cosimo's eyes were moist with emotion. The beautiful gesture! What a ripping touch that would be if anybody ever wrote the life of the painter of "Barrage!"... "Oh!" he breathed reverentially. "You are superb, Amory."

"And of course I'm not counting that stupid thing at my aunt's wedding——"

"That——," said Cosimo, straightway dismissing it.

"And that's all—absolutely all," said Amory, softly and bitterly. "To all intents and purposes I've never been kissed.... So don't you think, Cosimo, that from her at any rate I might have been spared this?"

She lifted the shallow opals of her eyes.

Suddenly Cosimo ceased to be the still strong man. He became the hero, dreadful in his anger.

"It's unbelievable—cruel!" he cried. "And I'm going to see about it! You wait here—I'm going now—I'm going to get to the bottom of this—you stay here till I come back."

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He was half-way across the room, reaching for his hat.

But Amory called him. "Cosimo—!"

"We'll talk about it when I get back!" Cosimo muttered, grim once more. Talking would do any time. This was the hour for action.

"But—Cosimo—wait! You can't go to her! She'd think I'd been telling you things—she doesn't understand these moments when the truth simply must be told! Come here and be reasonable. She'd only round on you; I know her! If I can take it calmly I think you might. I'm not angry now. I'm going to take simply no notice. 'Let Gryll be Gryll and have his hoggish mind'—you know—it's in the *Faerie Queene*. That's what I think about it.... So *you* don't mind, do you, Cosimo?"

Something in this, he did not know what, arrested Cosimo, but Amory gave him no time to think. She continued—

"We should show ourselves quite unworthy of the faith we profess to take the least bit of notice, either of us. It's merely the old prejudice about the Subjection persisting. Why should the woman be compromised, as they call it, and not the man? They're equally guilty or equally innocent, one would have thought? But that's not our business really; our business is to strike and suffer, and strike and suffer, and to go on striking and suffering until not a tongue in the whole wide world dare say those hateful words again, 'One Law for the Man and Another for the Woman!'"

"But—" Cosimo gasped.

"Isn't it?" Amory bore him down, flinging out an adorable arm. "Isn't it? What is the battle, then, if that isn't it? What is every woman worth her salt, and a few devoted men, working and suffering and fighting for if it isn't for that? They're fighting against Wrong, Cosimo, and Vivisection, and Tuberculosis, and Man-made Laws, and the White Slave Traffic—"

But Cosimo was white. He had heard all this before, but something he had not heard before had evidently seized on him now. Again he tried to speak, but again Amory went triumphantly on.

"And with *that* noble task before us, what does it matter what scurrilous tongues say? Let them say! We defy the world! The world!" (She gave a contemptuous laugh). "Why, the world will be drawing its 'conclusions' (I believe that's the expression) at this very moment. A young man and a young woman, discussing ideals together—," she became brightly mocking, "—dreadful! Two beings of the opposite sex merely discussing great Social Problems—ha ha! Heavens, if they only knew! I really believe, Cosimo, that of all the times we've been together, if once—just once—the roof could have been lifted off and we could have been seen, perfectly innocently occupied, the world would have had such a shock to its conceit and ignorance that the Dawn would begin tomorrow! I really think that—"

But here Cosimo found his tongue. "Amory," he gasped, "do you mean that they've been talking about—you and me?"

Amory laughed. "Why, you stupid old Cosimo, who else?"

"Do you mean—you and me?"

At that Amory's laugh ceased. She stared. "You?... Cosimo, did you—tell me—did you think I had a scandalous relation with anybody else?"

"No—no, no—but—"

"Then who did you suppose they'd been talking about?" she asked, staring.

"I—I—I didn't know—"

"Do you *mind*?" This was said slowly, as if Amory struggled with a new idea.

"No—of course not—I mean, I think you're magnificent—but it—it didn't occur to me—just at first—"

Amory smiled cynically. "Oh, I've not had any scandalous relation with anybody except you!"

"Er—er—ha—have some more tea," said Cosimo quaveringly, putting out his hand to the cold teapot.

There was a moment's silence.

"Perhaps *you* don't believe me either?" said Amory presently, her head suddenly thrown back. "Perhaps you thought I'd found another friend while you were away?"

"Oh, Amory!" Cosimo reproached her; but he fidgeted uneasily. Perhaps he had suddenly remembered Pattie Wynn-Jenkins.

"Because—because—" Amory's voice quavered now, "because if you did, Cosimo, it wasn't true—it wasn't—I trusted you as I thought you trusted me—"

She showed signs of breaking down. That was infinitely pathetic. Is it not pathetic, when one who is prepared to defy the whole world provided she is allowed her single beautiful friendship, finds that friendship too yielding under the strain? Cosimo thought so, and put out his hand rather aimlessly.

But Amory drew her own hand back. The pathetic weakness passed. Wearily she laughed now.

"Oh no, better not, Cosimo. There are perfectly innocent things that we can't allow ourselves. It's hard, isn't it? but you see what the world is. It's probably damned us already; we're probably damned at this moment for being together here; but as long as we give it no reason it only recoils on its own head. I'm perfectly willing to accept the situation. I accepted it in a sense when I did that foolish thing with the Antinous. I thought then that I was just vowing myself to my art, but I see now that it was a far greater thing. It really meant that I chose all the large and beautiful and abstract things—a sort of life of toil—and put off these other things once for all. I didn't know; I might not have had the courage if I'd known; but there's no going back. Once I said our friendship must end, Cosimo, but that's over too. They'd talk just the same if we ended it now. So let them talk. It's bitter, but if I can bear it you ought to be able to. After all, there is that petty sense in which I lose more than you do."

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Cosimo had been staring hard at her. Again he had a merely conventional look. This time it was that of a man who, occupied with important and practical things, indulgently allows a woman to talk while he arrives at his conclusion. Presently he seemed to have come to the conclusion. His face was set.

"Well," he said, rousing himself, "that leaves only one thing to be done."

"Precisely," said Amory, with a little shrug.

"You must marry me," said Cosimo.

Amory fell back into the sofa-corner and for a moment looked at him as if she did not believe she could have heard aright. Then she smiled. She shook her head slowly.

Poor, foolish Cosimo! Was *that* all he saw? Well she must teach him....

"Don't you see, Cosimo," she said, as patiently as if she had been instructing a child, "that that's the one thing that *can't* be done?"

"Can't!—It must!"

"Really, Cosimo—"

"But it's as plain as it can be—"

"But you don't, you don't see, dear," Amory replied, still smiling. "That would be to be false to everything. It would be an admission. Think how all those people who have been so hideously wrong would instantly be sure they'd been perfectly right all the time! Why, it might just as well have been so!... No, Cosimo, that would be mere weakness—yielding to pressure, and an acknowledgment of that very opinion we hate so. We can't be on both sides at once, Cosimo. Either we've been right or we've been wrong, and I know which *I* think we've been. Don't you see *yet*, dear, what it meant when I kissed the Antinöus? It meant that I removed myself *away* from all that!... Really, Cosimo, I think you are almost dull enough sometimes to marry!"

"But—but—lots of the League people *are* married—"

"Ah, but they aren't you and me, Cosimo! They haven't our perfect friendship. Besides, I'm rather proud, you know. I don't think I could ever accept a man who merely thought he was under an obligation to marry me. You never asked me before, and you were quite right, just as you're quite wrong in this. If you really want an answer, it's—No. And if you want to know whether you've got to behave one bit differently because of this—well, that's No too. I admit I was angry, but now that I've talked it over I find it really rather amusing. It's quite funny, in fact, coming from Dorothy, after you know what. There are Dorothy's ideas, and there are mine, and I do sometimes think that if Dorothy thinks a thing right that's almost enough in itself to make it wrong for me. I hope you see *now*, Cosimo?"

Cosimo may not have seen, but he was at any rate silenced. A new fear had seized on him now. Hitherto he had taken this question of "compromising" very much at Amory's valuation, without overmuch thought about it on his own account; but now—now that he had had his hair cut—that irrational conventional point of view refused to be altogether banished. Though it came late and should have come earlier, perhaps he ought to consider her a little more; indeed, things being so hatefully as they seemed to be, it might be better if, for some time to come at any rate, they were less together than they had been in the past. The thought afflicted him with a melancholy sense of loneliness and hopelessness; he felt a little as a man feels after a weakening attack of influenza. Something he had grown to need he must now be more or less deprived of... But again, as he mumbled something of this kind, Amory came out shining and magnificent. Not go on precisely as before? Why (she exclaimed) that would be the next worst thing to marrying! If any difference was to be made at all, they must be seen even *more* constantly together than before! Just as the League sometimes overstated things in order that those things should "carry," so even by a slight parade of intimacy they must enter their protest. To weaken now would never, never do! Surely Cosimo saw *that*?

So they dined that night at the Lettuce Grill, in St. Martins Lane, and Amory had never been more trenchant and brilliant, more bright and tender and free and brave. And after dinner they joined a larger party at one of the long tables, and Walter Wyron and Laura Beamish dropped in, and everybody was absolutely at his and her best, and it was almost like a larger and more responsible McGrath over again, and the Dawn, if emotion and enthusiasm and resolve counted for anything at all, was hastened that night by several years. And before the party broke up Amory definitely clinched the sale of "Barrage".... And Cosimo was pensive and abstracted now. He saw, not only how right Amory was in everything she said and did, but how temerarious he himself had been when, that afternoon, he had said, almost as if he had been making a sacrifice, that a being so daring and dashing and gloriously winged must of course marry him. There was no of course about it. It would be she, not he, who would be making the sacrifice. He would be lucky to get her. Laura Beamish, whispering to him that Amory, drinking to the Dawn in the Lettuce Grill's Unfermented Grape-fruit Moselle, was stunningly pretty, told Cosimo nothing that he could not now see for himself.

Yes, Cosimo Pratt saw at last that he had come near making a precious ass of himself when he had taken her acceptance of him so entirely for granted. He did not suppose for a moment that a girl so frank and free and brave could (to put it grossly) be holding out for her price; nevertheless her price could be no light one. And because it was not a light one, Cosimo was now full of eagerness to pay it.

THE sale of "Barrage" to the Manumission League was definitely concluded within the week. Amory thought it a distinct smack in the eye for Mr. Hamilton Dix. Mr. Dix, in hoodwinking her, and all but fraudulently getting her to accept Croziers' miserable hundred pounds, had no doubt thought he was doing a smart stroke of business; but he was likely to squirm now, and to wish he had not given her permission to sell privately what work she could. True, Amory admitted that in a sense she had been indebted to Dorothy Lennard for this release—but only in a sense. It was a thing anybody would have thought of, and things anybody might think of were very lightly and happily hit off in that perfect phrase of Nietzsche's, "the vulgarity of the lucky find." In any case, Amory and nobody else had actually painted "Barrage." So if Dorothy liked to go about boasting that she herself had procured the sale to the League—not that Amory knew for a fact that she had done or was doing this—well, it would be a little beneath Amory's dignity to contradict her. Some people cannot bear to hear of the success of others. Amory thanked goodness that she was not like that.

The transaction put her into possession of no less a sum than two hundred pounds. Two hundred pounds, and for a single picture—at last that was something like! She had always known it would come, and come it had. Again, as she had done after the Crozier agreement, she counted the time "Barrage" had taken to paint; again she saw those other pictures she intended to paint—the Education picture, the State Motherhood picture, the terrible indictment of all non-members of the Manumission League that the White Slave canvas was to set forth; and again she saw herself rich. "Barrage" had left her limp and a rag, but that was past. It paid in cash to soar. Throes meant thousands. She laughed at her immediate two hundred, and straightway set about the spending of it.

And first of all she discovered that no system of physical exercises yet invented can compare for one moment with silk stockings for giving an erect carriage to the female head. She bought a couple of dozen pairs, taking Cosimo with her to choose the colours. She bought scarves, too, Indian and Japanese, and the most exquisitely embroidered peasant smocks, and a kind of goose-girl costume for the evenings, to go with which Cosimo, as a joke, made her buy a pair of sabots also. She put on the costume in the studio in Cheyne Walk, and her tiny feet were bare inside the sabots, and her hair was done in two glorious plaits, and she had a Breton cap on the top of it. For the studio itself she bought nothing new; that, she said, was to be kept severely for work—she had already begun a cartoon for the White Slave picture, and Cosimo had posed for the angelic and accusing figure that symbolized Manumission and the League. The only new piece of furniture that she did buy was a hanging cupboard so tall that it would hardly go under the blackened and sagging ceiling. She filled it with the new velvets and silks and put the stockings and shawls and the dyed leather belts with the enamelled clasps in the drawers beneath; and then one Sunday she bore off Cosimo to Oasthouse View again, on the Mall, Chiswick. He was to see Aunt Jerry's baby.

This time they did not go to lunch; they arrived at about tea-time instead. But if by going later Amory had expected to avoid Mrs. Deschamps and Miss Crebbin and *her* young man, she was disappointed. And not only that; as it happened, she and Cosimo walked straight into a party so large that its talk and laughter could be heard twenty yards before they reached the wrought-iron gate. Indeed, at the gate Amory hesitated for a moment and exchanged a quick glance with Cosimo; one voice had risen above all the rest; it was the voice of Mr. Wellcome. "Shall we hurry past?" Amory's glance seemed to say; but Cosimo hoisted himself out of a rather quiet mood and replied, "Oh, we'll go in—rather!" Perhaps he still lived in hopes of hearing Mr. Wellcome say "May all your troubles be little ones."

It would have been laughable, if at the same time it had not been so terribly socially deplorable, to see the ridiculous fuss they made of that baby of Aunt Jerry's. These people did not seem to have as much as a glimmer of the true significance of childhood—not to speak of its rights. They did not seem to realize that every false impression it acquired now would have to be corrected, painfully and with labour and tears, in the long years to come. It did not seem to occur to them, for example, that it was in the last degree important that, from the very beginning, its eyes should rest on none but beautiful and sage-green objects; instead they let it see Mr. Wellcome. They seemed to be totally ignorant of the fact that, already, beauty born of murmuring sound should be passing into its mite of a face; they prodded it, and guffawed in its tender ears, and said "Boh!" and "Diddums!" And was it conducive to a proper modesty and earnestness of purpose in later years that the child should be told already that it was precious and a gem, and that its mother could eat it, and (when it expressed its just resentment by a cry, so that its father had to take it into his arms and to sing to it), that the hills and the towers (the oasthouses presumably) that it could see from the window all belonged to it? That was a lie. They did not, and never would. Amory hoped that by the time it grew up there would be no such thing as private ownership of hills and oasthouses. But there they were, all of them, poisoning its vague young mind, and really not thinking of it at all, but of their own stupid cachinnations and witticisms. No wonder it cried.

And Mr. Wellcome was positively devastating in his humour. Mrs. Deschamps had her small fingers on his mouth even as Amory and Cosimo entered, trying to prevent the utterance of some dreadful facetiousness or other; pretty Miss Crebbin was blushing at it yet; but Mr. Wellcome tore Mrs. Deschamps' hand away as he saw the newcomers, and cried, "Well, all I can say is hooray for the little difference—here's Cos and Am—is all right behind, George?—Here, Cos, come and be getting your hand in—"

And he snatched the baby and forced it into Cosimo's arms.

Truth to tell, Cosimo held the infant quite as well as Amory did. When, in the course of the shocking display of promiscuity, it arrived at Amory, she stood with it much as a hatstand stands with the hat that is hung upon it. But she thanked goodness that she knew a little more than to

say "Diddums" to it. It was a little boy; Amory was rather sorry for that; nevertheless she bent an earnest gaze upon it, as if, male as it was, she still sealed it as more or less vowed to the Cause. Mr. Wellcome was entirely wrong when he cried that he'd take short odds he could guess what she was thinking of. Mr. Wellcome could never have guessed. Mr. Wellcome was for the propagation of Tuberculosis and the direct encouragement of the Social Evil. In fact, Amory was not at all sure that men like Mr. Wellcome were not the real Antichrist.

Then the babe was borne away by a nurse, and, while George Massey, mingling his hissings with those of the silver kettle over Aunt Jerry's spirit-lamp, passed round cups of tea, the conversation came round to Amory herself and "Barrage." Mr. Wellcome had failed to catch the figure for which the picture had been sold.

"How much did you say?" he demanded again over his cup.

Amory glanced at Cosimo.

"Two hundred pounds," said Cosimo with a negligent air.

Mr. Wellcome's respect for the Cause evidently went up. "Come, that's not so dusty," he approved. "Have you been raking it in at this rate ever since you left Glenerne, Miss Am?" he asked, fixing her with his eye and tapping her on the knee. He was a friendly man.

Amory replied graciously that she had, more or less; it was not easy to fix a rate; sometimes she would be quite a long time without making very much, and then—

"I see; like winnings," said Mr. Wellcome. "Well, and Cos here's been touching too from all I hear." He winked slowly.

"*Mis-ter* Wellcome!" Mrs. Deschamps interposed, shocked.

But Mr. Wellcome only guffawed.

"Well, it makes the mare to go—eh, George? No doin' your duty as a citizen without it, George, what? I always say, every time I have a good win, '*Now* for the duty as a citizen!' Not that horses ain't precarious, like art; but getting married's like learning to swim—when you're neck and crop in for it you find a way out all right. Well, I don't care, among friends, where it is, Glenerne or where you like—I know where there's a bottle or two of G. H. Mumm left, and the Spanish brandy's got no force, I give you *my* word! It's betwixt Miss Crebbin and somebody—Miss Crebbin's favourite for the moment, but betting alters—"

And the opening of an oyster is not larger nor more watery than the next wink Mr. Wellcome gave.

"Aren't you going to stay and see him in his bath, Amory?" Aunt Jerry asked wistfully when, at a little after five, Amory and Cosimo rose to go.

"I'm afraid not," Amory replied, drawing on her new gloves. "Cosimo and I have to go and see *Europa* at the New Greek Society; it's the first performance in England."

"The theatre—on Sunday!" Aunt Jerry exclaimed softly.

And Amory and Cosimo left. If they had stayed there would have been nothing to beat Aunt Jerry's consternation at the idea of going to a theatre on Sunday.

Hitherto it had not struck Amory that the Manumission League, in paying her two hundred pounds for "Barrage," had paid a very good price indeed for a canvas by an artist who, save for a few columns about her by Mr. Hamilton Dix (who was not to a column or so about anybody on whom Croziers' wandering eyes might rest), was unknown. Nor had it occurred to her that the League might want to see its money back again. Dorothy Lennard might entertain such suspicions, but then Dorothy was of a suspicious nature, always thinking somebody might be getting the better of her, and naturally crediting other people with intentions no better than her own. "I don't like sales outright," Dorothy had said.... And Amory, too, began to wonder whether righteousness also may not have its mammon when she first heard, at the Lettuce Grill, of the purpose to which it was intended to put her picture. It was only a rumour; indeed, Amory had it from a source no more official than Walter Wyron and Laura Beamish; but Walter's father was the mainstay of the New Greek Society, and things that he said had a way of being authentic, and Amory began to wonder whether she ought not to have had a royalty, or a percentage, or whatever Dorothy had called it after all. The rumour was to the effect that, merely as a means of sowing the good seed, "Barrage" was to be exhibited, not in an ordinary gallery with a hundred other pictures, but by itself, with drapery round it, set back in a sort of proscenium, with lights at the top and bottom, and a muffled harmonium playing sacred music in the next room, and a faint odour of Ruban de Bruges burning, and other appurtenances of reverence and solemnity. That converts might be made, the whole of the League's resources were to be concentrated on the enterprise, and the admission was to be a shilling. If the picture drew neophytes and shillings enough in London it was to be taken to the Provinces.

There are twenty shillings in a pound, and in two hundred pounds four thousand shillings. When four thousand shillings had been taken, "Barrage," omitting other expenses, would have paid for itself.

Now the League had many times four thousand members in London alone....

A royalty of, say, a penny in the shilling would have worked out at more than four pounds per thousand....

The League was going to do the thing *very* thoroughly, and a special "Barrage" Committee was to be formed....

Two hundred pounds was well enough as far as it went, but there was going to be increment beyond that, earned really by Amory....

She felt a sharp stab of regret that she had let "Barrage" go for so little.

But the regret did not last long. She remembered in time that she was bringing herself down to Dorothy's level. The full reward she might not get, but all the renown would be hers, and, though she was no Dorothy, she was yet not so ignorant of business but that she knew that in other ways

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her market was now as good as made. And compared with the kudos that would be hers, even the foregone royalty fell away into the background. "Foregone," she told herself, was the world; for the effect was the same as if she had had the royalty and had magnanimously handed it back again to the Cause. To all intents and purposes, she was subscribing to the Cause's funds (say) a thousand guineas. Her name would not appear with that figure after it in any list, but it is well to do good by stealth, and the name would ring resoundingly enough in other ways. "Amory Towers, you know, the painter of 'Barrage'"—"Barrage," Miss Towers' great work—"That feminist picture that everybody's going to see, 'Barrage,' by Amory Towers" ... yes, there would be lots of that. And in the Movement itself she would be a person of consideration and authority. She would have a voice in its councils. "Has Miss Towers given her opinion yet?" the leaders would ask one another on this point or that; and there were the other propagandist pictures yet to come. In the meantime it was a little odd that Amory was not asked to join the "Barrage" Committee. But perhaps that was as well too. Anybody can serve on a Committee, but it takes a somebody to paint a "Barrage." To inferior minds inferior work. It was better after all that there should be a little mystery about Amory and that she should be shut off from the common gaze as it were by a veil. More than her own exclusion she resented the inclusion of the name of Mr. Hamilton Dix. For Mr. Dix had been called in. Mr. Dix, whose articles on Hallowells' advertisements had brought him very much to the fore, had evidently been deemed by the Committee to be the very man to act as Art Director for "Barrage" also. And as that man of parts, who had no interest in Croziers', still never abandoned an attitude of benevolence towards Croziers' and such artists as they elected to "take up," Amory's twenty-odd older pictures also seemed in a fair way for being fetched up out of Croziers' cellars. One thing brings another. Amory had known it would come, and it had come, or was coming. And it was coming without her having receded from the highest that was in her by as much as a single inch. That (as Cosimo said) was what was so wonderful. In an age of polluted altars she had kept her single taper burning pure and bright.

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To anticipate a little: those contingent results of the enormous publicity that was presently given to "Barrage" came duly to pass. Croziers' sold all but two of those old Saturday-night street-markets of hers at prices that varied from ten to thirty pounds apiece. Their numerous charges and commissions struck Amory as merely capacious; for all that, she received a series of cheques that totted up in all to more than four hundred pounds; and in several articles he wrote on the astonishing combination of human sympathy and pure idealism that distinguished the work of Miss Towers from the work of all other living artists, Mr. Hamilton Dix fairly let himself go. This was when "Barrage" left London for Manchester, Liverpool, and the North, to draw its thousands of visitors per week and to be chosen as a popular and attractive text, though with various applications, by half the Nonconformist ministers in the land; and one of the curious little after-effects of the enterprise was to show how entirely right Mr. Miller was when he said that the mere advertising "stunt" was over, and that advertising, to be effective to-day, must attach itself to something higher than itself. He would have attached a drapery business to the Royal Standard; but the feminist picture did even better. The "Barrage" turnstiles took their toll of shillings that were really the sinews of a Holy War.

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Nothing, in Cosimo's opinion, could have been more simple and unaffected and fine than the way in which Amory still stuck to the shabby little studio in Cheyne Walk. More than once he protested, but she lifted her eyes to him and asked him, Was it not enough? The roof kept out the rain; the door kept out intruders; and she could open the diamond-latticed window and look at the stars whenever she liked. She liked the solitude, she said; out of just such a solitude the strength must be gathered that is to be put to the service of the multitude. She did sometimes sigh for the country; she was not sure that soon she might not take a trip away somewhere, a longish one, quite alone; she had always promised herself such a trip, to Italy, but the loved servitude of her career had never permitted her to get farther than Paris; but now there was nothing to keep her in England. She might even go and live permanently abroad, working for the Cause from wherever it might be. But wherever she went, Cosimo must not suppose she would ever forget him. She would write to him quite frequently. And he must write to her.

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The first time Amory allowed Cosimo this peep at her plans his face became blank with dismay. They were sitting together on a bench in the little Embankment garden where the Carlyle statue is. It was an evening early in April, approaching dusk, and on another bench, twenty yards away, a dim huddle under the trees had caused Amory's lips to curl into a smile; it had reminded her of that horrible hypnotizing evening when she had walked on Clapham Common and had returned to pass a night of starts and tremors, lying dressed on Cosimo's bed. She could afford to smile now, though she did so a little disdainfully. Things had improved since then—rather! Cosimo, though he had always been splendid, had been somehow a little off-handed at odd times; not exactly casual, but as if, while esteeming her very highly indeed, his esteem had none the less fallen just a little short of her true deserts; but that, too, was being quickly altered now. And she *would* like to see Rome too. Quite inferior people had seen Rome, and Amory owed it to herself and to her art not to be crowded over by anybody. She told Cosimo so.

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"Yes," he said dejectedly; "I thought that would be the next. You're rising, Amory. You'll remember us poor grovellers sometimes, though, won't you?" Amory's tone of reproach almost passed reproach; it was as if she had received a twinge of pain.

"I don't think I've deserved that of you, Cosimo," she could not forbear saying.

But Cosimo persisted sadly.

"I beg your pardon, dear, but it is so. You might remember a little longer than most others, because you're finer and truer than they are, but time and distance do make a difference, and it's no good saying they don't. I know."

Amory wondered whether Cosimo knew the difference time and distance made because of Pattie Wynn-Jenkins, but she only shook her head on its white hyacinth-stalk of a neck.

"I don't forget my friends, Cosimo," she said quietly.

"I'm not accusing you, Amory. But," he continued mournfully, "there are brilliant circles in Rome, and I know exactly how you'd take your place there, and it would be quite right and proper in one sense, and nobody would be gladder than I. But I should be buried in that beastly hole Shropshire all the time, boring myself to tears with cows and grass and pheasants and a lot of stupid yokels—"

Gently Amory tried to show him how ungrateful he was.

"Oh, Cosimo, how can you speak so of the country that gave the world 'The Shropshire Lad'! I should always have beautiful thoughts of you—as my Shropshire Lad—and it isn't as if there wasn't a noble work to do in the country too. There's the Housing Problem, and an iniquitous Land System, and sanitary dwellings for the agricultural labourer—"

She went on, but Cosimo refused to see it. It was as if her "Barrage" would be carried in triumph through the streets of Rome as Cimabue's "Madonna" was carried through those of Florence, while he would be tapping the barometer each morning, and then taking a walk with no other company than that of his dog, and returning to his solitary lunch, and going to sleep in the afternoon, and wishing to goodness he'd never seen his beastly estate. And so strongly did he now feel how little he had to offer Amory that he did not offer it, but sighed instead, and said that he supposed he'd be driven to marry some wench from the nearest dairy in order not to die of sheer weariness within six months. Amory mused.

"About that, Cosimo," she said slowly at last. "You know what I've always wanted for you. I've always wanted you to marry some nice girl I could make a friend of. At one time I thought Dorothy might have done, but I see now that I was wrong. But you'd be better not marrying at all than marrying somebody who wouldn't enter into your ideas. Can't you live for duty alone, Cosimo, as I can?"

"You've more to sustain you," he replied dully.

"All duties are alike precious," said Amory firmly. "Yours is a more even temperament. I grant I rise a little sometimes, but for every rise there's a despair, Cosimo, and I often think almost anybody is happier than I. Besides, you'd have the richest of my thought in my letters. You remember that fine passage in Ruskin—I think it's in the *Crown of Wild Olive*—about the spoken word often being hasty and inaccurate, but the written one being choice and considered; I forget exactly how it goes. But you'd have that, Cosimo."

"Oh, that—" Cosimo sighed.

His eyes had rested on the grey huddle on the bench twenty yards away. The huddle had moved, and a dim face had appeared. It was the face of Mrs. 'Ill's daughter, Jellies, and Amory had seen it too. It seemed to brighten her. She gave a gay little laugh.

"There you are," she said; "when you say you'd marry a dairymaid, do you mean—that?" She made a little movement of her head. "If you do, Cosimo, by all means marry one. When things come to *that* pitch I don't see that anything matters very much. Marry a dairymaid, by all means, if *that's* what you mean by marriage. But"—her laughter suddenly ceased—"don't forget, Cosimo, that there is another side to it. You'd perhaps get all that some men seem to require, and perhaps you are that kind of man, but I shouldn't have thought it. I should have planned something very different for you.... And think what you'd forego. No Societies for the study of those lovely Folk-Songs. No revival of Morrice Dancing. No bringing back the peasantry to those beautiful and rational old smock costumes. No bringing up of the standard of rustic morals to the level of that of the chaste animals. No education of the people up to an enlightened system of Land Tenure. No jolly Socialist Vans, no Pamphlets, nothing fine. Only the extortions of Landlordism and the old hateful Three—Rent, Interest, and Profits.... I'm not saying that to do all this is your work, Cosimo. I'm only pointing out that it's *somebody's* work. I don't know Shropshire; perhaps Shropshire isn't ripe for it; but it's being done elsewhere. It attracts me. But of course that is no reason why it should attract you. I only mean that I should have said it was worth examining."

Cosimo sat in the falling dusk, thrilled. What a daring and constructive brain!... And still some fools said women had no capacity for affairs! What (he wondered) would they have said could they have heard Amory as she was now—not argumentative, urging nothing, pleading nothing, with nothing to gain, quite detached and disinterested, merely anxious that, as she saw her own work before her, so others should see theirs? He rather thought they would have been silenced!...

And now there was no expressing how much Cosimo wanted her. Alone and of himself he could never have thought of these things, but with Amory by his side!... He seemed to see that Shropshire estate as it might be made. The bright parts of his vision seemed to gather as it were about a Maypole; the Maypole was in the middle; Cosimo knew the very spot for it. And the place really needed a Village Hall, on a contributory basis. In wet weather they could have the Folk-Songs and the Morrice Dancing there, and in fine weather on the green. There might be Vans and Pamphlets too; they might even set up a Village Press. And with these as a beginning the rest would come in time; but he could do nothing without Amory. He must have her. He knew it would not be easy, but he fancied—he was not sure, but he fancied—that there had been suppressed emotion in the tone in which she had called him her Shropshire Lad. Again he glanced at Jellies, whose face had disappeared again. The huddle, as far as he could see in the gloom, was quite motionless. Often and often with Amory he had laughed at this slow and elementary and adhesive love-making of the lower orders; it had always seemed so funny; and of course it was funny still with people of that class; Cosimo was not running away from that. Still, Cosimo had once taken a crossing-sweeper's broom and had swept for half an hour for him, and Amory *was* temptingly pretty as she sat by his side in the dusk....

Between his dream of a Model Village, of which he was proud, and something else for which he felt a little apologetic, Cosimo did not quite know where he was; but he knew that he wanted

Amory. A soft "Ow!" came from the huddle on the other bench; it rather put Cosimo off for a moment or two; but all was silent again, and he took heart. He altered his position, and ran his arm along the back of the bench.

"Do you really think, Amory——" he began huskily.

"Eh?" said Amory. Apparently he had startled her. She had been quite lost in abstraction.

"Do you think that's the choice—for me?"

"The choice?... Oh, I see! You mean what I was saying. Well, Cosimo, what do you think yourself?"

Cosimo spoke spiritlessly.

"I don't know. Sometimes it doesn't seem worth while my thinking when you're here. I want you to tell me."

"I don't think," Amory answered slowly, "that in cases like this one person has really the right to settle things for another. As you know, I hate the word Conscience; I prefer the expression Personal Will; but that's what it seems to me to be."

"But in so many things my will's yours, Amory. You see deeper than I. You're constructive. You're one of the world's Makers of Things. I should be a very good lieutenant or something, but I'm quite without the creative gift. Won't you help me to do all those beautiful things, Amory?"

But evidently Amory didn't understand him. She replied, with quick eagerness—

"Gladly—oh, so gladly! You know you have only to ask, Cosimo, now or at any time."

Cosimo tried again.

"I—I don't mean that exactly," he stammered. "That's splendid, that part in the *Crown of Wild Olive*, I know, but—but—I mean something else, Amory—dear——"

His hand had slipped from the back of the bench; softly it lay on Amory's shoulder. He could hardly believe that it had lain there many times before, it lay so differently softly now. And yet Amory did not seem to recognize the difference in the softness, nor did she appear conscious that he had called her "dear" in a tone he had never used before. She put her finger-tips lightly on his knee. "Wait a bit," she said. "I have it on the tip of my tongue—it's not the *Crown of Wild Olive*; it's *Sesame and Lilies*—you know—that passage about gossiping with housemaids and stableboys when you might be conversing with kings and queens—I shall remember it in a moment——"

For one fleeting instant it did strike Cosimo that if he had not taken down Amory's hair for her and called her "dear" in the past he might have had more resources at his disposal now—at any rate in the sense that Amory would have apprehended him more quickly; and yet that, too, had its little furtive compensation. His hand could remain where it was....

Amory continued to try to recollect the passage from *Sesame and Lilies*.

But suddenly she too gave, not a common "Ow!" but a quite sudden start into perception. She moved a little, but the hand on her shoulder did not. With quiet firmness she put her own hand upon it, but her slight effort to draw it away met with resistance. She had seen. She made as if to rise.

"Isn't it getting late?" she said, looking away over the river.

"Amory—don't go—you know what I mean——" Cosimo pleaded throatily. "It's—it's what I said the other day—you know——"

"Let's be going, Cosimo," said Amory. "I really don't know what you mean by the other day."

"After you'd seen Dorothy—and I wanted you to marry me—do marry me, dear——"

Somehow his hold of her suddenly loosened, and Amory was on her feet. From the bench twenty yards away two faces watched them through the gloom. Amory looked sorrowfully at Cosimo. She was not angry. She did not pretend that she did not understand.

"Cosimo," she said, and her voice was low, "I don't see how you can expect things to be the same after this."

Cosimo sat helplessly, as if still to sit might be construed as an invitation for her also to resume her place.

"I—I don't want them to be the same, dear——" he begged almost abjectly.

"And you mustn't call me dear—not in this new way," Amory commanded, softly, but with decision. "I do see what you mean—now. And I admit it makes matters clearer—too clear, perhaps. In that way our friendship may have been a disadvantage. It's committed us to a certain course, and we must either keep to that course or else undo things. I think you'll admit that's a Law. I——"

"Oh, undo them!" Cosimo cried ardently, catching, as he sat, at her hands.

But Amory drew the hands away and glanced towards Alf and Jellies. Her low voice thrilled, as it were, with the first tones of a tragic scene.

"Cosimo—no, I say. Not now. Not here. Perhaps never, and not anywhere. I'm almost sure it would be better not. I'm quite sure. It's not like that time the other day. I'd seen Dorothy then, you see, and she'd said that horrid thing. Mere pride made us go on as we had been doing in the face of the whole world. It was noble of you to offer it then—noble in a way, but quite impossible; and that's all past. Now our paths seem to lie in different directions, and we must follow them; it's a Law—it's our duty. In the sense you mean, the sense of doing a sacred work, I was actually more your wife during that long and beautiful friendship than I can be now that you say you love me——"

"Oh, I do love you!" Cosimo groaned, hearing these words of doom. "I do love you, Amory!"

"Then I bid you love your duty more," Amory replied, with sweet mournfulness, placing her finger-tips ever so lightly for one moment on his shoulder, as it were an accolade. "Go, my Shropshire Lad, and do it. And I will try to do mine. Let that unite us, and let nothing gross and of the earth"—from the next bench came a resounding smack of two mouths placed together—"let

nothing of the earth come near. So you will be my Cosimo, and I your Amory. Isn't that the higher and the better way?"

"Oh, but, Amory, it's so hard! You know you've often said yourself that the physical relation has its proper place! How—how would the world go on without it?"

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"The world, Cosimo, goes on by the progress of ideas. Ideas can be in a sense our children, yours and mine. And these are born of no contact but the contact of the mingling spirits. I will write to you quite frequently—after a time, when I have forgotten a little; I will write such letters as you'd never, never receive from anybody else! And perhaps, after a number of years, we could meet again. When it was safer. I couldn't meet you until it was safe, and I must leave you now. Don't come with me, dear friend. I am not really going away; only the mortal part of me; everything else is yours, Cosimo. Good night—"

"Amory! Amory!"

"Don't make it harder, dearest thought—you *are* thought of my thought—"

Cosimo sat still.

"Must that be all, Amory?"

"Is it so little? Oh, you don't know! Have you forgotten what I told you about the Antinöus? You are all *that* to me!"

"Then—" Cosimo supplicated, his arms outstretched; but Amory turned away her head.

"Ah no! You mean I kissed the Antinöus. But I daren't kiss you, my Shropshire Lad; I might fail utterly. And it would be no good your trying to kiss me; you'd hold my corporeal part for a moment, but think of all you'd lose! Would it be worth while, Cosimo?" She smiled, benign as a star, down on him. "Would it?"

How could he say Yes? How, on the other hand, could he say No? He was between the highest she had ever taught him, and that common, blissful lethargy of the huddle on the neighbouring seat. Thus two Principles run through that multicoloured pattern of the world's web. It is a Law. Cosimo saw that it was a Law. He also saw that it was a hard one.

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Suddenly he did the most sensible thing he could have done. He rose.

"Well, I'll walk along with you as far as your place," he said wearily. "I suppose I may do that?"

"Yes," said Amory. She would not have had the heart to refuse him so little. They walked in silence, and stopped before the greengrocer's entry.

"Mayn't I come up?" Cosimo asked.

"No."

"Oh, Amory! You can't mean never again?"

"Never again, I think, Cosimo. I'm going up to think, and to gather my things together. I shall leave to-morrow or the day after."

An "Oh!" broke from Cosimo's lips. So might a prisoner failingly exclaim who, having known that he must die at sunrise, should be ordered forth from his cell before the stars had begun to pale.

"Good night—and good-bye," said Amory, smiling bravely as she held out her little hand.

"Oh!... Not like this! Amory, I can't bear it!"

"It must be borne. I see now that this had to come. I don't say you may not see me just once more."

Even at that Cosimo caught eagerly. "When? To-morrow?"

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"No, not to-morrow; I shall be packing. Nor the day after; I shall be busy with the 'Barrage' Committee. I'll write to you, Cosimo."

"Write!"

"Do you get many letters such as I should write to you?" she asked gently. "I'll write, Cosimo; perhaps you may see me once or twice more."

"Oh," Cosimo groaned, "however shall I get through the time!"

The years they had spent together now seemed as nothing compared with these last eternal days before the new order, whatever it was to be, should begin.

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### III

#### EPITHALAMIUM

**I**T is not impossible, though it is in the last degree unlikely, that you may have lived in England in those days of Amory Towers' rise to fame without having heard of the furore created by "Barrage," and of its triumphant tour through the country, drawing shillings wherever it went; but you certainly did not live in London that spring without having another and not dissimilar event hammered home on you morning, noon, and night—the astounding series of social functions with which Hallowells' immortalized its Inauguration. "Not dissimilar," one says, and that is the truth, if not the very obvious truth. For both successes were due to the same cause—high, victorious advertisement. It made no difference that the two glories were different glories—that Mr. Miller knew the dignity due to millinery, and the "Barrage" Committee, ably assisted by Mr. Hamilton Dix, had the secret of making art boom. And perhaps the hidden causes that slowly make history decreed that both successes should come to pass at pretty much the same time. You put pressure upon an object, but that object also puts pressure upon you. Mr. Miller recognized the need of commerce for ideals, and the leaders of the Manumission League recognized the

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need ideals had of business organization. The one would elevate business into a Faith, the others make their Faith into an effective and shilling-producing business. It is a Law. It was also one of the Laws that Amory did not see.

For Amory forgot the slight and constant bitterness of having sold "Barrage" outright in the renown that was now hers. Virtually, by an omission so ludicrously accidental that even Dorothy Lennard had noticed it (so, in these miserable mercenary matters, has the small mind the advantage over the great one), she was pouring streams of gold into the League's war-chest. She solaced herself with that thought—but she intended to see that matters were placed on a very different footing next time. She did not know that there could be no next time. She did not know that though her signature might now be clamoured for by the advertisers of Brain Foods and Hair Washes, Dentifrices and the makers of Portia Caps, the public does not rise to the same fly twice. There was to be no successor to "Barrage." She might paint—she did paint—all those other fiery-cross canvases, the White Slave canvas, the Tuberculosis canvas, the State Motherhood canvas, and the rest, but she remained Miss Amory Towers, the painter of the famous feminist picture, "Barrage." And presently there grew up a cult of her finer but unrecognized masterpieces. Cosimo began it later, when he set about the writing of the *Life and Work of Amory Towers*. It became a test of your knowledge and discrimination. Your lip, if you were really one of the elect, curled a little at the mention of "Barrage"; not (you were expected, if you were a superior person, to say) that "Barrage" was not all very well in its way; popular and so forth; but—did your hearer know the "Tuberculosis" canvas? *That* was the true Towers. So it was in this pluperfect esteem that Amory by and by came to bask, with Cosimo as her showman.

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Benighted Dorothy Lennard, on the other hand, fluked into *her* wretched success by sheer luck. She had never an ideal to her name, never realized that the best possession to which she could lay claim was a certain knack, a certain low business cunning. And it was only to be expected that this should pay her, in mere despicable cash, twenty times as well as Amory's purer *awen* had paid. Amory was not in the least envious. Poor Dorothy would need it all, and more. However rich she became, she could never become a prophet; she might become a millionaire, but she could never qualify for the martyr's crown. Amory hoped her money might make her happy. But she did not see how it could.

But to this fluke of Dorothy's:—

When, long, long before, Dorothy Lennard had told Amory Towers that she had an idea that alone had made her wealthy as she stood, she had spoken with a superb confidence. Amory had looked for something of national, nay, more, of feminist value; but later she had begun to think that Dorothy had been merely giving utterance to an idle boast; some people, seeing others achieving something, must needs boast, merely to keep up appearances. Since that day Dorothy had kept her own counsel. She had kept her project even from Mr. Miller, without whom she had known she could do nothing; she had kept it from Miss Benson, and Miss Umpleby, and for long enough, from her cousin Stanhope. But presently she had had to tell Stan. He shared her sandwiches, and must share her ignoble scheming also.

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It appeared that Mr. Miller and Hallowells' were to provide the money for them to marry on. They *must* marry, they told one another twenty times a week—simply must. It was stupid, Stan said, not marrying; what on earth was there *not* to get married about? He didn't believe in that off-and-on sort of business, as if they didn't know their own minds.... But *ought* second cousins to marry? Dorothy had urged (scuffling disgustingly for the biggest bite of the sandwich); wasn't it said to be a bad thing? Weren't all these Eugenist people always saying what a bad thing it was? Miss Towers said so—

"Was that Miss Towers, that red-haired little thing you were in such a paddy with that day?"

"What day?"

"The day she caught us—doing this."

"(There, I'm glad you pricked yourself!)... Yes, that was Miss Towers."

"Seemed to creep up rather quietly, didn't she?"

"Stan! Of course she didn't!"

"Oh, all right. I wondered where you picked her up, that's all.... And does she say second cousins oughtn't to marry?"

"Oh, I don't know. Perhaps she doesn't. She says so many things."

"Well, you can tell her from me that I don't know anything about 'ought,' but I want to, and I'm jolly well going to. And look here, Dot, I won't have you wearing pins—just look what you've done to my hand."

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"*Did* it tratch its hand!"...

Then, of course, the question of prospects had arisen, and Dorothy had had to tell Stanhope Tasker what was in her mind.

"All right, if you think there's anything in it," Stan had agreed when Dorothy had unfolded her plan. "I don't quite see it, though."

"Idiot!" Dorothy had chuckled, taking a butt at him with her face as if they had been two of the chaste animals at play. "You just wait and see if Mr. Miller doesn't see it, though!"

"Hope he does, that's all," Stan had grunted over the glass of ginger-beer. "Then we'll clear out of this. I've got my eye on a job as secretary to a polo club. Just suit me. And I might get a game sometimes."

Before Dorothy had allowed Mr. Miller either to "see it" or to know anything whatever about it, however, she had first taken good care of the receptivity of Mr. Miller's mind. At that time the Inauguration had occupied him day and night; ideas for cheap stunts had come to him plenty as blackberries; but no idea had occurred to him that combined the flashy and ephemeral attractions of these with that real dignity of which the Throne, the Royal Standard, and the



Established Church stood as the outward and visible symbols. And Dorothy had let him fume and fret. The longer he fumed and fretted the higher her price was likely to rise. And presently, by the time Mr. Miller had fumed and fretted himself into a state of nerves lest, after all his vaunting Hallowell & Smith's Inauguration might turn out to be just like any other Inauguration, the price was likely to be very high indeed.

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Moreover, Dorothy had seen Mr. Miller's somewhat unscrupulous ways with the originators of other ideas. Mr. Miller was painfully subject to a weakness which might have been constitutional to himself or merely part of the general keenness of his job. This weakness was that he had sometimes been known to help himself to an idea, and to deny its real author as much as an acknowledgment. It was in vain that those authors screened themselves with elaborate and formal contracts drawn up in black and white. The law, by the one master-phrase that there is no copyright in idea, indemnified Mr. Miller. Dorothy knew that if she also did not want to be robbed, she must make herself more secure than any black and white could make her. Now there is only one way of doing this. It is by means of the free and flexible understanding of which agreements and contracts are but the rather clumsy letter. She had seen that, touch by touch, she must so prepare Mr. Miller's attitude that *any* suggestion of hers would be more likely to appear valuable than not. That had meant such present sacrifices as the leaving of really quite passable "stunts" to others. Dorothy could not afford to suggest ordinary things. An imaginary red carpet, so to speak, was to be laid down before she approached Mr. Miller with a suggestion. And Mr. Miller would think the more highly of it in proportion as he paid highly for it.

So she had carefully "nursed" Mr. Miller, had used her charms when the use of charms would serve a turn and had been businesslike and off when the charm of her sex would have been out of place, had dined and supped with Mr. Miller, had left Mr. Miller alone for a week, had one day dropped a hint that Doubledays' manager was a friend of her people (expressing quite a liking for Doubledays' manager personally), and so on and so forth, until Mr. Miller thought her not only one of the brightest young women that had ever happened, but one with whom it was a pleasure to be seen in the well-dressed assemblies his British heart loved. And, of course, here Dorothy's connexions helped too. Lady Tasker crossed over at the Ritz one evening and sat talking with Dorothy for a full ten minutes, with Mr. Miller standing all the time and bowing whenever he got a chance; and his bow when Lady Tasker left was the bow of Sir Walter with the cloak. Thereafter he kept glancing across in the direction of Lady Tasker's party as if he wondered whether it would be permissible to take wine with Lady Tasker across the width of the room; and he spoke to Dorothy as follows:—

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"Now that's the reel thing; I say this is an Experience, Miss Lennard. The way you introduced me: 'Mr. Miller—,' no more than thaaat, but with a manner, so to say: 'Mr. Miller—,' and then went on conversing about intimate things just as if you'd been at home or in her ladyship's private suite of rooms at this ho-tel ... that's the Note! Now if we could secure Lady Tasker for our Inauguration—not to be on voo, but just to be there—that would be worth dallars, guineas, I mean, both to us and to her ladyship.... And is she Mr. Stan's aunt, if I may use the word, too? Well, now! I have to thank you for a real experience, Miss Lennard. 'Mr. Miller'—just like that—I might have been anybody way up! Some of our Misters make some of our Sirs look poor, if I may use the expression—cheap skates—'bum's' the word they use in America—nooveau. I'm vurry glad to have had the pleasure of Lady Tasker's acquaintance. Now indicate to me who the rest of the party are—"

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And when, a week later, Mr. Miller, bowing to Lady Tasker at the theatre, received a bow in return, he certainly felt, if he was not actually, many "dallars" better off. Perhaps actually he was, too. Perhaps his Idea had received confirmation and support, so that he was enabled to go forward with fresh energy and enthusiasm. We must get our inspiration from somewhere, and these things are very difficult to explain.

It may be supposed that this and a few similar things did Dorothy no harm at all; and of course she lied grossly, at any rate by implication, when she introduced the name of Doubledays'. Not that Doubledays', too, were not straining every nerve. They and everybody else knew of the coming Inauguration that was already as completely planned as—say, "Hamlet" without the Prince. Perhaps Dorothy did actually say something to them; perhaps she gave Mr. Miller an account that she thought quite good enough for Mr. Miller; not all of us can take our truth nascent and unsullied from the Fountainhead of all Truth. Mr. Miller at any rate thought she might possibly be dickering with Doubledays', and that was the practical matter. An introduction to Lady Tasker at the Ritz was no good to him if Doubledays' also was going to be introduced to Lady Tasker at the Ritz, and these and other things were Dorothy's to give or to withhold.... You see how it was. You see how time-serving and unprincipled and altogether immoral it was. Amory would not have touched it with the end of a long pole. Had Stan written the "Life and Work of Miss Dorothy Lennard" he would probably have written the most deplorable record of our whole deplorable age.

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Apart from these things, however, there was the intrinsic beauty of the idea itself. That went straight to the heart of every woman, and of nearly every man also. And it touched every single being of the future, too. To Mr. Wellcome it peculiarly belonged, and Jellies and the Eugenist might have shaken hands upon it. Actuarially its basis was as sound as it could be. Dorothy went carefully into this. The cost for the whole week would be nothing to Hallowells', and its return would be incalculable. Without it, those shining palatial premises would be as a setting that begged, prayed, implored for its jewel. If Mr. Miller didn't take it, Doubledays'—might. You don't bargain for these things; you show them, and name your price. If you are robbed, it is your own fault before the fact; only the people are robbed who deserve to be robbed. Dorothy didn't guarantee a gem of such water every spring; nevertheless she intended to ask for fifteen hundred pounds a year for a number of years on the strength of it—this time (for contracts have their dull

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uses) to be clinched by a formal contract. She was not a fashion artist now; she had barely passed her Sealskin; she was a Publicity Adviser, and what she did not know about wheedling and scheming and other gross misuses of her sex was not worth knowing. And she did not care one rap for Emancipation and the Cause. She thought the Cause a very useful thing, merely because it collected all the cranks together, so that you might know where to find them if you happened to want them and how to avoid them when you did not; and, applying her publicity training to the extraordinary success "Barrage" was by this time having, she had no difficulty whatever in seeing to what that success was really due. Given the occasion and the organization, anybody else's picture would have done quite as well as Amory's. Amory was merely lucky to have hit on the idea at the right moment, and foolish if she thought the idea and the moment were likely ever to jump so happily together again. And if Amory didn't know this, the odds were that Mr. Dix did.

This idea of Dorothy's, then (not to beat any longer about the bush), was that of the famous Wedding Week that has now passed into history. "Shopping Weeks" had been tried before, but they had struck Dorothy as "some of our Sirs" had struck Mr. Miller by comparison with the unadorned simplicity of some Misters—as "poor," "nooveau," and (to use the American expression) "bum." And yet they had paid. If those, then, had paid, such an idea as Dorothy's was likely to pay at least as well. It seemed to her that all that these highly-paid Captains of Commerce lacked was inventiveness. They could be trusted with the details, but they had no largeness of conception. They niggled where they should have drawn with a free hand: Dorothy knew that she had ideas enough to keep a dozen of them going.

Hallowell & Smith's, then, were going to provide, for a week, and up to the capacity of their largest hall, free weddings. Subject to certain conditions, that varied from the purchase of a veil to the opening of a monthly account—and even these were imposed only to stem the rush that was confidently anticipated—Hallowells' would supply carriages, the breakfast, flowers, cake, music, wine, silver-paper boxes, awnings, liveries, crimson carpets, souvenirs and what not, entirely without charge, deduction, obligation, or any catch about it whatever. Between the pronouncing of the Benediction at the Church and your stepping on to the footboard of the train that was to take you away, you simply put yourself into Hallowells' hands. Indeed, it was not Hallowells' fault that they were not able to do even more for you. Certainly it was not Mr. Miller's fault. For Mr. Miller simply could not see why, if in Scotland a wedding might be celebrated in an ordinary drawing-room, in England it might not take place in an up-to-date Store. He took advice, both legal and ecclesiastical; he approached both the Church and the Registry Office; and the only result was that he found something more inaccessible even than he had found the Royal Standard to be. Hallowells', dedicated though it was (subject to the Shops' Hours Acts) to that practical form of Faith which the Apostle James offered to show by his works, still remained, in the hidebound sense that is the only one accepted of dogma, an unconsecrated building. Mr. Miller felt this as an injustice. It seemed to him that the Church could not after all be very sure of its own position. If, as it preached, it was the duty of the strong to help the weak, surely it was equally the duty of an Establishment that had dignity enough and to spare to bestow a little of that dignity where there was need of it. Not to do so was a stultification of reel enterprise, and a refusal to give live and go-ahead brains (his brains and Dorothy's) their proper reward. He would have met the Church more than half-way; would have dressed his marshal-celebrant in any way they had wished; cloth-of-gold if they liked; no expense should have been spared: but the authorities of the Chapel Royal and St. George's, Hanover Square, stuck to their cobwebby old monopoly, and in a business sense Mr. Miller was forced to the conclusion that the Church was "bum."

But while the Sacrament itself lay beyond his power, its appurtenances provided an opportunity more glorious than Publicity had dreamed of yet. Never was a Publicity-secret more jealously guarded. Day and night a picket kept the door of the room in the Clerkenwell factory where the gigantic papier-maché Old Shoe was being made; and the white-and-silver hymeneal torches, both the large ones for the trophies and the small ones for table-decoration and the holding of flowers, were allotted to separate firms. All "roughs" given out to printers were red-labelled, like poison-bottles, "Destroy at Once"; and the deliveries of Menus, Souvenirs, Wedding-cake Boxes and so on were sealed with private seals. The theatrical costumiers who supplied the wings and wreaths for the Cupids were given for secrecy's sake, an address in Scotland from which the consignments were brought back by private van by road; and for long enough the Executive of the Wedding Week was divided about the building of an organ in the place. Mr. Miller rather wanted an organ: it would be, he thought, rather a scorching come-back on the Church; but his stunt-advisers persuaded him otherwise, and a string-band carried the day. And before it was absolutely too late for Doubledays' or any other firm to have queered the whole thing and to have got ahead of Hallowell's, Dorothy got her contract. The office of Consultant to Hallowell's for five years was signed, sealed and delivered unto her. Thereafter she might stick to the job or allow it to lapse, as she pleased; in the meantime, not counting contingent benefits that were sure to come, it would start her and Stan very comfortably together.

And so, with London at its fairest and fullest, and the flower-barrows in the Circuses ablaze with tulips and narcissi and gladioli and escholtzias, and Bond Street blocked with cars and taxis, and the Park on Sunday mornings for all the world as if rivers of confetti and black patches flowed slowly back and forth, all was made in readiness at Hallowell's. And so well had the secret been kept that it was only when Miss Umpleby happened one day to go into the room where the Bell was being unpacked that anybody in the place (outside the Executive) had the faintest notion of what was going on. But the Bell gave it away to Miss Umpleby. Mr. Miller had got the idea of the Bell from that foreign land, America. It was twelve feet high and composed entirely of artificial flowers; and while it had originally been intended that each bridal pair should hew its way out of it with a silver axe, bringing the souvenirs for its particular party out with it, that idea

had been abandoned as impracticable, and the Bell opened with two flaps like a roc's egg at a pantomime instead. Miss Umpleby was an intelligent young woman; she had read of the device before in the newspapers; and she flew to Dorothy.

"What are they up to in there, Lennie?" she demanded. "Mr. Miller isn't going to be married, is he?"

Nobody would have known from Dorothy's face that she guessed that the secret had leaked out.

"Mr. Miller get married? Mr. Miller is married. What are you talking about?" she asked.

"That thing in the room at the end of the corridor there. I peeped in."

"Then you'd no business to peep," Dorothy replied; and she denied all knowledge of what was toward.

But presently she was sorry she had done so. Miss Umpleby, being under no obligation of secrecy, told the girls of the fashion studio what she had seen. Dorothy entered the studio as they were discussing it that same afternoon, and the hail of questions that greeted her almost blew her out of the room again.

"Here's Lennie—she knows!"

"Is it going to be like that New York one that was in the papers, Lennie?"

"And who is it?"

"It isn't you, Lennie, is it?"

They paused for breath, and then went on.

"And there's stacks and stacks of mock-orange in boxes——"

"And lots of lace-paper——"

"And they're doing the Central Hall downstairs all in white and silver."

"Do tell us!" they implored.

But it was only some days later, when there was no longer any danger of betrayal, that Dorothy told Miss Umpleby, as a great secret. Miss Umpleby clutched at Dorothy's arm.

"Really?" she cried excitedly. "Do you mean there'll be champagne, and flowers, and a cake, all for nothing?"

"Well, you give Hallowells' an order, and they'll do as many as there's room for."

"Oh!... How much is the order?"

"What, do you mean that you'd——?"

"Me and Arthur? Rather! I don't suppose we shall be married this side of the next eclipse if we don't do something of the sort! I'm not proud, as long as they don't mix the husbands up; I've had to watch Arthur, I can tell you, ever since he got his new Sans Souci hat!... But really, Lennie, do you think you could get us a ticket or whatever it is?"

"If you *really* mean it——"

"Of *course* I mean it. Oh, I say, you are a brick! What a lark!"

And so Miss Umpleby, who otherwise would have had to wait for another year, put her name down for that public wedding-breakfast.

And so a word was dropped here and a word was dropped there, and the business spies stole back and forth piecing gathered rumours together, and, some days before the announcements appeared in the papers, Doubledays' and the rest of them knew that they were done. No counter-device they could have prepared in the time would have compared for one single instant with that clean-cut and beauty-bright idea of Dorothy's. So some of them touched hidden springs that caused letters on over-advertised business to appear in the papers, but most of them took their defeat magnanimously, merely sending out fresh spies to try to discover "whose notion Miller had stolen that time" and to try to secure the services of that ingenious brain for themselves. Oh, Dorothy would have had no difficulty whatever in selling herself two or three times over! In fact she did so, at varying figures, though of course not to Hallowell's trade competitors. It is quite simple. When you are more anxious to sell your brains than somebody else is to buy them, then your price is a low one; but when people come running to you with their money in their hands, that is the time to stick it on....

Dorothy stuck it on. If Stan got his game of polo once in a while he must have just as good ponies as anybody else's...

And so, you know, in the beginning of the June of that year the famous Wedding Week opened. You do not need to dig deep into your newspaper files in order to read all about it and to remember how, for brilliance and festivity and renown, for crowds and mirth and family gatherings and thundering good business, it by far outdistanced any mere Shopping Week that had ever been held in this island realm. It caught on instantaneously. London talked of nothing else. From eleven o'clock to four daily, Oxford Street was blocked. Folk stood up to watch from the standing buses; streams of traffic were diverted into the side streets; it took you half an hour to walk on foot from Oxford Circus to Tottenham Court Road, and high across the street, all pale blue and silver and white, Hallowell's swinging banner, "OUR WEDDING WEEK," flapped and fluttered in the spring wind. And the evening papers reserved special columns for the daily doings. Press-photographers snapped; descriptive reporting soared; ponderously playful editorials gave the Wedding Week their imprimatur; comedians made it the theme of their choicest "gags." The *Daily Speculum* rose to a million a day on the strength of its photographs of bridal-parties alone. There were rumours of a Manchester Wedding Week. One couple journeyed all the way from Stornoway to be married by Special Licence and to breakfast at Hallowells'; another couple came from the Potteries. In both these cases Hallowells' handsomely paid for the railway-tickets also. Newly-made husbands and wives were interviewed as they signed the large Bridal Book; they bore testimony that the champagne was excellent, the wedding-cakes not made of plaster of Paris, and that there were absolutely no gratuities whatever. Hallowells' defiantly invited investigation on

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these points. They issued a public challenge to anybody who could prove that they were not doing all they had undertaken to do. Especially they drove it home that any genuine bride or bridegroom or member of their party might drink just as much champagne as ever he or she wished. Doubts, they said, had been cast upon their *bona fides*, and they considered that they owed it to themselves to set themselves right with the public. And surely you could not blame them.

And inside the great domed Central Hall was the sight of a lifetime. The large twenty-four-hours' clock was embowered with cherubs' heads so that it almost resembled the picture by Reynolds, and quivers and darts and nuptial torches, big and little, were arranged in trophies everywhere. A real sculptor had been commissioned to model the figure of Hymen that stood in the middle of the hall, and at or in among the fifty tables the wedding-parties sat or moved. Ordinarily the parties were limited to a dozen; special notice had to be given of larger parties; *but* the mirth those dozens made!... Party succeeded party while the chairs were yet warm; as one party ate its fruit those who waited for the vacated chairs stood so close behind them that they also might almost have bitten of the same banana or apple or pear. The room that is now the world-famed Juperies was the reception-room; there those who did not breakfast joined their friends who did; and the Umbrella Department was turned into a smoking-room for the men. And in they came, party after party, to Hollowells' to breakfast. Cheers went up from those whom Hollowells' carriages passed in the streets. An amber-yellow, the same yellow in which their parcels are now done up, was Hollowells' chosen colour; flowers of that colour filled the carriage lamps, rosettes of that colour were tied to the drivers' whips. The souvenirs and favours were tied with ribbons of that colour, and confetti of that colour (unless not desired) was thrown at the parties that descended from Hollowells' vestibule to Oxford Street; this confetti thinned gradually out on the pavements for a quarter of a mile either way, east and west. And every bride and bridegroom who breakfasted was made to enter the great Floral Bell, and to take, from the shelves that lined the structure, the parcel of souvenirs for the party. Two Cupids kept the flap-doors of the Bell. They shot harmless darts at Hollowells' guests. Sometimes these darts had *serpentina*s of coloured paper (amber yellow) attached to them; sometimes they had whistles. These last, as they flew through the air, made a noise like swallows.

And the parties themselves!... Arthur and Miss Umpleby were among the first to breakfast and then, to the strains of the Wedding March from the string band, to take their souvenirs from the Bell; but on the following day Mr. Nolan, of the Satteens, took Miss Feather, of the Fancies Counters, to have and to hold, and the whole of those two Departments took tea in relays in the room where Sir Walter spread the Cloak, and Mr. Miller himself presided at the tea, and gave Mr. Nolan an advance of salary, and the reporters, too, joined in the applause that greeted the announcement. Mr. Miller would have given his ears to have dared to suggest to Dorothy that she and Mr. Stanhope, Lady Tasker's nephew and niece, should eat their cake and enter the Bell along with the others; but though he guessed an understanding to exist, he knew no more than that, and in the end funked it. Moreover, to his chagrin, he was losing Mr. Stanhope. His swellest Marshal of all had handed in his paper. In vain had Mr. Miller offered to confer on him the title of Field-Marshal; Stan had told him that he really didn't feel up to the job, and had refused to reconsider his decision. But that drop of mortification was as nothing in the buckets and buckets of good business the Wedding Week was doing. If Stan was leaving, there was still Sir Walter, and a daily drilling of Marshals for an hour before that inspiring picture might be expected to work wonders. They had really performed very creditably at the Nolan-Feather wedding-tea, and a touch here and there of the easy negligence Dorothy had used when she had introduced him to Lady Tasker in the simple words, "Mr. Miller," should presently give their department its consummation and crown.

Thus, from a hundred churches, east and west and south and north, the newly joined couples came to Hollowells' to make merry with their friends. They came from Fulham and Wimbledon, from Kilburn and Epping, from Finchley and Streatham and Woolwich and Denmark Hill; and the hinges of the Bell wore loose with much work, and parcels' delivery vans took the cakes away in great loads each evening, and the strains of the Wedding Marches never ceased, and enough champagne was opened to have converted the great silver-and-white Central Hall into a swimming-bath. And besides the wedding parties, sightseers came also. One of these came daily, occupying a chair under the garlanded and cherubimed twenty-four-hours' clock. His eyes were agog; sometimes, as one in a dream, he half rose from his chair, grasped the hand of some passing bride or bridegroom, murmured something unintelligible, and sat down again, once more watching in a sort of stupid ecstasy. He was Mr. Wellcome.... And Walter Wyron came with Laura Beamish, and they clutched one another, and, both speaking at once, said that Amory and Cosimo must on *no* account miss this, and Walter sent Cosimo a postcard that very night. Amory and Cosimo came on the morrow, but missed Walter and Laura in the crush, and retired to a sort of recess on the second floor, past which the lift-well ascended. There, sitting down on a narrow padded bench without a back, they talked. Cosimo had all but won Amory. Only a few points remained on which it was necessary that their understanding should be quite clear.

"You see, Cosimo," Amory explained earnestly, while the noisy parties went up and down in the lift, "in one sense two rational beings have hardly the right to marry at all as long as the Divorce Laws are in their present chaotic condition. Even a Judicial Separation places a quite unjust stigma on the woman, and the Restitution Decree has become a mere formal step to Divorce itself. There's absolutely no Equality in the contract. As Equity it's a farce from beginning to end. I'm not sure that the wisest thing to do wouldn't be to wait until the Law is altered. I want that one-sided plea of cruelty done away with, or else made the same for both. It's anomalous—it belongs to the Stone Age."

"I quite agree," said Cosimo slowly. "But we have our private arrangement about that. It's quite

understood that if it isn't a success we each go our own way. You're to be as free as I am, Amory. I've no right to choose your friends for you, male or female. If things come to the worst, I fancy I'm not altogether without a sense of fairness and rationalness and philosophy. So our eyes are quite open."

Amory mused. "It's a risk for all that," she murmured. "There may be all sorts of things about both of us that neither of us knows. In a sense, we're complete strangers."

"Then," Cosimo urged, "let us be brave and take it. There's very little doubt that they'll reform those ridiculous laws before long. They're bound to. With the spread of Democracy cheaper Divorce is inevitable; and when it becomes quite common much of the stigma you speak of will disappear. Look here: I've an idea!... Why shouldn't we start a sort of private Insurance against not getting on together—put away a sum each year for the contingency, so that the expenses of Divorce would be met out of a fund? We could arrange some means of drawing on it, too, in case we decided to live apart. Don't you think that's a good idea?"

"Ye-es," said Amory slowly. "Ye-es. It's certainly a Law, I should say, that the only real way of keeping people together is to leave them perfectly free to separate whenever they like. The day of force, whether physical or legal, is over. That's what makes all that downstairs so exquisitely funny. They think that the way to bind yourself is to tie yourself fast! So of course it's our duty to dissociate ourselves as far as ever we can from all that.... Isn't it nearly time 'Orris and Jellies were here?"...

"Oh, they aren't due for half an hour yet. Now about Incompatibility, Amory——"

And their love-making went on.

The remark about 'Orris and Jellies had to do with their dissociation from the semi-communal feasting that was going on in the Central Hall. It had been Amory's idea that this dissociation would be more complete if 'Orris and Jellies also feasted with the rest of the world, and the joke had been cheap at the cost of the qualifying purchase at Hallowells' of Jellies' wedding-veil. So 'Orris, Jellies, Mrs. 'Ill, a woman who lent a hand at the Creek sometimes, together with one or two friends, had been told off to a table midway between Hymen and the Bell. Amory and Cosimo intended to watch from the gallery. They still regarded the world and its happenings much as they might have regarded a stereoscope, to be taken up for a few minutes when they found themselves in the humour for it, and put down again when it no longer amused them; and if Dorothy did not like the presence of this particular party at Hallowells', that could only be because Dorothy was a snob.

So Amory and Cosimo, presently descending by the lift again, watched Jellies' nuptial party from the balcony, and went on to discuss their own affairs again. They would be married—unless even yet they amicably agreed that it would be best that they should not marry—at a Registry Office; and if they did happen to feel hungry afterwards (certainly *not* unless) they would go to the Lettuce Grill. The noise that came up from the vast oval below was no doubt a mere reaction from the false religiosity in the church an hour or so before, and champagne certainly heated the blood. Amory drank nothing at meals, Cosimo only barley-water. Jellies' husband, as they could see from where they leaned over the rail, was already a little drunk on champagne; there was no doubt whatever that he would presently be quite drunk on beer. And these were the people to whom England looked for a eugenically begotten race! Black eyes were in front of Jellies, and intervals of returning to her mother when 'Orris happened to be "in," and a shamefully large family, and work at the Jelly Factory as before, and very little prospect indeed of ever having either the money or the initiative to obtain a Divorce. It made Amory sad....

And as she stood, with Cosimo by her side, looking down on the laughing, moving crowd below, she thought of a picture that should move the best women and men of her land as even "Barrage" had not moved them. It was this:—

She would take a large canvas, and would rough out upon it that very oval down on which she now looked. And she would fill it with figures, even as it was filled with figures now. But they should not be giggling, guffawing, gesticulating figures such as these, uttering the inanities about lifelong happiness that they themselves knew to be untrue, and filling and refilling their glasses with the blood-heating champagne. No. They should be the enlightened men and women of To-morrow; rational, responsible, of a nobler-moulded flesh and a more ardent spirit; they should average about nine heads high. And their eyes should be centred, not on their own selfish and private parties, but on the figure in the centre of the room that she would put where that absurd Hymen now stood. This figure should be symbolic, colossal, twenty-five heads high. It should represent the Earthly Authority of the marriage-contract. Its feet should be set upon broken figures, each one of which should typify some marriage-form of the past—hedge-priests, broomstick-weddings, handfastings, morganatic unions, savage rites (from *Primitive Culture*), ecclesiastical rites, even the Registry Office; and the fragments of such pagan emblems as hearts and torches and Cupids and bells should appear all about it. And in her right hand the figure should bear, as it were, a crystal with a flame in it, which should be Marriage, and in her left another crystal with a flame in it, no less perfect, no less honourable, which should be Divorce. And these she should offer to the Children of the Morrow together, both at the same time. Either should be the warranty of the other, as the olive-branch justifies the sword, the sword maintains the olive-branch. So should that figure be set up. And benignly brooding over all, exactly where she and Cosimo now stood, should be two larger and vaguer shapes, rather difficult to do, but probably to be achieved by scraping and scumbling and pumice. These should symbolize the Divine Sanction. Soft and reassuring rays should shoot from their angelic eyes and rest upon the Earthly figure below; this should turn up its glad gaze to receive the rays. In one sense, it was true, Amory did not approve of this paraphernalia of angel-shapes, but merely as emblems they might prove serviceable. They were prejudices that must be accepted *pro tem*. Though she dreamed of To-morrow, she must paint her picture in terms of To-day.

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Rapidly and earnestly she began to describe the picture to Cosimo....  
"Oh! By Jove, Amory—" he breathed, wellnigh breathless before the daring of her genius.  
"And those two wonderful shapes, just here, exactly where we are."...  
"Looking down and comprehending everything—"...  
"Oh—like you, Amory!"  
"Like you, too, Cosimo—for, if you don't actually paint the picture, you help in other ways—"...  
"Shall I, Amory," he breathed—"shall I always be there to help in those other ways?" [313]  
Her eyelids fluttered and dropped.  
"You *do* understand me as nobody else does."...  
"I do—I do—I'm sure I do—"...  
"And you understand, too, that there's always that other kiss—the kiss of the Antinöus—"...  
"It shall be *our* picture, Amory—all three of us," he said, with ardour.  
"I hope we're not acting in haste, Cosimo."  
"I'm quite sure we're not. Oh, let it be soon, Amory!"  
He had put his hand on her arm, but she drew a little away.  
"Don't touch me just yet, Cosimo, please," she asked him.  
"No—I beg your pardon," he said humbly. "I know that in a sense you aren't here—you're creating. By Jove, it *is* wonderful!"  
He would have felt unworthy of her had he wanted to kiss her just then.  
And, down below them, Jellies and her party rose, and a Marshal made a signal, and the conductor gave a couple of taps with his baton, and the bored musicians reached for their instruments, and their eyes rested sullenly on the tip of the poised stick....  
"Hooray—let 'er go!" 'Orris roared huskily....  
And once more the Wedding March broke forth.

END OF BOOK ONE

ENTR' ACTE

TWO men turned out of the gateway of the McGrath and walked up the street that led to the Euston Road. Just before they reached the corner one of them stopped and gave a lingering, but sardonic, look behind him. He was Jowett, the Professor of Painting, and his companion was the friend who had once talked with him at a students' dance, while the Discobolus and the Gladiator had held the shawls and fans of the dancers. Then they went forward together again.  
"So you're shaking the dust off your feet?" Jowett's friend said. "How many years has it been?"  
"Twenty-odd. Twenty-two or three. Twenty-three years next March, to be precise. Nice way for a man to spend twenty-three years of his life, isn't it?"  
"A very nice way, I should say. Beautiful things about you all the time—lots of pleasant young people and so on. One gets older, of course, but you have the fun of starting 'em in the world and seeing how far they go."  
With an "Eh?" Jowett looked sideways at his companion; then he looked before him again.  
"The world? That place hasn't got anything to do with the world," he said.  
"No? Well, one of your old students seemed to be making quite a stir in it not so long ago—that girl who painted 'Barrage'—what's her name—Miss Towers, wasn't it?" [315]  
"Yes. Amory Towers. A small red-haired girl. I fancy I pointed her out to you once. She was married a year or so ago; married another of our students. Pratt, his name was."  
"Then she's in the world now, at any rate."  
"Think so? I very much doubt it. Of course she is, in one sense; I can't deny that; but this is what I mean: There's too much paper in their lives. They read too much. Draw too much. Especially reading. Lord, the books they get hold of! Weeks and months together I've heard 'em: Myers says this, and Galton says that, and Tolstoi says the other; and they make up a sort of world out of all that, and think it's the real one, or is soon going to be, and they live in it, and go on living in it, and never get out of it. I hope I've heard the last of Myers and Galton and Tolstoi."  
"But—my good chap!"  
Jowett glared. "Well?"  
"Well!"

"You mean these *are* the great men? Well, I'm not a great man myself, so what does it matter to me? And what does it matter to those infants? Oh, it's all in the old Greek tag: 'A great book is a great evil.'... You're laughing; look here: I'll tell you the kind of thing that used to happen half a dozen times a day. I used to set these boys and girls to draw a simple object—simple, but more than they could do, for all that, or ever would be able to do; it all depends on how much you see in a simple object. And I'd even show 'em how to do it—for there are one or two simple things I really know and can do myself. Well, presently I'd look up, and there would be sweet seventeen, giving me a pitying sort of smile. I'd ask her what she was smiling at, and then she'd coo, 'Oh, but Degas didn't draw like that!'—or Beardsley, or the newest man from Montmartre (but the chances were it was somebody rather corrupt). 'But you don't happen to be his pupil just at this moment,' I'd say.... Anyhow, the point is, that an adorable young female person, or a decent young fellow for that matter, with no more use for an idea than I have for Moses' Rod, would [316]

throw one of these names at my head as soon as look at me. And the bigger the duffer the bigger the name: get that well into your head: that was unvarying. They used to think it was a joke when I asked them, whether they could make an omelette—of course, I really meant make a baby's shirt and contrive to get a baby inside it, but I couldn't exactly say that, so I used to say 'omelette' very slowly and distinctly, and look hard at 'em.... A baby? If I had said it, another piece of paper would have come in. They wouldn't have been able to get a baby until they'd seen what Strindberg or Nietzsche or somebody had to say about it first! And even if they did manage it, then there'd be more paper—systematics—newest methods of this and that and the other—lectures on proteids before they dared to feed it—paper, paper, paper—I know—I've had twenty-three years of it—"

His friend twinkled. "Has the little red-haired girl any family yet?" he asked.

"I don't know; but"—something like a twinkle flickered for a moment under Jowett's shaggy brows also—"perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps Pratt knows at least one little bit about Life by this time. One of the girls there used to sing some song or other, I remember—something about—

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"'Tying a piece of ribbon round his bonnie, bonnie waist,  
To let the ladies know he was married.'

and I shouldn't be surprised—I don't know, of course, but at a guess—"

"Oh?... You mean she'll be likely to be jealous?"

"Well, I fancy she'll have him safe under her pretty little thumb. I suppose there's nothing new about the whole thing really—same old twig, same old lime, same old bird. But a vast deal more paper—I still stick to that."

Jowett's friend twinkled again. "I know what's the matter with you and me," he chuckled. "We're both on the wrong side of five-and-forty. That's all that's the matter with us."

Jowett had been muttering within his shaggy moustache some extempore Litany or other; his friend caught the words, "From all young women who talk paper with their hair down—From all young men who think the New Woman isn't just the same as the Old one—And from all day-nurseries for the children of the well-to-do middle classes—"

He stopped short.

"Think so?" he said. "You think that's it? Perhaps you're right.... Well, it's not my habit, but suppose—if it was only for the sake of the name—"

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He indicated an establishment with large hanging lamps—

And they entered the Adam and Eve.

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## BOOK TWO

### A VERY MODERN MARRIAGE

#### PART I

##### I

###### THE WITAN

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LADY Tasker had missed her way in the Tube. She had been on, or rather under known ground on the Piccadilly Railway as far as Leicester Square, but after that she had not heard, or else had forgotten, that in order to get to Hampstead by the train into which she had stepped she must change at Camden Town. Or perhaps she had merely wondered what Camden Town supposed itself to be that she should put herself to the trouble of changing there. With the newspaper held at arm's length, and a little figure-8-shaped gold glass moving slightly between her puckered old eyes and the page, she was reading the "*By the Way*" column of the "Globe."—"All change," called the man at Highgate; and, still unconscious of her mistake, Lady Tasker left the train. She was the last to enter the lift. But for an unhurried raising of the little locket-shaped glass as the attendant fidgeted at the half-closed gate she might have been the first to enter the next lift.

Only from the policeman outside Highgate Station did she learn that she must either take the Tube back again to Camden Town or else walk across the Heath.

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Now Lady Tasker was seventy, and, with the exception of the Zoo, a place she visited from time to time with troops of turbulent great-nephews, the whole of North London was a sort of Camden Town to her, that is to say, she had no objection to its existence so long as it wasn't troublesome. It was half-past three when she said as much to the Highgate policeman, who up to that time had been an ordinary easy-going Conservative; by five-and-twenty minutes to four she had made of him a fuming Radical. He was saying something about South Square and Merton Lane. Lady Tasker addressed the bracing Highgate air in one of those expressionless and semi-ventriloquial asides that, especially in a mixed company, always made her ladyship very well worth sitting next to.

"Merton Lane! Does the man suppose that conveys anything to me?... I want to know how to get to Hampstead, not the names of the objects of interest on the way!"

The newly-made Radical told her that there might be a taxi on the rank, and turned away to cuff the ears of an urchin who was tampering with an automatic machine. It was a wonder that Lady Tasker's glare, focussed through the gold-rimmed glass on a point between his shoulder-blades, did not burn a hole in his tunic.

Taxis at eightpence a mile, indeed, with the house at Ludlow already full of those children of Churchill's, and three of Tony's little girls eating their way through the larder in Cromwell Gardens, and young Tommy, Emily's boy, who had just "pulled" his captaincy, arriving at Southampton in the "Seringapatam" on Saturday with another batch for her to take under her wing! Did people suppose she was made of money?...

The policeman's tunic was just beginning to scorch when Lady Tasker, dropping the glass, turned away and set out for Hampstead on foot.

She might very well have been excused had she omitted to return Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's call. Indeed she had vowed that very morning that nothing should drag her up to Hampstead that day. But for twenty times that Lady Tasker said "I will not," nineteen she repented and went, taking out the small change of her magnanimity when she got there. And after all, she would be killing two birds with one stone, for her niece Dorothy also lived somewhere in this northern Great Karroo, and unless she got these things over before the "Seringapatam" dropped anchor on Saturday there was no knowing when next she would have an hour to call her own. As she turned (after a brush with a second policeman, who summed her up quite wrongly on the strength of her antiquated pelisse and trailing old Victorian hat) down Merton Lane to the ponds, she told herself again that she was a foolish old woman to have come at all.

For the Cosimo Pratts were not bosom friends of hers. True, they had been, until six months ago, her neighbours at Ludlow, and for that matter she had known young Cosimo's people for the greater part of her life: but she had not forgotten the hearty blackguarding the young couple had got, any time this last two years, from the rest of the country-side. Small wonder. What else did they expect, after the way in which they had made farm-labour too big for its jacket and beaters hardly to be had for love or money? Not that Lady Tasker herself had seen very much of their antics. Great-nieces and nephews had kept her too busy for that, and she was moreover wise enough not to believe all she heard. And even were it true, that, she now told herself, had been in the country. They would have to behave differently now that they had let the Shropshire house and had come to live in town. They could hardly dance barefoot round a maypole in Hampstead, or stage-manage the yearly Hiring-Fair for the sake of the "Daily Speculum" photographer (as they had done in Ludlow), or group themselves picturesquely about the feet of the oldest inhabitant while that shocking old reprobate with the splendid head recited (at five shillings an hour) the stories of old, unhappy, far-off things he had learned by heart from the booklets they had printed at the Village Press. No: in London they would almost certainly have to do as other people did, and Shropshire, after its three years of social and artistic awakening, would no doubt forget all about the æsthetic revival and would sink back into a well-earned rest.

It was a Thursday afternoon in September, warm for the time of the year, and a half-day closing for the shops. Had Lady Tasker remembered the half-holiday she certainly would not have come. She hated crowds, and, if you would believe her, had no illusions whatever about the sanctity of our common nature and the brotherhood of man. She would tell you roundly that there was far too much aimless good-nature in the world, and that every sob wasted over a sinner was something taken away from the man who, if he was a sinner too, had at least the decency to keep up appearances. And so much for brotherhood. Great-nephewship, of course, was another matter. Somebody had to look after all those youngsters, and if her sister Eliza, the one at Spurrs, went into a tantrum about every bud that was picked in the gardens and every chair-leg that was an inch out of its place in the house, so much the worse for Lady Tasker, who must walk because she had something else to do with her money than to waste it on taxis.

She had been told by her niece Dorothy to look out for a clump of tall willows and an ivied chimney; that was where the Pratts lived; but Dorothy had spoken of the approach from the Hampstead side, not from Highgate way. Lady Tasker got lost. She was almost dropping for want of a cup of tea, and the Heath seemed all willows, and all the wrong ones. No policeman, Radical or Conservative, was to be seen. Walking across an apparently empty space, well away (as she thought) from a horde of shouting boys, the old lady suddenly found herself enveloped in a game of football. This completed her exhaustion. Near by, one of Messrs. Libertys' carts was ascending a steep road at a slow walk; somehow or other Lady Tasker managed to get her hand on the tail of it; and the car gave her a tow. She was seventy after all.

As it happened, that was her first piece of luck in a luckless afternoon. The cart drew off to the left; Lady Tasker trailed after it; and suddenly it stopped before a high privet hedge with a closed green door in the middle of it. Lady Tasker did not look for the ivied chimney. On the door was painted in white letters "The Witan." She was where she wanted to be.

Ordinarily Lady Tasker would have approved of the height of the privet hedge, which was seven or eight feet; that was a nice, reassuring, anti-social height for a hedge; but as it was she could not even put up her hand to the bell. The carter rang it for the pair of them. Over the hedge came the low murmur of voices and the clink of cups and saucers, and then the door was opened. It was opened by the mistress of the house. No doubt Mrs. Pratt had expected the cart, had heard its drawing up, and had not waited for a maid to come. Her eyes sought the carman, who had stepped aside. She spoke with some asperity.

"It's Libertys', isn't it?" she said. "Well, I've a very good mind to make you take it back. It was promised for yesterday."

"Can't say, I'm sure, m'm."

"It's always the same. Every time I—"

Then she saw her visitor, and gave a little start.

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"Why, it's Lady Tasker! How delightful! Do come in! And do just excuse me—I shan't be a minute.... Why didn't this come yesterday? It was promised faithfully——"

She stepped outside to scold the carman, leaving Lady Tasker standing just within the green door.

The altercation was plainly audible:

"Very sorry, m'm. You see——"

"I will see, if it occurs again——"

"The orders is taken as they come, m'm——"

"They said the first delivery——"

"We wasn't loaded till one o'clock——"

"That's none of my business——"

"Very sorry, m'm——"

"Well, the next time it occurs——"

And so forth.

Now in reading what happened the next moment you must remember that Lady Tasker was very, very tired. Had she been less tired she might have wondered why one of the two maids she saw crossing to the tea-table under the copper beech had not been allowed to take in Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's parcel. And she would certainly have thought it extraordinary that she should be left standing alone while Mrs. Cosimo Pratt scolded the carrier, and wanted to know why the parcel had not been brought yesterday. But, tired as she was, her eyes had already rested on something that had momentarily galvanized even the weariness out of her. It was this:—

Seven or eight people sat in basket-chairs or stood talking; and, under the copper beech, as if Mrs. Pratt had just slid out of it, a hammock of coloured string still moved, slung from the beech to a sycamore beyond. Lady Tasker saw these things at once; she did not at once see what it was that stood just beyond the hammock.

Then it moved, and Lady Tasker raised her glass.

No doubt you have seen the cover of Mr. Wells's "Invisible Man." It will be remembered that all that can be seen of that afflicted person is his clothes; and all that Lady Tasker at first saw of the Invisible Man by the copper beech was his clothes. These were of light yellow tussore, with a white double collar and a small red tie, sharp-edged white cuffs and highly polished brown boots. At collar and cuffs the man ended.

And yet he did not end, for the lenses of a pair of spectacles made lurking lights in the shadow of the beech, a few inches above the white collar.

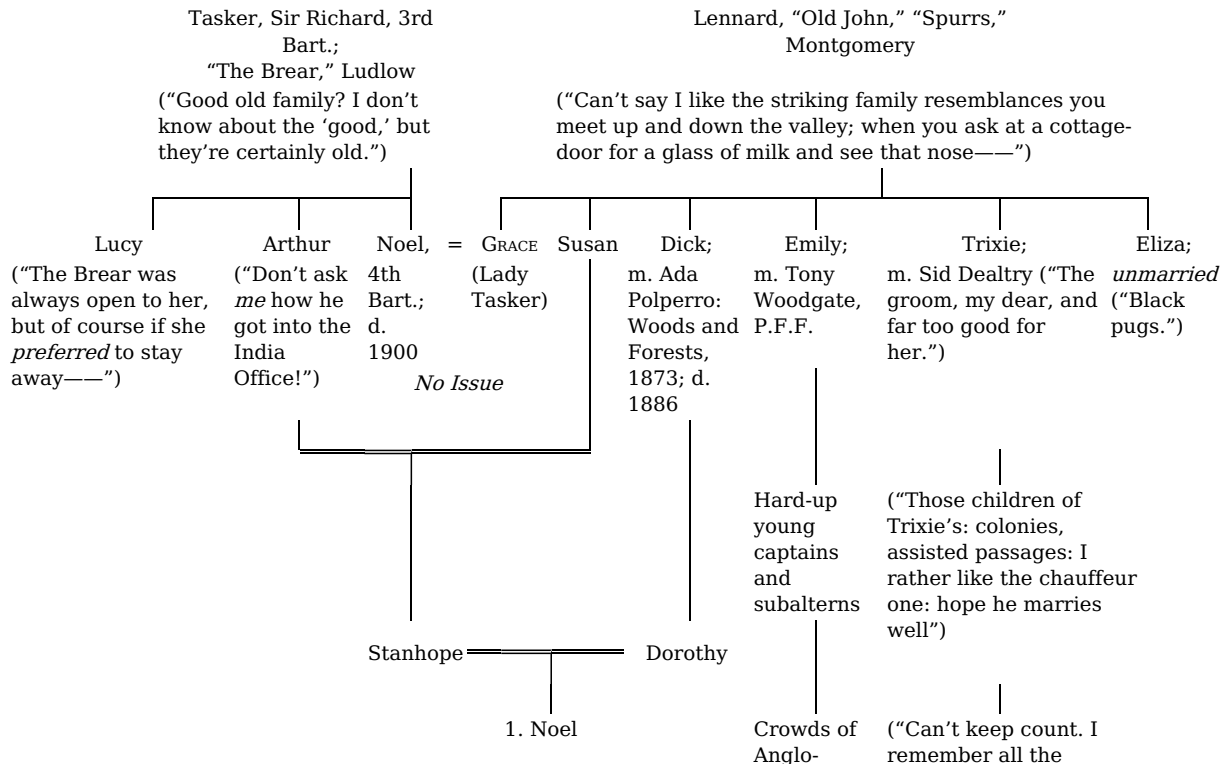
The phantom wore no hat.

Then Lady Tasker, suddenly pale, dropped her glass. Between the collar and the spectacles a white gash of teeth had appeared. The Invisible Man had smiled, and at the same moment there had shown round the bole of the beech a second smoky shape, this one without teeth, but with white and mobile eyes instead.

Lady Tasker was in the presence of two Hindoos.

Now all her life, and long before her life for that matter, Lady Tasker had been accustomed ... but no: that is not the way to put it. The following table will save many words:—

PORTION OF TREE OF THE LENNARDS AND TASKERS  
(COMMENTS BY LADY TASKER)



("They called him that to please me: innocents!") 2. Jack 3. (See page 448)	Indian babies, Lady Tasker's charges	birthdays, I can, but ——")
--	--	-------------------------------

You see how it was, and had to be. Not only was Lady Tasker insular, arrogant, and of opinion that Saint Paul made the mistake of his life when he set out to preach the Gospel to all nations, but she made a virtue of her narrowness and defect. Show her a finger-nail with a purple half-moon, and you no longer saw a charming if acid-tongued old English lady, who cut timber in order to pay for governesses for those grand-children of Emily's and sent, under guise of birthday gifts, useful little cheques to the descendants of her brother-in-law the groom. Babu or Brahmin, all were the same to her. No defence is offered of an attitude so indefensible. Such people do still exist. Let us sigh for their narrowness of mind, and pass on.

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The smile of the first Hindoo was for Mrs. Pratt, who had got her row with the carman over and had reappeared behind Lady Tasker and closed the door of The Witan again. Her face, pretty and finished as a miniature, and the great chestnut-red helm of her hair, showed over the slant of the box in her arms. "Do excuse me, just *one* moment!" she said, smiling at Lady Tasker as she passed; and she ran off into the house, her mistletoe-berry white robe with its stencilling of grey-green whipping about her heels as she did so. And fortunately, as she ran in at the door, Cosimo Pratt came out of the French window, saw Lady Tasker, and strode to her. He broke into rapid and hearty speech.

"You here! How delightful!—Amory!—I didn't hear you come! So kind of you!—Amory, where are you?—How are you? Do let me get you some tea!—Amory!—"

Lady Tasker spoke faintly.—"I should like," she said, "to go into the house."

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"Rather! Hang on to my arm.—Amory! Where is that girl?—Sure you won't have tea outside? I can find you a nice shady place under the beech—"

Lady Tasker closed her eyes.—"Please take me in."

"Tube headache? I hate the beastly thing. I thought you were in Ludlow. Charming of you—"

And he led Lady Tasker into the house.

This was a low building of stucco, with slatted window-shuts which, like the sashes of the slightly bowed French window and of the two windows beyond, were newly painted green. This painting seemed rather to emphasize than to mitigate a certain dogseared look the place had, not amounting to dilapidation, but enough to make it probable that Cosimo Pratt had taken it on a repairing lease. The copper beech, the high privet hedge and the willows beyond it, shut out both light and air. The fan-lighted door had two electric bell buttons, with little brass plates. The upper plate read, "Mr. Cosimo Pratt"; the lower one "Miss Amory Towers (Studio)."

But Lady Tasker noticed none of these things. In the hall she sank into the first chair she came to. "Tea, please," she said faintly; and Cosimo dashed out to get it. He returned, and began to murmur something sympathetic, but Lady Tasker made a little movement with her hand. She didn't want him to "send Amory." She only wanted to rest her tired legs and to collect her dispersed thoughts.

An eight-foot hedge, not to shut the populace out, but to shut Indians in! And she, Lady Tasker, had been kept standing while some parcel or other had been taken into the house—standing, and watching a still-moving hammock with a smiling Invisible Man bending over it! Was this England, or a Durbar?... And even yet her hostess didn't come to ask her if she felt better!... Not that Lady Tasker was greatly surprised at that. She knew that Mrs. Pratt was quite capable of reasoning that the greatest respect is shown to a tired old lady when no fuss is made about her tiredness. The Pratts were like that—full of delicacies so subtle that plain folk never noticed them, but jumped instead to the conclusion that they were bad-mannered. And it would not in the least surprise Lady Tasker if, presently, Mrs. Pratt allowed her to leave without a word about her indisposition. Of course: Lady Tasker had a little forgotten the Pratts at Ludlow. That would be it: "Good-bye—and do come again!" She could see Mrs. Pratt's pretty brook-brown eyes did anybody (say a Japanese or an Ethiopian) point out this so-called omission to her. She could see the surprise in them. She could hear her earnest voice: "Say these things!... Why, does she suppose I was *glad* then?"...

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Yes, Lady Tasker had a little forgotten her Pratts.

It was an odd little hall in which she sat. It appeared to be an approach to the studio of which the electric bell gave notice, for it was continued by a narrower passage that led to a garden at the back; and either the studio "properties" were gradually thrusting the hatstand and hall table out of the fan-lighted front door, or else these latter ordinary and necessary objects were fighting as it were for admission. Thus, the chair on which Lady Tasker sat was of oak, but it had a Faust-like look; beyond it stood a glass-fronted cupboard of bric-à-brac, with a trophy of Abyssinian armour hanging over it; and the whole of the wall facing Lady Tasker was hung with a tapestry which, if it had been the only one of its kind in existence, would no doubt have been very valuable. And two other objects not commonly to be seen in ordinary halls were there. One of these stood on the narrow gilt console table next to Lady Tasker's cup of tea. It was a plaster cast, taken from the life, of a female foot. The other hung on the wall above it. This also was a plaster cast, of the whole of a female arm and shoulder, ending with a portion of the side of the neck and the entire breast—of its kind an exquisite specimen. Many artists make or buy such things, but Brucciani has nothing half so beautiful.

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It was as Lady Tasker finished her tea that her gaze fell on the two casts. Half negligently she raised her glass and inspected, first the foot, and then the other piece. It is probable that her first

remark, uttered in a casual undertone to the air about her, was prompted by mere association of ideas; it was "Hm! I wonder if Mrs. Pratt nursed those twins herself!" Any other reflection that might have followed it was cut short by a sudden darkening of the doorway by which she had entered. Mrs. Pratt stood there. Lady Tasker had been wrong. She *had* come to ask if she felt better. She did ask her, gathering up long swathes of some newly unpacked white material she carried over her arm as she did so.

"Sorry you were done up," she remarked. "Won't you have some more tea?"

Already Lady Tasker was rising.—"No more, thank you.—I was just looking at these. What are they?" She indicated the casts.

The gesture that Mrs. Pratt gave she could probably no more have helped giving than an eye can help winking when it is threatened with a blow. Within one mistletoe-white sleeve an arm moved ever so slightly; very likely a foot also moved within a curiously-toed Saxon-looking white slipper; and she gave a confused and conscious and apologetic little laugh.

"Oh, those silly things!" she said deprecatingly. "I really must move them. But the studio is so full.... Do you know, it's a most horrid feeling having them done—first the cold plaster poured on, and then, when they take it off again—the mould—you know—"

Lady Tasker plainly did not understand. Perhaps she did not yet even apprehend.—"But—but —," she said, "they're from a statue, aren't they?"

Again Mrs. Pratt gave the pleased bashful little laugh. It was almost as if she said it was very good of Lady Tasker to say so.

"No, they're from life," she said. "As a matter of fact they're me, but I really must move them; they aren't so remarkable as all that.... Oh, you're not going, are you?—"

For Lady Tasker had given a jump, and a movement as sudden and sprightly as if she had only that moment got freshly out of her bed. Nervously she put out her hand, while her hostess looked politely disappointed.

"Oh, and I was hoping you'd come and join us in the garden! We've Brimby there, the novelist, you know—and Wilkinson, the young Member—and Mr. Strong, of the 'Novum'—and I should so much like to introduce Mr. Suwarree Prang to you—"

"Oh, thank you so much—," sprang as effusively from Lady Tasker's lips as if she had been a schoolgirl allowed for the first time to come down to dinner, "—it's so good of you, but really I half hoped you'd be out when I called—I only meant to leave cards—I'm going on to see my niece, and really haven't a moment—"

"Oh, I'm sure Dorothy'd excuse you for once!—," Mrs. Pratt pressed her.

"Oh, she wouldn't—I'm quite sure she wouldn't—she'd never forgive me if she knew I'd been so near and hadn't called," said Lady Tasker feverishly.... "How do I get to Dorothy's from here?"

"Oh, Mr. Wilkinson will take you, or Mr. Prang; but are you sure you won't stay?"

Lady Tasker was so far from staying that she was already out of the hall and walking quickly towards the green door in the eight-foot hedge. "Thank you, thank you so much," she was murmuring hurriedly. "I don't see your husband anywhere about—never mind—so good of you—good-bye—"

"Come again soon, won't you?"

"Yes, yes—oh, yes!... No, no, please don't!" (Mrs. Pratt had made a half-turn towards the hammock and the copper beech). "Straight across the Heath you said, didn't you? I shall find it quite easily! Don't come any further—good-bye—"

And, touching Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's extended fingers as timorously as she might have touched those of the cast itself, she fairly broke into a run. The door of The Witan closed behind her.

## II

### THE POND-ROOM

THE truth was not very far to seek: Lady Tasker was too old for these things. Nobody could have expressed this more effectively than Mrs. Cosimo Pratt herself, had it entered the mind of Mrs. Pratt to conceive that any human soul could be so benighted as the soul of Lady Tasker was. "Those casts!" Mrs. Pratt might have cried in amazement—or rather Miss Amory Towers might have cried, for there is nothing in the Wedding Service about making over to your husband, along with your love and obedience, the valuable goodwill of a professional name. "Those poor casts!... Of course they may not be *very* beautiful—," here the original of the casts might have modestly dropped her eyes, "—but such as they are—goodness me! How *can* people be so prurient, Cosimo? Don't they see that what they really prove has nothing at all to do with the casts, but—ahem!—a good deal to do with their own imaginations? I don't want to use the word 'morbid,' but really!... Well, thank goodness Corin and Bonniebell won't grow up like that! Afraid of the beautiful, innocent human form!... Now that's what I've always claimed, Cosimo—that that's the type of mind that's made all the mischief we've got to set right to-day."

But for all that Lady Tasker was too old. Invisible Men in the garden (or, if not actually invisible, at any rate as hard to be seen against the leaves of the copper beech as a new penny would have been)—and in the hall those extraordinary replicas! In the hall—the very forefront of the house! It was to be presumed that Mrs. Pratt's foreign friends, who were permitted to lean over her hammock, would not be denied. The Witan itself, and, for all Lady Tasker knew, the rest of Mrs. Pratt might be reduplicated in plaster in the dining-room, the drawing-room, and

elsewhere....

Had she not said it herself, Lady Tasker would never have believed it....

What a—what a—what an extraordinary thing!—

Lady Tasker had fled from The Witan still under the influence of that access of effusive schoolgirlishness in which she had told Mrs. Pratt that she really must go; nor did she grow up again all at once. But little by little, as she walked, she began to resume the burden of her years. She became eighteen, twenty-five, thirty again. By the time she reached the lower pond Arthur had just got that billet in the India Office, and her brother Dick, of the Department of Woods and Forests, had married Ada Polperro, daughter of old Polperro of Delhi fame, and her sister Emily had got engaged to Tony Woodgate, of the Piffers. (But those casts!)... Then as she took the path between the ponds she remembered the children at Ludlow, the three little girls at Cromwell Gardens, and the arrival on Saturday of the "Seringapatam." (But those natives!)... The thought of the children settled it. Her curious lapse into juvenescence was over. By the time she rang Dorothy's bell she was the same Lady Tasker who changed the political opinions of policemen and deprecated the wanderings of Saint Paul.

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Dorothy's flat was as different as it could well be from that other house which (Lady Tasker had already decided) had something odd and furtive about it—stagnant yet busy, segregated yet too wide open. The flat had one really brilliant room. This room did not merely overlook the pond in front of it; it seemed actually to have asked the pond to come inside. A large triple window occupied the whole of one end of it; this window faced west; and not only did the September sun shine brightly in, but the inverted sun in the water shone in also, doubling (yet also halving) all shadows, illumining the ceiling, and setting the cream walls a-ripple with the dancing of the wavelets outside. Sprightly chintzes looked as if they also might begin to dance at any moment; the china in Dorothy's cupboards surprised the eye that had not expected this altered light; and presently, to complete the complexity, the shadow of the sycamore in the little garden below would move round, so that you would hardly be able to tell whether the ceaseless creeping on the cream walls was glitter of ripples, pattern of leaves, or both.

Dorothy sat in her accordion-pleats by the window, surrounded by letters. And pray do not think it mere coincidence in this story that her letters were Indian letters. Some interests that the home-amateur takes up as he might take up poker-work or the diversion of jig-saw hold a large part of the hearts and lives of others, and so Dorothy, as she did more or less every week, had been reading her cousin Churchill's letter, and that of her little niece and namesake Dot, up in Murree, and Eva Woodgate's, who had sent her a parcel from Kohat, and others. She rose slowly as her aunt was announced, and put her finger on the bell as she passed.

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"How are you, auntie?" she said, kissing Lady Tasker on both cheeks. "Give me your things. Somehow I thought you might come to-day, but I'd almost given you up. Do look what Eva's sent me! Really, with her own to look after, I don't know how she finds the time! Aren't they sweet!—"

And she held them up.

Now Lady Tasker knew perfectly well the meaning of her niece's accordion-pleating; but she was seventy and worldly-wise again now. Therefore as she looked at the things she remarked off-handedly, "But they're far too small."

"Too small!" Dorothy exclaimed. "Of course they aren't. Why, Noel was only nine, and that's pretty big, and Jackie only just over eight-and-a-half, though he put on weight while you watched him. They're just right."

Lady Tasker reached for a chair. "But they *are* for Jackie, aren't they?"

Dorothy's blue eyes were as big as the plates in her cupboards.—"Jackie! Good gracious, auntie!—"

"Eh?" said Lady Tasker, sitting down. "Not Jackie? Dear me. How stupid of me. Of course, I did hear, but I've so many other things to think of, and nobody'd suppose, to look at you—"

Dorothy ran to her aunt and gave her a kiss and a hug, a loud kiss and a hug like two.

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"You dear old thing!—Really, I'd begun to *hate* all the horrid kind people who asked me how I felt to-day and whether I shouldn't be glad when it was over! What business is it of theirs? I nearly made Stan sack Ruth last week, she looked so, and I positively refuse to have a young girl anywhere near me!... But wasn't it sweet of Eva? I'll give you some tea and then read you her letter. Indian or China?"

"China," Lady Tasker remarked.

"China, Ruth, and I'll have some more too. I don't know whether His Impudence is coming in or not; he's gadding off somewhere, I expect.... But you weren't only *pretending* just now, were you, auntie?—"

She put the plug of the spirit-kettle into the wall.

"Well, how are the Bits?" Lady Tasker asked....

(Perhaps "His Impudence" and "The Bits" require explanation. Both expressions Dorothy had from her "maid," Ruth Mossop. "Maid" is thus written because Ruth was a young widow, who, after a series of disciplinary knockings-about by the late Mr. Mossop, was not over-troubled with maternal anxiety for the four children he had left her with. When asked by Dorothy whether she would prefer to be called Mrs. Mossop or Ruth, Mrs. Mossop had chosen the latter name, giving as her reason that it had been like Mr. Mossop's impudence to ask her to accept the other name at all; and very many other memories also, brooded on and gloomily loved, including the four children, had been bits of Mr. Mossop's impudence. Stan had adopted the phrase, finding in it chuckles of his own; and so His Impudence he had become, and Noel and Jackie the fruits thereof.)

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Dorothy put her fair head on one side, as if she considered the absent Bits critically and

dispassionately, and really thought that on the whole she might venture to approve of them.

"Ra-ther little dears; but oh, Heaven, how *are* we going to manage with a third!"

Her aunt dissociated herself from the problem with a shrug.—"Well—if Stan will persist in thinking that his dressing-room is merely a room for him to dress in——"

"So I tell him," Dorothy murmured, with great meekness. "But—but flats aren't made for children. We did manage to seize the estate agent's little office for a nursery when all the flats were let, but when Stan brings a man home we have to sleep him in the dressing-room as it is—," (Lady Tasker shook her head, but the words "Wrong man" were hardly audible), "—and a house will mean stair-carpets, and hall furniture, and I don't know what else. Besides, Stan hasn't time to look for one——"

"No?" said Lady Tasker drily.

"He really hasn't, poor boy," Dorothy protested. "And he's after something really good this time—Fortune and Brooks, the what-d'-you-call-'ems, in Pall Mall——"

"What about them?"

"Well, Stan's been told that they pay awfully good commissions, for introductions, new accounts you know; Stan dines out, say, and makes himself nice to somebody with whole stacks of money, and mentions Fortune & Brooks's chutney and pickled peaches and things, and— and——"

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"I know," remarked Lady Tasker, with not much more expression than if she had been a talking-doll and somebody had pulled the string that worked the speaking apparatus. She did know these dazzling schemes of her smart and helpless nephew's—his club secretaryships, his projects for journals that should combine the various desirable features of the "Field" and "Country Life" and the "Sporting Times" and "Punch," his pony deals, and his other innumerable attempts to make of his saunters down Bond Street to St. James's and back *viâ* the Junior Carlton and Regent Street a source of income. Perhaps she knew, too, that Dorothy knew of her knowledge, for she went on, "Well, well—let's hope there's more in it than there was in the fishing-flies—now tell me what Eva's got fresh."

"Oh, yes!" cried Dorothy, plunging her hand into her letters. "Eva sent the things, but here's Dot's first—look at the darling's writing!——"

And from a sheet of paper with a regimental heading Dorothy began to read:

"DEAREST AUNT DOROTHY,—

"were in murree and we got a servant that wigles his toes when we speak to him and he loves baba and makes noises like him and there are squiboos in the tres——"

—(she means squirrels)—

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"—and ive got a parrot uncle tony bought me and uncle tony says the monsoon will praps fale and the peple wont have anything to eat but weve lots and i like this better than kohat the shops are lovely but there are lots of flees and they bite baba and he cries this is a long letter how are jackie and noel i got the fotograf——"

—(that's the new one on the mantelpiece)—

"—were going to tiffin at major hirsts little girls one is called marjorie and were great friends——"

"Where's the other page got to? It was here——"

She found the other page, and continued the reading of the child's letter.

Suddenly Lady Tasker interrupted her.

"Had Jack to borrow money to send them up there?"

"To Murree? I really don't know. Perhaps he had. But as adjutant of the Railway Volunteers he'd have his saloon."

"H'm!... Anyway, the child oughtn't to be there at all. India's no place for children."

"I know, auntie; but what can one do? They do come."

"H'm!... They didn't to me. Thank goodness I've done with love and babies." (Dorothy laughed, perhaps at a mental vision of the houses in Ludlow and Cromwell Gardens.) "Anyway, now they are here somebody's got to look after them. They may as well be healthy...."

She mused, and Dorothy reached for other letters.

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Lady Tasker's additions to her responsibilities usually began in this way. Dorothy had very little doubt that presently little Dot also would be handed like a parcel to some man or other coming home on leave, and Lady Tasker would send to the makers for yet another cot.... Therefore, pushing aside her last letter, she exclaimed almost crossly, "I *do* think it's selfish of Aunt Eliza! There she is, with Spurrs all to herself, and she never once thinks that Jack might like to send Dot to England!"

"Neither would I if I had my time over again," said Lady Tasker resolutely. "You needn't look like that—I wouldn't. Cromwell Gardens is past praying for, and in another year there won't be a stick at the Brear that's fit to be seen. The next batch I certainly intend to charge for. I'm on the brink of the poor-house as it is."

This time it was Dorothy who mused. She was a calculating young woman; the wife of His Impudence had to be; and she was far too shrewd to suppose for a moment that her aunt could ever escape her destiny, which was to be imposed upon by her own flesh and blood while hardening her heart against the rest of the world. Dorothy, and not Stan, had had to keep that flat going, and the flat before it; unless Fortune & Brooks turned up trumps—a rather remote contingency—she would have to continue to do so; and she was quite casuistical enough to argue

that, while Aunt Eliza might keep her old Spurrs, Aunt Grace might properly be victimized because Dorothy loved Aunt Grace. Therefore there were musings in Dorothy's wide-angle blue eyes ... musings that only the sound of a key in the outer lock interrupted.

"Hallo, that's His Impudence," Dorothy exclaimed. "I do hope he hasn't brought anybody. I shall simply rush out if he has."

Stan hadn't. He came in at the door drawing off a pair of lemon-yellow gloves, said "Hallo, Aunt Grace," and rang the bell. He next said, "Hallo, Dot! Been out? Beastly smelly in town. No, I've not had tea. Look here, you've eaten all the hot cakes; never mind; bread and butter'll do, if you've got some jam—no, honey. Got an invitation for you, Dot, to lunch, with Ferrers on Monday; can't you buck up and manage it?... Well, Aunt Grace, what brings you up here? Bit off your beat, isn't it? Awfully rude of me, I know, but it is a long way. Glad I came in."

"I've been to see the Cosimo Pratts," said Lady Tasker.

Dorothy looked suddenly up.

"Oh, auntie, you didn't tell me that!" she exclaimed.

A grin lighted up Stan's good-looking face.

"Oh? How many annas to the rupee are they to-day? By Jove, they are a rum lot up there! Any new prime cuts?"

"Stan, you mustn't!" said Dorothy, peremptorily. "Please don't! Don't listen to him, auntie; he's outrageous."

But His Impudence went on, with his mouth full of bread and butter.

"I've only seen the fore-quarter and the trotter, but you see I haven't been over the house. Did they show you the Bluebeard's Chamber? What is there there? By Jove, it's like Jezebel and the dogs.... But I don't suppose they'll have me up again. There was some chap there, and I got him by himself and told him he didn't know what he was talking about; rotten of me, I know, but you should have heard him! Anarchist—Votes for Women—all the lot; whew!... More tea, Ruth, please—"

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Lady Tasker felt the years beginning to ebb away from her again. She had remembered the hammock and the Invisible Men.

"I hope he was—English?" she murmured.

"Who?"

"The man you say you were rude to."

"English? Yes. Why? English? Rather! No end of gas about the Empire. Said it was on a wrong basis or something. Why do you ask?"

"I only wondered."

But Stan was perspicacious; he could see anything that was as closely thrust under his nose as is the comparative rarity of the Englishman in Hampstead. He laughed.

"Oh, that! We're used to that. We've all sorts up here.... By Jove, I believe Aunt Grace has been thrown into the arms of a Jap or a nigger or something! Well, if that doesn't put the lid on!... So of course you wondered what I meant by the fore-quarter and Jezebel and the dogs. Those are just some things they used to have.... Well, I'll tell you what you can do about it next time, auntie. You talk to 'em about Ludlow. That shuts 'em up. Sore spot, Ludlow; they're trying to forget about Ye Olde Englysshe Maypole, and that row with old Wynn-Jenkins, and old Griffin letting his hair grow and reciting those poems. They look at you as if it never happened. But they didn't shut *me* up."

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"You seem to have been thoroughly rude," Lady Tasker remarked.

"Well, dash it all, they ask for it. She used to be some sort of a pal of Dorothy's—"

"She's very clever, and she was always very kind to me," Dorothy interpolated over her sewing.

"When, I should like to know? But never mind. I was going to say, Aunt Grace, that I've had to put my foot down. I won't have the Bits meeting those kids of Pratt's. It's perfectly awful; why, those children know as much as I do—and I know a bit! They'll be wanting latchkeys presently. That day I was up there I heard one of 'em say that little boys weren't the same as little girls. I forget how she put it, but she knew all right; think of that, at about four! I wish I could remember the words, but it was a bit thick for four!—"

A restrained smile, perhaps at the thought of Stan putting his foot down, had crossed Lady Tasker's face; no doubt it was part of the smile that she presently said, toying with the little gold-rimmed glass, "Quite right, Stan.... Anything fresh about Fortune & Brooks? Dorothy told me."

Stan's feelings on any subject were never so strong but that at a word he was quite ready to talk about something else. "Eh? Rather!" he said heartily, and went straightway off at score.—New? Yes. He'd seen old Brooks the day before; not a bad chap at all really; and they quite understood one another, he and old Brooks. He'd told Stan things, old Brooks had, (which Stan wasn't at liberty to disclose) about the commissions they paid for really first-class introductions, things that would astonish Lady Tasker!—

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"You see," he explained, "as Brooks himself said, they can't afford to advertise in the ordinary way; *infra dig*. They'd actually lose custom if they put an ad. in the 'Daily Spec.' I don't mean that they don't put a thing now and then into the right kind of paper, but just being mentioned in general conversation, at dinners and tamashas and so on, that's *their* kind of advertisement! For instance—but just a minute, and I'll show you—"

He jumped up and dashed out of the room. Lady Tasker took advantage of his absence to give a discreet glance at Dorothy, but Dorothy's head remained bent demurely over her work. Stan returned, carrying a small parcel.

"Here we are," he said, unfastening the package: and then suddenly his voice and manner changed remarkably. He took a small pot from the parcel and set it on the palm of his left hand;

he pointed at it with the index-finger of his right hand; and a bright and poster-like smile overspread his face. He spoke slightly loudly, and very, very persuasively.

"Now I have here, Aunt Grace, one of our newest lines—Pickled Banyan. Now I'm not going to ask you to take my word for it; I want you to try it for yourself. It isn't what this man says or what that man says; tasting's believing. Give me your teaspoon."

"My *dear* Stan!" the astonished Lady Tasker gasped.

"We're selling a great many of this particular article, and are prepared to stake our reputation on it," Stan went on. "Established 1780; more than One Hundred Gold Medals. Those are our credentials. Those are what we lose.—Pass your spoon."

Lady Tasker was rigid. Perhaps Stan would have been better advised to cast his spell over those who were going up in the world, and not on those who, like themselves, were coming down or barely holding their own. Again he went on, pointing engagingly at the small pot.

"But just try it," he urged, pushing the pot under his aunt's nose. "It isn't what this man says or—I mean, it doesn't cost you anything to try it. A free trial invited. Here's the recipe, look, on the bottle—carefully selected Banyans, best cane sugar, lemon-juice refined by a patent process, and a touch of tabasco. The makers' guarantee on every label—none genuine without it—have a go!"

With a "Really, Stan!" Lady Tasker had turned away in her chair, revolted. "And do you expect to go to a house again after an exhibition like that?" she asked over her shoulder.

"Eh?" said Stan, a little discomfited. "Too much salesman about it, d'you think? Brooks warned me about that. Fact is, he had a chap in as a sort of object-lesson. This chap came in—I didn't know they had schools and classes for this kind of thing, did you?—this chap came in, and I was supposed to be somebody who didn't want the stuff at any price, and he'd got to sell it to me whether I wanted it or not, and old Brooks said to me, 'Now ask him how much the beastly muck is,' and a lot of facers like that, and so we'd a set-to.... Then, when the fellow had gone, he said he'd had him in just to show me how *not* to do it.... But he was an ingenious sort of beast, and I can't get his talk out of my head. I'd thought of having a shot at it to-night, but perhaps I'd better practise a bit more first. Thanks awfully for the criticism, Aunt Grace. If you don't mind I'll practise on you as we go along. I'm dining with a man to-night, but I'd better be sure of my ground.—Now what about having the Bits in, Dot?"

"I think I hear them coming," said Dorothy, whose demureness had not given as much as a flicker. Perhaps she was wondering whether she could spare the sovereign His Impudence would presently ask her for.

The door opened, and Noel and Jackie stood there with a nurse behind them. Noel walked stoutly in. Jackie, not yet very firm on his pins, bumbled after him like an overladen bee.

### III

#### THE "NOVUM"

STAN was quite right in supposing that the Cosimo Pratts wished to forget all about the Ludlow experiment that had disturbed the Shropshire country-side a year or more before, but he was wrong in the reason he assigned them. They were not in the least ashamed of it. As a stage in their intellectual development, the experiment had been entirely in its place. Especially in Mrs. Pratt's career—as an old student of the McGrath School of Art, a familiar (for a time) with Poverty in cheap studios, the painter of the famous Feminist picture "Barrage," and so forward—had this been true. Cosimo, in "The Life and Work of Miss Amory Towers," a labour to which he devoted himself intermittently, pointed out the naturalness and inevitability of the sequence with real eloquence. Step had led to step, and the omission of any one step would have ruined the whole.

But nobody with work still in them lingers long over the past. They had dropped the task of regenerating rural England, or rather had handed it over to others, only when it had been pointed out to them that capacity so rare as theirs ought to be directed to larger ends. One evening there had put in an appearance at one of the Ludlow meetings—a meeting of the Hurdy-gurdy Octette, which afterwards gave instrumental performances with such success at Letchworth, Bushey and Golder's Green—Mr. Strong, the original founder and present editor of the "Novum Organum," or, as it was usually called, the "Novum." Mr. Strong, as it happened, was the man whom the scatter-brained Stan had met at The Witan, and of whom he had expected that impossibility of any man whomsoever—an admission that he did not know what he was talking about. At that time Mr. Strong had been perambulating the country with a Van, holding meetings and distributing literature; and whatever Mr. Strong's other failings might have been, nobody had ever said of him that he did not recognize a good thing when he saw it. The Cause itself had served as an introduction between him and Cosimo; it had also been a sufficient reason for his inviting himself to Cosimo's house for a couple of days and remaining there for three weeks; and then he had got rid of the Van and had come again. He was a rapturous talker, when there was an end to be gained, and he had expressed himself as strongly of the opinion that, magnificent a field for the sowing of the good seed as the country-side was, there was simply stupendous propaganda to be done in London. He knew (he had gone on) that Mrs. Pratt would forgive him (he had a searching blue eye and an actor's smile) if he appeared for a moment to speak disparagingly of what he might call the mere graces of the Movement, (alluring as these were in Mrs. Pratt's capable and very pretty hands); it was not disparagement really; he only meant that these garlands would burgeon a hundred-fold if the stern and thankless work was got

out of the way first. Mr. Strong had a valuable trick of suddenly making those searching blue eyes of his more searching, and of switching off the actor's smile altogether; both of these things had happened as he had gone on to point out that what the Cause was really languishing for was a serious and responsible organ; and then, and only then, when they had got (so to speak) the diapason, there would be time enough for the trills and appoggiaturas of the Hurdy-gurdy Band.

Before the end of Mr. Strong's second visit Cosimo had put up the greater part of the money for the "Novum."

So you see just where the feather-pated Stan was wrong. The Cosimo Pratts were not outaced from anything; they had merely seen a new and heralding light. They did not so much recede from the Rural Experiment, and discussions of the Suffrage, and eating buns on the floor at assemblies of the Poets' Club, and a hundred and twenty other such things, as become as it were translated. They still shed over these activities the benignity of their approval, but from on high now. Amory could no longer be expected actually to "run" the Suffrage Shop herself—Dickie Lemesurier did that; nor the "Eden" (the new offshoot off the Lettuce Grill)—that she left to Katie Deedes; nor the "Lectures on Love" Agency—that was quite safe in the hands of her friends, Walter Wyron and Laura Beamish. Amory merely shed approval down. She was *hors concours*. She ... but you really must read Cosimo's book. You will find it all there (or at any rate a good deal of it).

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For Amory Pratt, in so far as Cosimo was the proprietor of the "Novum," was the proprietor of the proprietor of a high-class weekly review that was presently going to put the two older parties out of business entirely. She had more than a Programme now; she had a Policy. She had crossed the line into the *haute politique*. Her At Homes were already taking on the character of the political salon, and between herself and the wives of ministers and ambassadors were differences, in degree perhaps, but not in kind. And that even these differences should become diminished she had taken on, ever since her settling-down at The Witan, slight, but significant, new attitudes and condescensions. She was kinder and more gracious to her sometime equals than before. She gave them encouraging looks, as much as to say that they need not be afraid of her. But it was quite definitely understood that when she took Mr. Strong apart under the copper beech or retired with him into the studio at the back of the house, she must on no account be disturbed.—Mr. Strong, by the way, always dressed in the same Norfolk jacket, red tie and soft felt hat, and his first caution to Cosimo and Amory had been that Brimby, the novelist, was an excellent chap, but not always to be taken very seriously.

Amory did not often put in an appearance at the "Novum's" offices. This was not that she thought it more befitting that Mr. Strong should wait on her, for she went about a good deal with Mr. Strong, and did not always trouble him to come up to The Witan to fetch her. It was, rather, if the truth must be told, that she found the offices rather dingy. Her senses loved the newly-machined smell of each new issue of the paper, but not the mingled odour of dust and stale gum and Virginia cigarettes of the place whence it came. Moreover, the premises were rather difficult to find. They lay at the back of Charing Cross Road. You dodged into an alley between a second-hand bookseller's and a shop where electric-light fittings were sold, entered a narrow yard, and, turning to the right into a gas-lighted cavern where were stacked hundreds and hundreds of sandwich-boards, some back-and-fronts, some with the iron forks for the bearer's shoulders, you ascended by means of a dark staircase to the second floor. There, at the end of a passage which some poster-artist had half papered with the specimens of his art, you came upon the three rooms. The first of these was the general office; the second was Mr. Strong's private office; and the third was a room which, the "Novum" having no need of it, Mr. Strong had thought he might as well use as a rent-free bedroom as not. The door of this room Mr. Strong always kept locked. It was more prudent. He was supposed to live somewhere in South Kentish Town, and gave this address to certain of his correspondents. The letters of these reached him sooner or later, through the agency of a barber, in whose window was a placard, "Letters may be addressed here."

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Perhaps, too, the extraordinary people who visited Mr. Strong in the way of business helped to keep Amory away. For an endless succession of the queerest people came—contributors, and would-be contributors, and friends of the Cause who "were just passing and thought they'd look in," and artists seeking a paper with the courage to print really stinging caricatures, and article-writers who were out of a job only because they dared to tell the truth about things, and Russian political exiles, and Armenians who wanted passages to America, and Eurasians who wanted rifles, and tramps, and poets, and the boy from the milkshop who brought in the bread and butter and eggs for Mr. Strong's breakfast. And out of these strange elements had grown up the paper's literary style. This was unique in London journalism: philosophical, yet homely; horizon-wide of outlook, yet never without hope that the shining thing in the gutter might prove to be a jewel; and, despite its habitual omissions of the prefix "Mr." from the names of statesmen, and its playful allusions to this personage's nose or the waist-measurement of the other, with more than a little of the Revelation of Saint John the Divine about it. "Damn" and "Hell" were words the "Novum" commonly used. Once Amory had demurred at the use of a word stronger still. But Mr. Strong had merely replied, "If I can say it to you I think I can say it to them." He was no truckler to his proprietors, and anyhow, the man whom the word had encarnadined was only a colliery-owner.

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The "Novum" had hardly been six weeks old when a certain desire on Amory's part to make experiment of her power had, putatively at any rate, lost it money. The little collision of wills had come about over the question of whether the "Novum" should admit advertisements to its columns or not. Now as most people know, that is a question that seldom arises in journalism. A question far more likely to arise is whether the advertisements can be got. But when a journal sets out to do something that hitherto has not only not been done, but has not even been

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attempted, you will admit that the case is special. The experience of other papers is useless; their economics do not apply. What did apply was the fact that Mrs. Pratt had been an artist, looked on sheets of paper from another angle than that of the mere journalist and literary man, and loved symmetry and could not endure unsightliness. Besides, "No Compromise" was the "Novum's" motto, and what was the good of having a motto like that if you compromised in the very form of your expression?... A "shoulder-piece," "*The Little Mary Emollient*," had brought out all Mrs. Pratt's finer artistic instincts. Here was a journal consecrated to a great and revolutionary cause, and the very first thing to catch a reader's eye was, not only an advertisement, but a facetious advertisement at that—a Pill, without a Pill's robust familiarity—a commercial cackle issuing from the "Novum's" august and oracular mouth.... For the first time in her life Mrs. Pratt had wielded the blue pencil, tearing the rubbishy proof-paper in the energy with which she did so. Mr. Strong's blue eyes, bluer for the contrast with his red knot of a tie, had watched her face, but he had said nothing. He was willing to humour her....

But when all was said and done he was an editor, and no sooner was Amory's back turned than he had restored the announcement. The paper had appeared, and there had been a row....

"Then I appeal to Pratt," Mr. Strong had said, with all the good-nature in the world. "I take it the 'Novum's' a serious enterprise, and not just a hobby?"

Cosimo had glanced a little timidly at his wife. Then he had replied thoughtfully.

"I don't know. I'm not so sure. That is, I'm not so sure it oughtn't to be a serious enterprise *and* a hobby. The world's best work is always done for love—that's another way of calling it a hobby—you see what I mean—Nietzsche has something about it somewhere or other—or if he hasn't Ruskin has—"

Any number of effective replies had been open to Mr. Strong, but he had used none of them. Instead his eyes had given as it were a flick to Amory's face. The proprietor's proprietor had continued indignantly.

"It ruins the whole effect! It's *unspeakably* vulgar! After that glowing, that impassioned Foreword—*this!* Hardly a month ago that lovely apostrophe to Truth Naked—that beautiful image of her stark and innocent on our banners but with a forest of bright bayonets bristling about her—and now *this!* It's revolting!"

But Mr. Strong had himself written that impassioned Foreword, and knew all about it. Again he had given his proprietor's wife that quietly humouring look.

"Do you mean that the 'Novum's' going to refuse advertisements?"

"I mean that I blue-pencilled that one myself."

"And what about the others—the 'Eden' and the Suffrage Shop and Wyron's Lectures?"

"They're different. They *are* the Cause. You said yourself that the 'Novum' was going to be a sort of generalissimo, and these the brigades of whatever they're called. They are, at any rate, doing the Work. Is *that* doing any Work, I should like to know?"

Mr. Strong had refrained from flippancy.—"I see what you mean," he had replied equably. "At the same time, if you're going to refuse advertisements the thing's going to cost a good deal more money."

"Well?" Amory had replied, as who might say, "Has money been refused you yet?"

Strong had given a compliant shrug—"All right. That means I censor the advertisements, I suppose. New industry. Very well. The 'Eden' and Wyron's Lectures and Week-end Cottages and the Plato Press only, then. I'll strike out that '*Platinum: False Teeth Bought.*' But I warn you it will cost more."

"Never mind that."

And so the incident had ended.

But perhaps Mrs. Pratt's sensitiveness of eye was not the only cause of the rejection of that offending advertisement. Another reason might have lain in her present relation with her sometime fellow-student of the McGrath School of Art, Dorothy Tasker. For that relation had suffered a change since the days when the two girls had shared a shabby day-studio in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. At that time, now five years ago, Amory Towers had been thrust by circumstances into a position of ignoble envy of her friend. She had been poor, and Dorothy's people (or so she had supposed) very, very wealthy. True, poor Dorothy, without as much as a single spark of talent, had nevertheless buckled to, and, in various devious ways, had contrived to suck a parasitic living out of the wholesome body of real art; none the less, Amory had conceived her friend to be of the number of those who play at hardship and independence with a fully spread table at home for them to return to when they are tired of the game. But the case was entirely changed now. Amory frankly admitted that she had been mistaken in one thing, namely, that if those people of Dorothy's had more money, they had also more claims upon it, and so were relatively poor. Amory herself was now very comfortably off indeed. By that virtue and good management which the envious call luck, she had now money, Cosimo's money, to devote to the regeneration of the world. Dorothy, married to the good-tempered and shiftless Stan, sometimes did not know which way to turn for the overdue quarter's rent.

Now among her other ways of making ends meet Dorothy had for some years done rather well out of precisely that kind of work which Amory refused to allow the "Novum" to touch—advertisements. She had wormed herself into the services of this firm and that as an advertisement-adviser. But her contracts had begun in course of time to lapse, one or two fluky successes had not been followed up, and two children had further tightened things. Nor had Stan been of very much help. Amory despised Stan. She thought him, not a man, but a mere mouth to be fed. Real men, like Cosimo, always had money, and Amory was quite sure that, even if Cosimo had not inherited a fortune from his uncle, he would still have contrived to make himself the possessor of money in some other way.

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Therefore Amory was even kinder to Dorothy than she was to Dickie Lemesurier of the Suffrage Shop, to Katie Deedes of the "Eden," and to Laura Beamish and Walter Wyron, who ran the "Lectures on Love." But somehow—it was a little difficult to say exactly how, but there it undoubtedly was—Dorothy did not accept her kindnesses in quite the proper spirit. One or two she had even rejected—gently, Amory was bound to admit, but still a rejection. For example, there had been that little rebuff (to call it by its worst name for a moment) about the governess. Amory had, in Miss Britomart Belchamber, the most highly-qualified governess for Corin and Bonniebell that money and careful search had been able to obtain; Dorothy lived less than a quarter of an hour's walk away; it would have been just as easy for Britomart to teach four children as to teach two; but Dorothy had twisted and turned and had finally said that she had decided that she couldn't put Amory to the trouble. And again, when the twins had had their party, Amory would positively have *liked* Noel and Jackie to come and dance "Twickenham Ferry" in those spare costumes and to join in those songs from the Book of Caroline Ditties; but again an excuse had been made. And half a dozen similar things had driven Amory to the conclusion, sadly against her will, that the Taskers were taking up that ridiculous, if not actually hostile attitude, of the poor who hug their pride. It was not nice between old friends. Amory could say with a clear conscience that she had not refused Dorothy's help in the days when the boot had been on the other leg. She was not resentful, but really it did look very much like putting on airs.

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But of course that stupid Stanhope Tasker was at the bottom of it all. Amory did not so much mind his not having liked her from the first; she would have been sorry to let a trifle like that ruffle her equanimity; but it was evident that he did not in the least realize his position. She was quite sure, in the first place, that he couldn't afford (or rather Dorothy couldn't afford) to pay eighty pounds for that flat, plus another twenty for the little office they had annexed and used as a nursery. And in the next place he dressed absurdly above his position. Cosimo dressed for hygiene and comfort, in cellular things and things made of nonirritant vegetable fibre; but those absurdly modish jackets and morning-coats of Stan's had, unless Amory was very much mistaken, to be bought at the expense of real necessities. And so with their hospitality. In that too, they tried to cut a dash and came very near to making themselves ridiculous. Amory didn't want to interfere; she couldn't plan and be wise for everybody; she had her own affairs to attend to; but she was quite sure that the Taskers would have done better to regulate their hospitality as hospitality was regulated at The Witan—that was, to make no special preparation, but to have the door always open to their friends. But no; the Taskers must make a splash. They must needs "invite" people and be a little stand-offish about people coming uninvited. They were "At home" and "Not at home" for all the world as if they had been important people. But Amory would have thought herself very stupid to be taken in by all this ceremony. For example, the last time she and Cosimo had been asked to the flat to dinner she knew that they had been "worked off" only because the Taskers had had the pheasants given by somebody, and very likely the fish too. And it would have been just like Stan Tasker's insolence had he asked them because he *knew* that the Pratts did not eat poor beasties that should have been allowed to live because of their lovely plumes, nor the pretty speckled creatures that had done no harm to the destroyer who had taken them with a hook out of their pretty stream.

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But, kind to her old friend as Amory was always ready to be, she did not feel herself called upon to go out of her way to be very nice to her friend's husband. He had no right to expect it after his rudeness to Edgar Strong about the "Novum." For it had been about the "Novum" that Stan had given Strong that talking-to. Much right (Amory thought hotly) he had to talk! Just because he consorted with men who counted their money in rupees and thought nothing of shouldering their darker-skinned brothers off the pavement, he thought he was entitled to put an editor into his place! But the truth, of course, was, that that very familiarity prevented him from really knowing anything about these questions at all. Because an order was established, he had not imagination enough to see how it could have been anything different. His mind (to give it that name) was of the hidebound, official type, and too many limited intelligences of that kind stopped the cause of Imperial progress to-day. Or rather, they tried to stop it, and perhaps thought they were stopping it; but really, little as they suspected it, they were helping more than they knew. A pig-headed administration does unconsciously help when, out of its own excesses, a divine discontent is bred. Mr. Suwarree Prang had been eloquent on that very subject one afternoon not very long ago. A charming man! Amory had listened from her hammock, rapt. Mr. Prang did the "Indian Review" for the "Novum," in flowery but earnest prose; and as he actually was Indian, and did not merely hobnob with a few captains and subalterns home on leave, it was to be supposed that he would know rather more of the subject than Mr. Stanhope Tasker!—

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And Mr. Stanhope Tasker had had the cheek to tell Mr. Strong that he didn't know what he was talking about!

Amory felt that she could never be sufficiently thankful for the chance that had thrown Mr. Strong in her way. She had always secretly felt that her gifts were being wasted on such minor (but still useful) tasks as the "Eden" Restaurant and the "Love Lectures" Agency. But her personal exaltation over Katie Deedes and the others had caused her no joy. What had given her joy had been the immensely enlarged sphere of her usefulness; that was it, not the odious vanity of leadership, but the calm and responsible envisaging of a task for which not one in ten thousand had the vision and courage and strength. And Edgar Strong had shown her these things. Of course, if he had put them in these words she might have suspected him of trying to flatter her; but as a matter of fact he had not said a single word about it. He had merely allowed her to see for herself. That was his way: to all-but-prove a thing—to take it up to the very threshold of demonstration—and then apparently suddenly to lose interest in it. And that in a way was his weakness as an editor. Amory, whom three or four wieldings of the blue pencil had sufficed to convince that there was nothing in journalism that an ordinary intelligence could not

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master in a month, realized this. She herself, it went without saying, always saw at once exactly what Mr. Strong meant; she personally liked those abrupt and smiling stops that left Mr. Strong's meaning as it were hung up in the air; but it was a mistake to suppose that everybody was as clever as she and Mr. Strong. "I's" had to be dotted and "t's" crossed for the multitude. But it was at that point that Mr. Strong always became almost languid.

It was inevitable that the man who had thus revealed to her, after a single glance at her, such splendid and unsuspected capacities within herself, should exercise a powerful fascination over Amory. If he had seen all this in her straight away (as he assured her he had), then he was a man not lightly to be let go. He might be the man to show her even greater things yet. He puzzled her; but he appeared to understand her; and as both of them understood everybody else, she was aware of a challenge in his society that none other of her set afforded her. He could even contradict her and go unsacked. Prudent people, when they sack, want to know what they are sacking, and Amory did not know. Therefore Mr. Strong was quite sure of his job until she should find out. [367]

Another thing that gave Mr. Strong this apparently offhand hold over her was the confidential manner in which he had warned her not to take Mr. Brimby, the novelist, too seriously. For without the warning Amory, like a good many other people, might have committed precisely that error.... But when Mr. Brimby, taking Amory apart one day, had expressed in her ear a gentle doubt whether Mr. Strong was quite "sound" on certain important questions, Amory had suddenly seen. Mr. Strong had "cut" one of Mr. Brimby's poignantly sorrowful sketches of the East End—seen through Balliol eyes—and Mr. Brimby was resentful. She did not conceal from herself that he might even be a little envious of Mr. Strong's position. He might have been wiser to keep his envy to himself, for, while mere details of routine could hardly expect to get Amory's personal attention, there was one point on which Mr. Strong was quite "sound" enough for Amory—his sense of her own worth and of how that worth had hitherto been wasted. And Mr. Strong had not been ill-natured about Mr. Brimby either. He had merely twinkled and put Amory on her guard. And because he appeared to have been right in this instance, Amory was all the more disposed to believe in his rightness when he gave her a second warning. This was about Wilkinson, the Labour Member. He was awfully fond of dear old Wilkie, he said; he didn't know a man more capable in some things than Wilkie was; but it would be foolish to deny that he had his limitations. He wasn't fluid enough; wanted things too much cut-and-dried; was a little inclined to mistake violence for strength; and of course the whole point about the "Novum" was that it *was* fluid.... [368]

"In fact," Mr. Strong concluded, his wary blue eyes ceasing suddenly to hold Amory's brook-brown ones and taking a reflective flight past her head instead, "for a paper like ours—I'm hazarding this, you understand, and keep my right to reconsider it—I'm not sure that a certain amount of fluidity isn't a Law...."

Amory nodded. She thought it excellently put. [369]

#### IV

##### THE STONE WALL

AMORY sometimes thought, when she took her bird's-eye-view of the numerous activities that found each its voice in its proper place in the columns of the "Novum," that she would have allowed almost any of them to perish for lack of support rather than the Wyrton's "Lectures on Love." She admitted this to be a weakness in herself, a sneaking fondness, no more; but there it was—just that one blind spot that mars even the clearest and most piercing vision. And she always smiled when Mr. Strong tried to show this weakness of hers in the light of a merit.

"No, no," she always said, "I don't defend it. Twenty things are more important really, but I can't help it. I suppose it's because we know all about Laura and Walter themselves."

"Perhaps so," Mr. Strong would musingly concede.

Anybody who was anybody knew all about Laura Beamish and Walter Wyrton and a certain noble defeat in their lives that was to be accounted as more than a hundred ordinary victories. That almost historic episode had just shown everybody who was anybody what the world's standards were really worth. Hitherto the Wyrtons have been spoken of both as a married couple and as "Walter Wyrton" and "Laura Beamish" separately; let the slight ambiguity now be cleared up. [370]

Mrs. Cosimo Pratt became on occasion Miss Amory Towers for reasons that began and ended in her profession as a painter; and everybody who was anybody was as well aware that Miss Amory Towers, the painter of the famous feminist picture "Barrage," was in reality Mrs. Cosimo Pratt, as the great mass of people who were nobody knew that Miss Elizabeth Thompson, the painter of "The Roll Call," was actually Lady Butler. But not so with the Wyrtons. Reasons, not of business, nor yet of fame, but of a burning and inextinguishable faith, had led to their noble equivocation. Deeply seated in the hearts both of Walter and of Laura had lain a passionate non-acceptance of the merely parroted formula of the Wedding Service. So searching and fundamental had this been that by the time their various objections had been disposed of little had remained that had seemed worth bothering about; and in one sense they had not bothered about it. True, in another sense they had bothered, and that was precisely where the defeat came in; but that did not dim the splendour of the attempt. To come without further delay to the point, the Wyrtons had married, under strong protest, in the ordinary everyday way, Laura submitting to the momentary

indignity of a ring; but thereafter they had magnificently vindicated the New Movement (in that one aspect of it) by not saying a word about the ceremony of their marriage to anybody—no, not even to the people who were somebody. Then they had flown off to the Latin Quarter.

It had not been in the Latin Quarter, however, that the true character of their revolt had first shown. Perhaps—nobody knows—their relation had not been singular enough there. Perhaps—there were people base enough to whisper this—they had feared the singularity of “letting on.” It is easy to do in the Boul’ Mich’ as the Boul’ Mich’ does. The real difficulties begin when you try to do in London what London permits only as long as you do it covertly.

And if there had been a certain covertness about their behaviour when, after a month, they had returned, what a venial and pardonable subterfuge, to what a tremendous end! Amory herself, up to then, had not had a larger conception. For while the Wyrons had secretly married simply and solely in order that their offspring should not lie under a stigma, their overt lives had been one impassioned and beautiful protest against any assumption whatever on the part of the world of a right to make rules for the generation that was to follow. No less a gospel than this formed the substance of those Lectures of Walter’s; great as the number of the born was, his mission was the protection of a greater number still. The best aspects both of legitimacy and of illegitimacy were to be stereoscoped in the perfect birth. And he now had, in quite the strict sense of the word, a following. The same devoted faces followed him from the Lecture at the Putney Baths on the Monday to that at the Caxton Hall on the Thursday, from his ascending the platform at the Hampstead Town Hall on the Tuesday to his addressing of a garden-party from under the copper-beech at The Witan on the Sunday afternoon. And in course of time the faithfulness of the followers was rewarded. They graduated, so to speak, from the seats in the body of the building to the platform itself. There they supported Laura, and gave her a countenance that she no longer needed (for she had earned her right to wear her wedding-ring openly now), and flocked about the lecturer afterwards, not as about a mere man, but rather as seeing in him the physician, the psychologist, the expert, the helper, and the setter of crooked things straight that he was.

As a lecturer—may we say as a prophet?—Walter had a manner original and taking in the extreme. Anybody less sustained by his vision and less upheld by his faith might have been a little tempted to put on “side,” but not so Walter. Perhaps his familiarity with the stage—everybody knew his father, Herman Wyron, of the New Greek Theatre—had taught him the value of the large and simple statement of large and simple things; anyhow, he did not so much lecture to his audiences as accompany them, chattily and companionably, through the various windings of his subject. With his hands thrust unaffectedly into the pockets of his knickers, and a sort of sublimated “Well, here we are again” expression on his face, he allayed his hearers’ natural timidity before the magnitude of his mission, and gave them a direct and human confab. on a subject that returned as it were from its cycle of vastness to simple personal experience again. His every sentence seemed to say, “Don’t be afraid; it’s nothing really; soon you’ll be as much at your ease in dealing with these things as I am; just let me tell you an anecdote.” No wonder Laura held her long and muscular neck very straight above her hand-embroidered yoke. Everybody understood that unless she adopted some sort of an attitude her proper pride in such a married lover must show, which would have been rather rubbing it in to the rest of her sex. So she booked dates for new lectures almost nonchalantly, and, when the platform was invaded at the end of the Lecture, or Walter stepped down to the level of those below, she was there in person as the final demonstration of how well these things actually would work as soon as Society had decided upon some concerted action.

Corin and Bonniebell, Amory’s twins, did not attend Walter’s Lectures. It was not deemed advisable to keep them out of bed so late at night. But Miss Britomart Belchamber, the governess, could have passed—had in fact passed—an examination in them. It had been Amory who, so to speak, had set the paper. For it had been at one of the Lectures—the one on “*The Future Race: Are We Making Manacles?*”—that Miss Belchamber had first impressed Amory favourably. Amory had singled her out, first because she wore the guarantee of Prince Eadmond’s Collegiate Institution—the leather-belted brown sleeveless djibbah with the garment of fine buff fabric showing beneath it as the fruit of a roasted chestnut shows when the rind splits—and secondly because of her admirable physique. She was splendidly fair, straight as an athlete, and could shut up her long and massive limbs in a wicker chair like a clasp-knife; and for her movements alone it was almost a sin that Walter’s father could not secure her for the New Greek Society’s revival of “Europa” at the Choragus Theatre. And she was not too quick mentally. That is not to say that she was a fool. What made Amory sure that she was not a fool was that she herself was not instinctively attracted by fools, and it was better that Miss Belchamber should be ductile under the influence of Walter’s ideas than that she should have just wit enough to ask those stupid and conventional and so-called “practical” questions that Walter always answered at the close of the evening as patiently as if he had never heard them before. And Miss Belchamber told the twins stories, and danced “Ruffy Tufty,” with them, and “Catching of Quails,” and was really cheap at her rather stiff salary. Cosimo loved to watch her at “Catching of Quails.” If the children did not grow up with a love of beauty after that, he said, he gave it up. (The twins, by the way, unconsciously served Amory as another example of Dorothy Tasker’s unreasonableness. As the mother of Noel and Jackie, Dorothy seemed rather to fancy herself as an experienced woman. But Amory could afford to smile at this pretension. There was a difference in age of a year and more between Noel and Jackie. No doubt Dorothy knew a little, but she, Amory, could have told her a thing or two).

On a Wednesday afternoon about a fortnight after Lady Tasker’s visit to The Witan, Amory walked the garden thoughtfully. The weather was growing chilly, the hammock had been taken in, and her feet in the fallen leaves made a melancholy sound. Cosimo had left her half an hour

before; certain points had struck him in the course of conversation which he thought ought to be incorporated in the "*Life and Work*"; and it was a rule at The Witan that nothing must ever be allowed to interfere with the impulse of artistic creation. For the matter of that, Amory herself was creating now, or at any rate was at the last preparatory stage that immediately precedes creation. Presently she would have taken the plunge and would be deep in the new number of the "Novum." For the moment she was thinking of Mr. Strong.

As she tried to clear up exactly what place Mr. Strong had in her thoughts she was struck by the dreadful tendency words and names and definitions have to attach themselves to vulgar and ready-made meanings—a tendency so strong that she had even caught herself more than once jumping to a common conclusion. To take an example, though a rather preposterous one. Had Dorothy, with one of her ridiculous advertisements waiting to be done, confessed to her that instead of setting about it she was thinking of a male person with a pair of alert blue eyes and a curiously mobile and clean-cut mouth (not that it was likely that Dorothy would have had the candour to make such a confession)—well, Amory might have smiled just like anybody else. She was not trying to make herself out any better than others. She was candid about it, however, which they were often not.

Still, the trouble about her feeling for Mr. Strong was to find a word for it that had not been vulgarized. She was, of course, exceedingly interested in him, but that was not saying very much. She "liked" him, too, but that again might mean anything. Her difficulty was that she herself was so special; and so on second thoughts she might have been right in giving an interpretation to Dorothy's actions, and Dorothy quite wrong in giving the same interpretation to hers merely because the data were the same.

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Nor had Mr. Strong himself been able to help her very much when, a couple of days before, she had put the question to him, earnestly and without hateful false shame.

"What *is* this relation of ours?" she had asked him, point-blank and fearlessly.

"Eh?" Mr. Strong had replied, a little startled.

"There *must* be a relation of some sort between every two people who come into contact. I'm just wondering exactly what ours *is*."

Then Mr. Strong had knitted his brows and had said, presently, "I see.... Have you read '*The Tragic Comedians*'?"—Amory had not, and the copy of the book which she had immediately ordered had not come yet. And then she too had knitted her brows. She had caught the trick from him.

"I suppose that what it really comes to is knowing *yourself*," she had mused; and at that Mr. Strong had given her a quick approving look, almost as if he said that if she put in her thumb in the same place again she might pull out a plum very well worth having.

"And not," Amory had continued, curiously heartened, "anything about the other person at all."

"Good, good," Mr. Strong had applauded under his breath; "have you Edward Carpenter's book in the house, by the way?... Never mind: I'll send you my copy."

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He had sent it. It was in Amory's hand now. She had discovered that it had a catching and not easily identifiable smell of its own, of Virginia cigarettes and damp and she knew not what else, all mingled; and somehow the smell seemed quite as much an answer to the question she had asked as anything in the book itself.

Nor, despite Walter's special knowledge of these indications, could she go to the Wyrons for diagnosis and advice. For one thing, there was her own position of high patronage to be considered; for another, splendidly daring as the Wyrons' original protest had been, the Lectures had lately begun to have a little the air of a shop, over the counter of which admittedly valuable specifics were handed, but with a kind of "*And the next article, please?*" suspicion about it. Besides, the Wyrons, having no children, had of necessity to "chic" a little in cases where children formed a complicating element. Besides ... but anyway, Amory wasn't going either to Laura Beamish or to Walter Wyron.

She made a charming picture as she walked slowly the length of the privet hedge and then turned towards the copper beech again. Mr. Strong had said that he liked her in that dress—an aluminium-grey one, very simple and very expensive, worn with a handsome Indian shawl, a gift of Mr. Prang's, the mellow colour of which "led up" to the glowing casque of her hair; and she had smiled when Mr. Strong had added that Britomart Belchamber's rough tabards and the half-gym costume in which she danced "Ruffy Tufty" would not have suited her, Amory, at all. Probably they wouldn't—not as a regular thing. Cosimo liked those, especially when the wearer was largish; indeed, it was one of Cosimo's humours to pose as Britomart's admirer. But Amory was small, and never shut her limbs up like a multiple-lever in a basket chair, but drew her skirt down a foot or so below her toes instead whenever she sat down. She fancied, though Mr. Strong had never used the word, that the "Novum's" editor found Miss Belchamber just a little hoydenish.

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Amory wished that something would bring Mr. Strong up that afternoon. It was one of the days on which the editing of the "Novum" could take care of itself, and besides, they would actually be editing it together. For the next number but one—the forthcoming one was already passed—was to be their most important utterance yet. It was to indicate clearly, firmly and once for all, their Indian policy. The threatened failure of the monsoon made the occasion urgent, and Mr. Suwarree Prang himself had explained to Amory only the night before precisely what the monsoon was, and how its failure would provide, from the point of view of those who held that the present wicked regime of administration by the strong hand was at last tottering to its fall, a providential opportunity. It had struck Amory as wondrously romantic and strange that a meteorological condition halfway round the world, in a place she had never seen, should thus change the course of her quiet life in Hampstead; but, properly considered, no one thing in this

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wonderful world was more wonderful than another. It was Life, and Life, as she remembered to have read somewhere or other, is for the Masters of it. And she was beginning to find that after all these things only required a little confidence. It was as easy to swim in six miles deep of water, like that place in Cosimo's atlas of which the name escaped her for the moment, as it was in six feet. And Mr. Prang had talked to her so long and so vividly about India that she sometimes found it quite difficult to realize that she had never been there.

Still wishing that Mr. Strong would come, she slowly left the garden and entered the house. In the hall she paused for a moment, and a tender little smile softened her face. She had stopped before the exquisite casts of the foot and the arm. Pensively she took the foot up from the console table, and then, coming to a resolution, she took the arm down from its hook on the wall. After all, beautiful as she had to admit them to be, the studio, and not the hall, was the proper place for them.

With the foot and Edward Carpenter in her left hand, and the plaster arm hugged to her right breast, she walked along the passage and sought the studio.

It was called the studio, and there certainly were canvases and easels and other artists' paraphernalia there, but it was less used for painting than as a room for sitting and smoking and tea and discussion. It was a comfortable apartment. Rugs made islands on the thick cork floor-covering, and among the rugs were saddlebag chairs, a long adjustable chair, and a wide couch covered with faded tapestry. The room was an annex of corrugated iron lined with matchboarding, but electric-light fittings depended from the iron ties overhead, and in place of an ordinary hearth was a sort of stage one, with an imitation log of asbestos, which, when you put a match to it, broke into a licking of blue and yellow gas-jets. The north window occupied the whole of the garden end, and, facing it, was the large cartoon for Amory's unfinished allegorical picture, "*The Triumph of Humane Government.*" High up and just within the door was the bell that answered to the button outside.

Amory was putting down the casts on a Benares tray when the ringing of this bell startled her. But as it rang in the kitchen also, she did not move to answer it. She stood listening, the fingers of one hand to her lips, those of the other still resting on the plaster shoulder. Then she heard a voice, and a moment later there came a tap at the door.

It was Mr. Strong.

He advanced, and did a thing he had not done before—lifted the hand she extended to his lips and then let it drop again. But Amory was not surprised. It was merely a new and natural expression of the homage he had never concealed, and even had Amory been vain enough to suppose that it meant anything more, the briskness of the "Good afternoon" that followed it would have disabused her. "Glad I found you," Mr. Strong said. "I wanted to see you. Cosimo in?"

Her husband was always Cosimo to him, but in speaking to herself he used no name at all. It was as if he hesitated to call her Amory, and refused to call her Mrs. Pratt. Even "Miss Towers" he had only used once, and that was some time ago.

Amory's fingers left the cast, and Mr. Strong walked towards the asbestos log.—"May I?" he said, drawing forth a packet of Virginia cigarettes; and afterwards he put the match with which he lighted one of the cigarettes to the log. Amory drew up a small square footstool, and put her elbows on her knees and her interwoven fingers beneath her chin. Mr. Strong examined the end of his cigarette, and thrust his chin down into his red tie and his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Then he seemed to plunge into thought.

Suddenly he shot a glance at Amory, and said abruptly, "I suppose you've talked over the Indian policy with Cosimo?"

It was nice and punctilious of him, the way he always dragged Cosimo in, and Amory liked it. She felt sure that the editor of the "Times," calling on the Prime Minister's wife, would not ignore the Prime Minister. But to-day she was a little abstracted—dull—she didn't know exactly what; and so she replied, without moving, "Would you like him here? He's busy with the '*Life.*'"

"Oh no, don't trouble him then."

There was a pause. Then, "I did talk to him about it. And to Mr. Prang," Amory said.

"Oh. Hm. Quite so," said Mr. Strong, looking at the toes of his brogues.

"Yes. Mr. Prang was here last night," Amory continued, looking at the points of her own slippers.

"Yes."

Again Mr. Strong's chin was sunk into his red tie. He was rising and falling slowly on his toes. His eyes moved ruminatively sideways to the rug at Amory's feet.

"Yes. Yes. I've been wondering——" he said thoughtfully.

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing really. I dare say I'm quite wrong. You see, Prang——"

"What?" Amory asked as he paused again.

There was a twinkle in the eyes that rose to Amory's. Mr. Strong gave a slight shrug.—"Well—Prang!——" he said with humorous deprecation.

Amory was quick.—"Oh!—You don't mean that Mr. Prang isn't sound?"

"Sound? Perfectly, perfectly. And a most capable fellow. Only I've wondered once or twice whether he isn't—you know—just a little *too* capable.... You see, we want to use Prang—not to have Prang using *us.*"

Amory could not forbear to smile. If that was all that was troubling Mr. Strong she thought she could reassure him.

"I don't think you'd have been afraid of that if you'd been here last night," she replied quietly. "We were talking over England's diabolical misrule, and I never knew Mr. Prang so luminous. It

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was pathetic—really. Cosimo was talking about that Rawal Pindi case—you know, of that ruffianly young subaltern drawing down the blinds and then beating the native.—‘But how do they take it?’ I asked Mr. Prang, rather scornfully, you know; and really I was sorry for the poor fellow, having to apologize for his country.—‘That’s it,’ he said sadly—it was really sad.—And he told me, frankly, that sometimes the poor natives pretended they were killed, and sometimes they announce that they’re going to die on a certain day, and they really *do* die—they’re so mystic and sensitive—it was *most* interesting.... But what I mean is, that a gentle and submissive people like that—Mr. Prang admits that’s their weakness—I mean they *couldn’t* use us! It’s our degradation that we aren’t gentle and sensitive too. You see what I mean?”

“Oh, quite,” Mr. Strong jerked out. “Quite.”

“And that’s why I call Mr. Prang an idealist. There must be something *in* the East. At any rate it was splendid moral courage on Prang’s part to say, quite openly, that they couldn’t do anything without the little handful of us here, but must simply go on suffering and dying.”

There fell one of the silences that usually came when Mr. Strong lost interest in a subject. Merely adding, “Oh, I’ve not a word to say against Prang, but—,” he began to rise and fall on his toes again. Then he stepped to the Benares table where the casts were. But he made no criticism of them. He picked the foot up, and put it down again. “I like it,” he said, and returned once more to the asbestos hearth. The silence fell again.

Amory, sitting on the footstool with her knees supporting her elbows and her wrists supporting her chin, would have liked to offer Mr. Strong a penny for his thoughts. She had had an odd, warm little sensation when he had picked up that cast of the perfect foot. She supposed he must know that it was her foot, but so widely had his thoughts been ranging that he had merely put it down again with an abstracted “I like it.” Amory was not sure that any other woman than herself would not have been piqued. Any other woman would have expected him either not to look at the thing, or else to say that it was small, or to ask whether the real one was as white, or something foolish like that. But Amory was superior to such things. She lived on higher levels. On these levels such an affront to the pure intellect as a flirtation could not exist. Free Love as a logical and defensible system—yes, perhaps; or a combination so happy of marriage and cohabitation as that of the Wyrons’—yes again; but anything lower she left to the stupid people who swallowed the conventions whole, including the convention of not being found out.—So she merely wondered about their relation again. Obviously, there must *be* a relation. And yet his own explanation had been quite insufficient; it had been no explanation at all to ask her whether she had read “*The Tragic Comedians*” or whether she had Edward Carpenter in the house. No doubt it was flattering to her intelligence to suppose that she could “flash” at his meaning without further words on his part, but it was also a little irritating when the flash didn’t come. And, now that she came to think of it, except that he allowed it to be inferred that he found Britomart Belchamber a bit lumpish, she didn’t know what he thought, not merely of herself, but of women at all.

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And yet there was a passed-through-the-furnace look about him that might have piqued any woman. It was not conceivable that his eyes had softened only over inspired passages in proof, or that the tenderest speeches his lips had shaped had been the “Novum’s” rallying-cries to the devoted band of the New Imperialists. Amory was sure that his memory must be a maze of things, less spacious perhaps, but far more interesting than these. He looked widely now, but must have looked close and intense too. He pronounced upon the Empire, but, for all he was not married, must have probed deep into the palpitating human heart as well.

Amory was just thinking what a gage of intimacy an unembarrassed silence can be when Mr. Strong broke it. He lighted another cigarette at the end of the last, turned, threw the end on the asbestos log, and stood looking at the purring blue and yellow jets. No doubt he was full of the Indian policy again.

But as it happened it was not the Indian policy—“Oh,” Mr. Strong said, “I meant to ask you—Who was that fellow who came up here one day?”

This was so vague that when Amory said “What fellow?” Mr. Strong himself saw the vagueness, and laughed.

“Of course: ‘How big is a piece of wood?’—I mean the fellow who came to the Witan in a morning-coat?”

This was description enough. Amory’s back straightened a little.

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“Oh, Stanhope Tasker! Oh, just the husband of a friend of mine. I don’t think you’ve met her. Why?”

Surely, she thought, Mr. Strong was not going to tell her that “Stanhope Tasker was an excellent fellow in his way, but—,” as he had said of Mr. Brimby, Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Prang!—

“Oh, nothing much. Only that I saw him to-day,” Strong replied offhandedly.

“He’s often about. He isn’t a very busy man, I should say,” Amory remarked.

“Saw him in Charing Cross Road as I was coming out of the office,” Mr. Strong continued. “I don’t think he saw me though.”

“After his abominable manners to you that day I should think he’d be ashamed to look you in the face.”

For a moment Mr. Strong looked puzzled; then he remembered, and laughed again.

“Oh, I didn’t mind that in the least! Rather refreshing in fact. Far more likely he didn’t notice me because he had his wife with him. I think you said he was married?”

Amory was just about to say that Mr. Strong gave Stan far more magnanimity than he deserved when a thought arrested her. Dorothy in Charing Cross Road! As far as she was aware Dorothy had not been out of Hampstead for weeks, and even then kept to the less frequented parts of the

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Heath. It wasn't likely....

Her eyes became thoughtful.

"Oh? That's funny," she said.

"What, that he shouldn't see me? Oh no. They seemed far more interested in electric-light fittings."

Amory's eyes grew more thoughtful still—"Oh!" she said; and added, "Did you think her pretty?"

"Hm—in a way. Very well dressed certainly; they both were. But I don't think these black Spanish types amuse me much," Mr. Strong replied.

Dorothy a black Spanish type!

"Oh, do tell me what she had on!" said Amory brightly.

She rather thought she knew most of Dorothy's dresses by this time.

A black Spanish type!

The task of description was too much for Mr. Strong, but he did his best with it. Amory was keenly interested. But she pocketed her interest for the present, and said quite banteringly and with an almost arch look, "Oh, I should have thought Mrs. Tasker exactly your type!"

Again the quick motion of Mr. Strong's blue eyes suggested an audible click—"Oh? Why?" he asked.

"Oh, there's no 'why' about it, of course. It's the impression of you I had, that's all. You see, you don't particularly admire Miss Belchamber——"

"Oh, come! I think Miss Belchamber's an exceedingly nice girl, only——"

"Well, Laura Beamish, then. But I forgot; you don't go to Walter's Lectures. But I wonder whether you'd admire Laura?"

"If she's black and Spanish you think I should?" He paused. "Is she?"

"No. Brown and stringy rather, and with eyes that open and shut very quickly.... But I'm very absurd. There's no Law about these things really. Only, you see, I've no idea of the kind of woman you *do* admire?"

She said it smilingly, but that did not mean that she was not perfectly candid and natural about it too. Why not be natural about these things? Amory knew people who were natural enough about their preferred foods and clothing and houses; was a woman less than an entrée, or a bungalow, or a summer overcoat? Besides, it was so very much more intrinsically interesting. Walter Wyrton had made a whole Lecture on it—Lecture No. II, "*Types and Tact*," and Walter had barely touched the fringe of the subject. Amory wanted to go a little deeper than that. But she also wanted to get away from those vulgarized words and ready-made conclusions, and to have each case considered on its merits. Surely it ought to be possible to say that the presence of a person affected you pleasantly, or unpleasantly, without sniggering inferences of a *liaison* in the one case or of a rupture in the other!

Therefore it was once more just a little irritating that Mr. Strong, instead of telling her what type he did admire, should merely laugh and say, "Well—not Mrs. Tasker." If Amory had a criticism at all to make of Mr. Strong it was this habit of his of negatives, that sometimes almost justified the nickname Mr. Brimby had given him, of "Stone Wall Strong." So she dropped one hand from her chin, allowing it to hang loose over her knee while the other forearm still kept its swan's-neck curve, and said abruptly, "Well—about the Indian Number. Let's get on."

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Strong. "Let's get on."

"What had we decided?"

"Only Prang's article so far."

"But you say you have your doubts about it?"

Mr. Strong hesitated. "Only about its selling-power," he said with a little shrug. "We must sell the paper, you see. It's not paying its way yet."

"Well, I'm sure that's not Mr. Prang's fault," Amory retorted. "He's practically made the export circulation."

"You mean the Bombay circulation? Yes, I suppose he has. I don't deny it."

"You can't deny it. Since Prang began to write for us we've done awfully well in Bombay."

To that too, Mr. Strong assented. Then Amory, after a moment's pause, spoke quietly. She did not like to think of her editor as jealous of his own contributors.

"I know you don't like Mr. Prang," she said, looking fixedly at the asbestos log.

"I!" began Stone Wall Strong. "Why, you know I think he's a first rate fellow, if only——"

This time, however, Amory really did intend to get it out of him. For once she would have one of those hung-up sentences completed.

"If only what?" she said, looking up at him.

"Oh, I don't know—as you said a moment ago, there's no 'why' about these things——"

"But I did give you my impression. You don't give me yours."

"You did, I admit. Yes, I admit you did.... What is it you want to know, then?"

"Only why you seem so doubtful about Mr. Prang."

"Ah!" said Mr. Strong....

Those who knew Edgar Strong the best said that he was a man who, other things being equal, would rather go straight than not. Even when the other things were not quite equal, he still had a mild preference for straightness. But if other people positively insisted that he should deviate from straightness, very well; that was their lookout. He had been a good many things in his time—solicitor's clerk, free-lance journalist, book-pedlar, election-agent's minion, Vanner, poetic vagabond, and always an unerring "spotter" of the literary son of the farming squire the moment



he appeared in sight; and the "Novum" was the softest job he had found yet. If the price of his keeping it was that he should look its owner's wife long and earnestly in the eyes, as if in his own there lay immeasurable things, not for him to give but for her to take if she list, so be it; he would sleep none the less well in his rent-free bedroom behind the "Novum's" offices afterwards. His experience of far less comfortable sleeping-quarters had persuaded him that in this imperfect world a man is entitled to exactly what he can get.

His eyes, nevertheless, did not seek Amory's. Instead, roving round the room to see if nothing less would serve (leaving him still with the fathomless look in reserve for emergencies), they fell on the Benares tray and the casts. And as they remained there he suddenly frowned. Amory's own eyes followed his; and suddenly she felt again that little creeping thrill. A faint colour and warmth, new and pleasurable, came into her cheeks.

Then with a little rush, her discovery came upon her....

She *had* got something from Mr. Strong at last!

Her head drooped a little away from him, and the hand that had hung laxly over her knee dropped gently to the rug. It was a delicious moment. So all these weeks and weeks Mr. Strong *had* cared that that foot, that arm, had been exposed to the gaze of anybody who might have entered the house! He had not said so; he did not say so now; but that was it! More, he had cared so much that it had quite distorted his judgment of Mr. Prang. And all at once Amory remembered something else—a glance Edgar Strong had given her, neither more nor less eloquent than the look he was bending on the casts now, one afternoon when she had lain in the hammock in the garden and Mr. Prang, bending over her, had ventured to examine a locket about her throat....

So *that* was at the bottom of his reserve! *That* was the meaning of his "buts"!...

Amory did not move. She wished it might last for hours. Mr. Strong had taken a step towards the casts, but, changing his mind, had turned away again; and she was astonished to find how full of meaning dozens of his past gestures became now that she had the key to them. And she knew that the casts *were* beautiful. Brucciani would have bought them like a shot. And she seemed to see Mr. Strong's look, piteous and frowning both at once, if she should sell them to Brucciani, and Brucciani should publish them to hang in a hundred studios....

The silence between them continued.

But speak she must, and it would be better to do so before he did; and by and by she lifted her head again. But she did not look directly at him.

"It was very foolish," she murmured with beautiful directness and simplicity.

Mr. Strong said nothing.

"But for weeks I've been intending to move them."

Mr. Strong shrugged his shoulders. It was as if he said, "Well better late than never ... but you see, *now*."

"Yes," breathed Amory, softly, but aloud.

The next moment Mr. Strong was himself again. He returned to his station by the asbestos log.

"Well, there's Prang's article," he said in his business voice. "Am I to have it set up?"

"Perhaps we'd better see what Cosimo says first," Amory replied.

She did not know which was the greater delicacy in Mr. Strong—the exquisite tact of the glance he had given at the casts, or the quiet strength with which he took up the burden of editing the "Novum" again.

## V

### THREE SHIPS

**A** WHITE October mist lay over the Heath, and the smell of burning leaves came in at the pond-room window of Dorothy Tasker's flat. But the smell was lost on Dorothy. All her intelligence was for the moment concentrated in one faculty, the faculty of hearing. She was sure Jackie had swallowed a safety-pin, and she was anxiously listening for the click with which it might come unstuck.

"Shall I send for the doctor, m'm?" said Ruth, who stood holding the doorknob in her aproned hand. She had been called away from her "brights," and there was a mournful relish of Jackie's plight on her face.

"No," said Dorothy.... "Oh, I *know* there were twelve of them, and now there are only eleven!... *Have* you put one of these things into your mouth, Jackie?"

"He put it up his nose, mumsie, like he did some boot-buttons once," said Noel cheerfully.

"But he couldn't do that.... *Have* you swallowed it, Jackie?"

"Mmm," said Jackie resolutely, as who should say that that which his hand (or in this case his mouth) found to do he did with all his might.

"Oh dear!" sighed Dorothy, leaning back in her chair....

She supposed it was the still white weather that weighed on her spirits; she hoped so, for if it was not that it was something worse. Even dreary weather was better than bankruptcy. She had sent her pass-book to the bank to be balanced; until it should come back she refused to look at the pile of tradesmen's books that stood on her writing-desk; and borrowing from her aunt was not borrowing at all, but simply begging, since Aunt Grace regarded the return of such loans as the last of affronts.

And (she sighed again) she had been *so* well-off at the time of her marriage! Why, she had had well over a thousand a year from Hallowell and Smith's alone!... But Stan had had a few debts which had had to be settled, and Stan's knowledge of the style in which things ought to be done had been rather a drawback on that trip they had taken to the Riviera, for his ideas of hotels had been a little splendacious, and of dinners to "a few friends" rather daring; and, with one thing and another, the problem of how to satisfy champagne tastes on a beer income had never been really satisfactorily solved by Stan, poor old boy. And he never, never grumbled at home, not even when the cold beef came on three evenings together, which was harder on him than it was on most people. He did what he could to earn, too. It wasn't his fault that the standard of efficiency in the Army was so impracticably high, nor that he had been packed off to try his luck in Canada with the disadvantage of being a remittance-man, nor that, at the age of twenty-seven, when his father had died, he had had to turn to and compete for this job or that with a horde of capable youngsters years his juniors and with fewer hampering decencies. It was his father's fault and Aunt Susan's really, for having sent him to Marlborough and Sandhurst without being able to set him properly on his feet afterwards. Such victims of circumstances, on a rather different level, made husbands who stopped at home and cleaned the knives and took the babies out in the perambulator. In Stan's case the natural result had been to make a young man fit only to join as a ranker or to stand with his back to a mirror in a suspect card-room.

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"Shall I take him away, m'm?" Mrs. Mossop asked—"And prepare his winding-sheet," her tone seemed to add).

"Yes, do," Dorothy replied, with a glance at Ruth's blackened hands. "And please make yourself fit to be seen, Ruth. You know you oughtn't to be doing all that on the very day I let Norah out."

She knew that her rebuke had set Ruth up in the melancholy enjoyment of resentment for half a week, but she was past caring. Ruth rose an inch in height at being chidden for the faithful performance of her most disagreeable duties; she turned; and as she bore the Bits away the mighty roar into which Jackie broke diminished in volume down the passage.

Dorothy sighed, that all her troubles should thus crowd on her at once. Her eyes fell again on the tradesmen's books. It hardly seemed worth while to pay them, since they would only come in again next week, as clamorous and urgent as ever. They were thrust through the letterbox like letters; Dorothy knew very well the thud with which they fell on the floor; but she could never help running out into the hall when they came. She had tried the plan of dispensing with books altogether and paying for everything in cash as she got it, but that had merely meant, not one large worry a week, but harassing little ones all the week through.

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Oh, why had she squandered, or allowed Stan to squander, those good round sovereigns of Hallowell and Smith's!—

Still—there is measure in everything—she had not sent her pass-book to the bank in order to learn whether she had a balance. That would have been too awful. It was the amount of her margin that she wanted, and feared, to know. For presently there would be the doctor to pay, and so many guineas a week at the Nursing Home, and the flat going on just the same, and poor old Stan pathetically hoping that a casual dinner-table puff in a Marlborough voice would result in fat new ledger-accounts for Fortune and Brooks' and magnificent commissions for himself. If only she could get just a little ahead of her points! But the money went out just slightly quicker than it came in. Stan carved it as it were in twopences off the cold beef, the Bits swallowed it in pennorths with their breadcrumbs and gravy, and directly the strain eased for a little, down swooped the rent and set everything back again exactly where it had been three months before.

And the Income Tax people had actually sent Stan a paper, wanting to know all about his income from lands, hereditaments, etc., and warning him that his wife's income must be accounted as part of his own!

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But it must not be supposed that Dorothy had allowed things to come to this pass without having had an idea. She had an idea, and one that she thought a very good one. Nevertheless, an idea is one thing, and the execution thereof at the proper time quite another. For example, the proper moment for the execution of this idea of Dorothy's was certainly now, or at any rate at the Christmas Quarter (supposing she herself was up and about again by that time and had found a satisfactory subtenant for the flat). But the person against whom her idea was designed—who, by the way, happened to be her unsuspecting and much-loved aunt, Lady Tasker—was a very present difficulty. Dorothy knew for a fact that what would be admirably convenient for herself at Christmas could not possibly be convenient to her aunt until, at the very earliest, next summer. That was the crab—the intervening period of nine months. She knew of no mandragora that would put herself, Stan and her Bits of Impudence gently to sleep, to wake up again to easier times.

Oh, why had she spent those beautiful thick sovereigns of Hallowell and Smith's so recklessly!—

The mist lay flat over the pond outside, making in one corner of it a horrible scum, from which the swans, seeking their food, lifted blackened necks. There was never a ripple on the pond-room walls to-day. Slowly Dorothy rose. Moping was useless; she must do something. She crossed to her writing-desk and took from one of its drawers a fat file, concertina-ed like her own accordion-pleated skirts; and she sat down and opened it fan-wise on her knee. It was full of newspaper-cuttings, draft "ideas" for advertisements, and similar dreary things. She sighed again as her listless fingers began to draw them out. She had not thought at one time that she would ever come to this. By a remarkable piece of luck and light-heartedness and ingenuity she had started at Hallowell and Smith's at the top of the tree; the brains of underlings had been good enough to cudgel for such scrap-stuff as filled her concertina-file; but that was all changed now. Light come, light go; and since the lapse of her contracts she had been glad not only to devise these ignoble lures for the public, but to draw them also. They formed the pennies-three-farthings that came in

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while Stan carved the twopences from the joint. She had thought the good times were going to last for ever. They hadn't. She now looked enviously up to those who had been her own subordinates.

With no heart in her task at all, Dorothy set about the drafting of an advertisement.

She was just beginning to forget about swallowed safety-pins, and poor luckless Stan, and guineas for her Nursing Home, and the prospect of presently having seven mouths, big and little, to feed—she was even beginning to cease to hear the clamour of the Bits in the room along the passage—when there came a ring at the bell. Her fair head did not move, but her blue eyes stole abstractedly sideways as Ruth passed the pond-room door. Then a man's voice sounded, and Dorothy dropped her pen....

"Mrs. Tasker," she had heard, with the "a" cut very short and two "s's" in her name....

The next moment Ruth had opened the pond-room door, and, in tones that plainly said "You needn't think that I've forgotten about just now, because I haven't," announced: "Mr. Miller."

Now it was curious that Dorothy had just been thinking about Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller was Hallowells' Publicity Manager, and the time had been when Dorothy had had Mr. Miller completely in her pocket. She had obtained that comfortable contract of hers from Mr. Miller, and if during the latter part of its continuance she had taken her duties somewhat lightly and her pleasures with enormous gusto, she was not sure that Mr. Miller had not done something of the same kind. But the firm, which could excuse itself from a renewal of her own contract, for some reason or other could not get rid of Mr. Miller; and now here was Mr. Miller unexpectedly in Dorothy's flat—seeking her, which is far better for you than when you have to do the seeking. He stood there with his grey Trilby in his hand and his tailor-made deltoids almost filling the aperture of the doorway.

"There, now, if I wasn't right!" said Mr. Miller with great satisfaction, advancing with one hand outstretched. "I fixed it all up with myself coming along that you'd be around the house. I've had no luck all the week, and I said to myself as I got out of the el'vator at Belsize Park, 'It's doo to change.' And here I find you, right on the spot. I hope this is not an introosion. How are you? And how's Mr. Stan?"

He shook hands heartily with Dorothy, and looked round for a place in which to put his hat and stick.

"Why, now, this is comfortable," he went on, drawing up the chair to which Dorothy pointed. "I like your English fires. They may not have all the advantages of steam-heat, but they got a look about 'em—the Home-Idee. And you're looking just about right in health, Mrs. Tasker, if I may say so. You English women have our N'York ladies whipped when it comes to complexion, you have for sure. And how's the family—?"

But here Mr. Miller suddenly stopped and looked at Dorothy again. If the look that came into his eyes had come into those of a young unmarried woman, Dorothy would have fled there and then. He dropped his head for a moment as people do who enter a church; then he raised it again.

"If you'll pardon an old married man and the father of three little goils," Mr. Miller said, his eyes reverently lifted and his voice suddenly altered, "—but am I right in supposing that ... another little gift from the storks, as my dear old Mamie—that was my dear old negro nurse—used to say?" Then, without waiting for the unrequired answer, he straightened his back and squared his deltoids in a way that would have made any of Holbein's portraits of Henry the Eighth look like that of a slender young man. His voice dropped three whole tones, and again he showed Dorothy the little bald spot on the crown of his head.

"I'm glad. I say I'm glad. I'm vurry glad. I rejoice. And I should like to shake Mr. Stan by the hand. I should like to shake you by the hand too, Mrs. Tasker." Then, when he had done so: "It's the Mother-Idee. The same, old-fashioned Idee, like our own mothers. It makes one feel good. Reverent. I got no use for a young man but what he shows lats of reverence for his mother. The old Anglo-Saxon-Idee—reverence for motherhood.... And when, if an old married man may ask the question—?"

Dorothy laughed and blushed and told him. Mr. Miller, dropping his voice yet another tone, told her in return that he knew of no holier place on oath than the chamber in which the Anglo-Saxon-Idee of veneration for motherhood was renewed and sustained. And then, after he had said once more that he rejoiced, there fell a silence.

Dorothy liked Mr. Miller. Once you got over his remarkable aptitude for sincerities he had an excellent heart. Nevertheless she could not imagine why he had come. She shuddered as he seemed for a moment to be once more on the point of removing his shoes at the door of the Mosque of Motherhood, but apparently he thought better of it. Squaring his shoulders again, and no doubt greatly fortified by his late exercise, he said, "Well, I always feel more of a man after I felt the throb of a fellow-creature's heart. That's so. And now you'll be wondering what's brought me up here? Well, the fact is, Mrs. Tasker, I'm wurrried. I got wurrries. You can see the wurry-map on my face. Hallowells' is wurrrying me. I ain't going to tell you Hallowells' ain't what it was in its pammy days; it may be, or it may not; mebbe you've heard the talk that's going around?"

"No," said Dorothy.

"Is that so? Well, there is talk going around. There's a whole push of people, knocking us all the time. They ain't of much account themselves, but they knock us. It's a power the inferior mind has. And I say I'm wurrried about it."

Dorothy, in spite of her "No," had heard of the "knocking" of Hallowell and Smiths', and her heart gave an excited little jump at the thought that flashed across her mind. Did Hallowells' want her back? The firm had been launched upon London with every resource of publicity; Dorothy herself had been the author of its crowning device; and whereas the motto of older firms

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had been "Courtesy Costs Nothing," Hallowells' had vastly improved upon this. Courtesy had, as a matter of fact, cost them a good deal; but the rewards of the investment had been magnificent. Mr. Miller had known that if you say to people often enough "See how courteous I am," you are to all intents and purposes courteous. But what Mr. Miller had not known had been the precise point at which it is necessary to begin to build up a strained reputation again. Commercial credit too, like those joints Stan carved, comes in in twopence-halfpennies but goes out in threepences.... And so the "knocking" had begun. Rumours had got about that Hallowells' was a shop where you were asked, after a few unsuitable articles had been shown to you, whether you didn't intend to buy anything, and where you might wait for ten minutes at a counter while two assistants settled a private difference behind it. Did Mr. Miller want her help in restoring the firm's fair name? Did he intend to offer her another contract? Were there to be more of Hallowells' plump, ringing sovereigns—that she would know better how to take care of this time? It was with difficulty that she kept her composure as Mr. Miller continued:

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"There's no denying but what inferior minds have that power," he went sorrowfully on. "They can't build up an enterprise, but they can knock, and they been good and busy. You haven't heard of it? Well, that's good as far as it goes, but they been at it for all that. Now I don't want to knock back at your country, Mrs. Tasker, but it seems to me that's the English character. You're hostile to the noo. The noo gives you cold feet. You got a terrific capacity for stopping put. Your King Richard Core de Lion did things in a certain way, and it ain't struck you yet that he's been stiff and straight quite a while. And so when you see something with snap and life to it you start knocking." Mr. Miller spoke almost bitterly. "But I ain't holding you personally responsible, Mrs. Tasker. I reckon you're a wonderful woman. Yours is a reel old family, and if anybody's the right to knock it's you; but *you* appreciate the noo. *You* look at it in the light of history. *You* got the sense of world-progress. *You're* a sort of Lady Core de Lion to-day. I haven't forgotten the Big Idee you started us off with. And so I come to you, and tell you, straight and fair, we want you."

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Dorothy was tingling with excitement; but she took up a piece of sewing—the same piece on which she had bent her modest gaze when she had machinated against her aunt on the afternoon on which Lady Tasker had come on, weary and thirsty, from the Witan. It was a piece she kept for such occasions as these. She stitched demurely, and Mr. Miller went on again:—

"We want you. We want those bright feminine brains of yours, Mrs. Tasker. And your ladies' intooition. We're stuck. We want another Idee like the last. And so we come to the department where we got satisfaction before."

Dorothy spoke slowly. She was glad the pond-room was beautifully furnished—glad, too, that the hours Ruth spent over her "brights" were not spent in vain. The porcelain gleamed in her cabinets and the silver twinkled on her tables. At any rate she did not look poor.

"This is rather a surprise," she said. "I hardly know what to say. I hadn't thought of taking on another contract."

But here Mr. Miller was prompt enough.

"Well, I don't know that we were thinking of a noo contract exactly. You're a lady with a good many responsibilities now, and ain't got too much time for contracts, I guess. No, it ain't a contract. It's an Idee we want."

Far more quickly than Dorothy's hopes had risen they dropped again at this. "An Idee:" naturally!... Everybody wanted that. She had not had to hawk an idea like the last—so simple, so shapely, so beauty-bright. And she had learned that it is not the ideas, but what follows them, that pays—the flat and uninspired routine that forms the everyday work of a lucrative contract. It is the irony of this gipsy life of living by your wits. You do a stately thing and starve; you follow it up—or somebody else does—with faint and empty echoes of that thing, and you are overfed. An Idee—but not a contract; a picking of her brains, but no permanent help against that tide of tradesmen's books that flowed in at the front door.... And Dorothy knew already that for another reason Mr. Miller had sought her out in vain. Ideas are *not* repeated. They visit us, but we cannot fetch them. And as for echoes of that former inspiration of hers, no doubt Mr. Miller had thought of all those for himself and had rejected them.

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"I see," she said slowly....

"Well," said Mr. Miller, his worry-map really piteous, "I wish you could tell me where we've gone wrong. It must be something in the British character we ain't appreciated, but what, well, that gets me. We been Imperialistic. There ain't been one of our Monthly House Dinners but what we've had all the Loyal Toasts, one after the other. There ain't been a Royal Wedding but what we've had a special window-display, and christenings the same, and what else you like. We ain't got gay with the Union Jack nor Rotten Row nor the House of Lords. We've reminded folk it was your own King George who said 'Wake up, England—!'"

But at this point Mr. Miller's doleful recital was cut short by a second ring at the bell. Again Ruth's step was heard in the passage outside, and again Ruth, loftily sulky but omitting no point of her duty, stood with the door-knob in her hand.

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"Mrs. Pratt," she announced; and Amory entered.

Seeing Mr. Miller, however, she backed again. Mr. Miller had risen and bowed as if he was giving some invisible person a "back" for leapfrog.

"Oh, I do so beg your pardon!" said Amory hurriedly. "I didn't know you'd anybody here. But—if I could speak to you for just a moment, Dorothy—it won't take a minute—"

"Please excuse me," said Dorothy to Mr. Miller; and she went out.

She was back again in less than three minutes. Her face had an unusual pinkness, but her voice was calm. She did not sit down again. Neither did she extend her hand to Mr. Miller in a too abrupt good-bye. Nevertheless, that worried man bowed again, and looked round for his hat and stick.

"I shall have to think over what you've been saying," Dorothy said. "I've no proposal to make off-hand, you see—and I'm rather afraid that just at present I shan't be able to come and see you—"

There were signs in Mr. Miller's bearing of another access of reverence.

"So I'll write. Or better still, if it's not too much trouble for you to come and see me again—? Perhaps I'd better write first.—But you'll have tea, won't you?"

Mr. Miller put up a refusing hand.—"No, I thank you.—So you'll do your possible, Mrs. Tasker? That's vurry good of you. I'm worried, and I rely on your sharp feminine brains. As for the honorarium, we shan't quarrel about that. I wish I could have shaken hands with Mr. Stan. There ain't a happier and prouder moment in a man's life than—"

"Good-bye."

And the father of the three little goils of his own took his leave.

No sooner had he gone than Dorothy's brows contracted. She took three strides across the room and rang for Ruth. Never before had she realized the inferiority, as a means of expressing temper, of an electric bell to a hand-rung one or to one of which a yard or two of wire can be ripped from the wall. Only by mere continuance of pressure till Ruth came did she obtain even a little relief. To the high resolve on Ruth's face she paid no attention whatever.

"A parcel will be coming from Mrs. Pratt," she said. "Please see that it goes back at once."

Ruth's head was heroically high. The late Mr. Mossop had had his faults, but he had not kept his finger on electric-bell buttons till she came.

"No doubt there's them as would give better satisfaction, m'm," she said warningly.

But Dorothy rushed on her fate.—"There seems very little satisfaction anywhere to-day," she answered.

"Then I should wish to give the usual notice," said Ruth.

"Very well," said the reckless mistress.... "Ruth!" (Ruth returned). "You forgot what I said about always shutting the door quietly."

This time the door closed so quietly behind Ruth that Dorothy heard her outburst into tears on the other side of it.

Second-hand woollies for her Bits!... Of course Amory Pratt had made the proposal with almost effusive considerateness. No doubt the twins, Corin and Bonniebell, *had* outgrown them. Dorothy did not suppose for a moment that they were *not* the best of their kind that money could buy; the Pratts seemed to roll in money. And beyond all dispute the winter *might* come any morning now, and the garments *would* just fit Jackie. But—her own Bits! ... she had had her back to the bedroom window when the offer had been made; she knew that her sudden flush had not showed; and her voice had not changed as she had deliberately told her lie—that she had bought the children's winter outfits only the day before....

"I'm sure you won't have any difficulty in giving them away," she had concluded as she had passed to the bedroom door.

"Far less difficulty than you'll find here," she might have added, but had forborne....

Other children's woollies for her little Jackie!—

What gave sting to the cut was that Jackie sorely needed them; but then it was not like Amory Pratt, Dorothy thought bitterly, to make a graceful gift of an unrequired thing. She must blunder into people's necessities. A gift of a useless Teddy Bear or of a toy that would be broken in a week Dorothy might not have refused; but mere need!—"Oh!" Dorothy exclaimed, twisting in her chair with anger....

What a day! What a life! And what a little thing thus to epitomize the whole hopeless standstill of their circumstances!

And because it was a little thing, it had a power over Dorothy that twenty greater things would not have had. She was about to call the precious and disparaged Jackie when she thought better of it. Instead, she dropped her face into her hands and melted utterly. What Ruth did in the kitchen she did in the pond-room; and Jackie, who caught the contagion, filled the passage between with an inconsolable howling.

It was into this house of lamentation that Stan entered at half-past four.

"Steady, there!" he called to his younger son; and Jackie's bellow ceased instantaneously.

"Ruth's c'ying, so I c'ied too," he confided solemnly to his father; and the two entered the pond-room together, there to find Dorothy also in tears.

"Hallo, what's this?" said Stan. "Jackie, run and tell Ruth to hurry up with tea.... Head up, Dot—let's have a look at you—"

Perhaps he meant that Dot should have a look at him, for his face shone with an—alas!—not unwonted excitement. Dorothy had seen that shining before. It usually meant that he had been let in on the ground floor of the International Syndicate for the manufacture of pig-spears, or had secured an option on the world's supply of wooden pips for blackberry jam, or an agency for a synthesized champagne. And she never dashed the perennial hopefulness of it. The poor old boy would have been heartbroken had he been allowed to suppose that he was not, in intent at any rate, supporting his wife and children.

"What is it, old girl?" he said. "Just feeling low, eh? Never mind. I've some news for you."

Dorothy summoned what interest she could.—"Not an agency or anything?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"Better than that."

"Well, some agencies are very good."

"Not as good as this!"

"Put your arm round me. I've been feeling so wretched!"

"Come and sit here. There. Wretched, eh? Well, would three hundred a year cheer you up any?"

It would have, very considerably; but Stan's schemes were seldom estimated to produce a sum less than that.

"Eh?" Stan continued. "Paid weekly or monthly, whichever I like, and a month's screw to be going on with?"

Suddenly Dorothy straightened herself in his arms. She knew that Stan was trying to rouse her, but he needn't use a joke with quite so sharp a barb. She sank back again.

"Don't, dear," she begged. "I know it's stupid of me, but I'm so dull to-day. You go out somewhere this evening, and I'll go to bed early and sleep it off. I shall be all right again in the morning."

But from the pocket into which she herself had put four half-crowns that very morning—all she could spare—Stan drew out a large handful of silver, with numerous pieces of gold sticking up among it. A glance told her that Stan was not likely to have backed a winner at any such price as that. Other people did, but not Stan. She had turned a little pale.

"Tell me, quick, Stan!" she gasped.

"You laughed rather at the Fortune & Brooks idea, didn't you?"

"Oh, don't joke, darling!—"

"Eh?... I say, you're upset. Anything been happening to-day? Look here, let me get you a drink or something!"

"Do you mean—you've got a job, Stan?"

"Rather!—I say, do let me get you a drink—"

"I shall faint if you don't tell me—"

She probably would....

Stan had got a job. What was it, this job that had enabled Stan to come home, before he had lifted a finger to earn it, with masses of silver in his pocket, and the clean quids sticking up out of the lump like almonds out of a trifle?

—He would have to lift more than a finger before that money was earned. He would have to hang on wires by his toes, and to swim streams, and to be knocked down by runaway horses, and to dash into burning houses, and to fling himself on desperate men, and to ascend into the air in water-planes and to descend in submarines into the deep. Hydrants would be turned on him, and sacks of flour poured on him, and hogsheads of whitewash and bags of soot. Not for his brains, but for his good looks and steady nerves and his hard physical condition had he been the chosen one among many. For Stan had joined a Film Producing Company, less as an actor than as an acrobat. Go and see him this evening. He is as well worth your hour as many a knighted actor. And the scene from "Quentin Durward," in which Bonthron is strung up with the rope round his neck, is not fake. They actually did string Stan up, in the studio near Barnet that had been a Drill Hall, and came precious near to hanging him into the bargain.

But he passed lightly over these and other perils as he poured it all out to Dorothy at tea. Pounds, not perils, were the theme of his song.

"I didn't say anything about it for fear it didn't come off," he said, "but I've been expecting it for weeks." He swallowed tea and cake at a rate that must have put his internal economy to as severe a strain as "Mazeppa" (Historical Film Series, No. XII) afterwards did his bones and muscles. "I start on Monday, so breakfast at eight, sharp, Dot. 'Lola Montez.' They've got a ripping little girl as Lola; took her out to tea and shopping the other day; I'll bring her round." ("No you don't—not with me sitting here like a Jumping Bean," quoth Dorothy). "Oh, that's all right—she's getting married herself next month—furnishing her flat now—I helped her to choose her electric-light fittings—you'd like her.... *Ain't* it stunning, Dot!—"

It was stunning. Part of the stunningness of it was that Dorothy, with an abrupt "Excuse me a moment," was enabled to cross to her desk and to dash off a note to Harrods. Second-hand woollies for her Bits! Oh no, not if she knew it!... "Yes, go on, dear," she resumed, returning to the tea-table again. "No, I don't wish it was something else. If we're poor we're poor, and the Services are out of the question, and it's just as good as lots of other jobs.—And oh, that reminds me: I had Mr. Miller in this afternoon!..."

"And oh!" said Stan ten minutes later; "I forgot, too! I met a chap, too—forgotten all about it. That fellow I gave a dressing-down about India to up at the Pratts' there. He stopped me in the street, and what do you think? It was all I could do not to laugh. He asked me whether I could put him on to a job! Me, who haven't started myself yet!... I said I could put him on to a drink if that would do—I had to stand somebody a drink, just to wet my luck, and I didn't see another soul—and I fetched it all out of my pocket in a pub in St. Martin's Lane—," he fetched it all out of his pocket again now, "—fetched it out as if it was nothing—you should have seen him look at it!—Strong his name is—didn't catch it that day he was burbling such stuff—"

Dorothy's eyes shone. Dear old Stan! That too pleased her. No doubt the Pratts would be told that Stan was going about so heavily laden with money that he had to divide the weight in order not to walk lop-sided—

Worn woollies for His Impudence's Bits!—

Rather not! There would be a parcel round from Harrods' to-morrow!

AMORY would have been far less observant than she was had it not occurred to her, as she left Dorothy's flat that day, that she had been hustled out almost unceremoniously. She hoped—she sincerely hoped—that she did not see the reason. To herself, as to any other person not absolutely case-hardened by prejudice, the thing that presented itself to her mind would not have been a reason at all; but these conventional people were so extraordinary, and in nothing more extraordinary than in their regulations for receiving callers of the opposite sex. That was what she meant by the vulgarizing of words and the leaping to ready-made conclusions. A conventional person coming upon herself and Mr. Strong closeted together would have his stereotyped explanation; but that was no reason why anybody clearer-eyed and more open-minded and generous-hearted should fall into the same degrading supposition. It would be ridiculous to suppose that there was "anything" between Dorothy and Mr. Miller. Amory knew that in the past Dorothy had had genuine business with Mr. Miller. And so now had she herself with Mr. Strong. And as for Stan's going about in open daylight with a "dark Spanish type"—a type traditionally wickeder than any other—Amory thought nothing of that either. Stan had as much right to go about with his Spanish female as Cosimo had to take Britomart Belchamber to a New Greek Society *matinée* or to one of Walter's Lectures. Amory would never have dreamed of putting a false interpretation on these things.

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Nevertheless, her visit *had* been cut singularly short, and Dorothy plainly *had* wanted to be rid of her. Because hearts are kind eyes need not necessarily be blind. Amory could not conceal from herself that in magnanimously passing these things over as nothing, she was, after all, making Dorothy a present of a higher standard than she had any right to. Judged by her own standards (which was all the judgment she could strictly have claimed), there was—Amory would not say a fishiness about the thing—in fact she would not say anything about it at all. The less said the better. Pushed to its logically absurd conclusion, Dorothy's standard meant that whenever people of both sexes met they should not be fewer than three in number. In Amory's saner view, on the other hand, two, or else a crowd, was far more interesting. Nobody except misanthropists talked about the repulsion of sex. Very well: if it was an attraction, it *was* an attraction. And if it was an attraction to Amory, it was an attraction to Dorothy also; if to Cosimo, then to Stan as well. The only difference was that she and Cosimo openly admitted it and acted upon it, while Stan and Dorothy did not admit it, but probably acted furtively on it just the same.

It was very well worth the trouble of the call to have her ideas on the subject so satisfactorily cleared up.

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At the end of the path between the ponds she hesitated for a moment, uncertain whether to keep to the road or to strike across the sodden Heath. She decided for the Heath. Mr. Strong had said that he might possibly come in that afternoon to discuss the Indian policy, and she did not want to keep him waiting.

Then once more she remembered her unceremonious dismissal, and reflected that after all that had left her with time on her hands. She would take a turn. It would only bore her to wait in The Witan alone, or, which was almost the same thing, with Cosimo. The Witan was rather jolly when there were crowds and crowds of people there; otherwise it was dull.

She turned away to the right, passed the cricket-pitch, found the cycle track, and wandered down towards the Highgate ponds.

She had reached the model-yacht pond, and was wondering whether she should extend her walk still further, when she saw ahead of her, sitting on a bench beneath an ivied stump, two figures deep in conversation. She recognized them at a glance. They were the figures of Cosimo and Britomart Belchamber. Britomart was looking absently away over the pond; Cosimo was whispering in her ear. Another second or two and Amory would have walked past them within a yard.

Now Amory and Cosimo had married on certain express understandings, of which a wise and far-sighted anticipation of the various courses that might be taken in the event of their not getting on very well together had formed the base. Therefore the little warm flurry she felt suddenly at her heart could not possibly have been a feeling of liberation. How could it, when there was nothing to be liberated from? Just as much liberty as either might wish had been involved in the contract itself, and a formal announcement of intention on either part was to be considered a valid release.

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And so, in spite of that curious warm tingle, Amory was not one atom more free, nor one atom less free, to develop (did she wish it) a relationship with anybody else—Edgar Strong or anybody—than she had been before. She saw this perfectly clearly. She had talked it all over with Cosimo scores of times. Why, then, did she tingle? Was it that they had not talked it over enough?

No. It was because of a certain furtiveness on Cosimo's part. Evidently he wished to "take action" (if she might use the expression without being guilty of a vulgarized meaning) *without* having made his formal announcement. That she had come upon them so far from The Witan was evidence of this. They had deliberately chosen a part of the Heath they had thought it unlikely Amory would visit. They could have done—whatever they were doing—under her eyes had they wished, but they had stolen off together instead. It was a breach of the understanding.

Before they had seen her, she left the path, struck across the grass behind them, and turned her face homewards. She was far, far too proud to look back. Certainly it was his duty to have let her know. Never mind. Since he hadn't...

Yet the tingling persisted, coming and going in quite pleasurable little shocks. Then all at once she found herself wondering how far Cosimo and Britomart had gone, or would go. Not that it was any business of hers. She was not her husband's keeper. It would be futile to try to keep somebody who evidently didn't want to be kept. It would also take away the curious subtle pleasure of that thrill.

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She was not conscious that she quickened the steps that took her to the studio, where by this

time Edgar Strong probably awaited her.

Most decidedly Cosimo ought to have given her warning—

As for Britomart Belchamber—sly creature—no doubt she had persuaded him to slink away like that—

Well, there would be time enough to deal with her by and bye—

Amory reached The Witan again.

As she entered the hall a maid was coming out of the dining-room. Amory called her.

"Has Mr. Strong been in?"

"He's in the studio, m'm," the maid replied.

"Are the children with Miss Belchamber?"

"No, m'm. They're with nurse, m'm."

"Is Miss Belchamber in her room?"

"No, m'm. She's gone out."

"How long ago?"

"About an hour, m'm."

"Is Mr. Pratt in?"

"I think so, m'm. I'll go and inquire."

"Never mind. I'm going upstairs."

Ah! Then they had gone out separately, by pre-arrangement! More slyness! And this was Cosimo's "pretence" at being Miss Belchamber's devoted admirer! Of course, if there had been any pretence at all about it, it would have had to be that he was not her admirer. Very well; they would see about that, too, later!—

She went quickly to her own room, changed her blouse for a tea-gown, and then, with that tingling at her heart suddenly warm and crisp again, descended to the studio.

It was high time (she told herself) that the "Novum's" Indian policy was definitely settled. Mr. Strong also said so, the moment he had shaken hands with her and said "Good afternoon." But Mr. Strong spoke bustlingly, as if the more haste he made the more quickly the job would be over.

"Now these are the lines we have to choose from," he said....

And he enumerated a variety of articles they had in hand, including Mr. Prang's.

"Then there's this," he said....

He told Amory about a crisis in the Bombay cotton trade, and of a scare in the papers that very morning about heavy withdrawals of native capital from the North Western Banks....

"But I think the best thing of all would be for me to write an article myself," he said, "and to back it up with a number of Notes. What I really want cleared up is our precise objective. I want to know what that's to be."

"We'll have tea in first, and then we shall be undisturbed," said Amory.

"Better wait for Cosimo, hadn't we?"

"He's out," said Amory, passing to the bell.

She sat down on the corner of the sofa, and watched the maid bring in tea. Mr. Strong, who had placed himself on the footstool and was making soughing noises by expelling the air from his locked hands, appeared to be brooding over his forthcoming number. But that quick little tingle of half an hour before had had a curious after-effect on Amory. How it had come about she did not know, but the fact remained that she was not, now, so very sure that even the "Novum" was quite as great a thing as she had supposed it to be. Or rather, if the "Novum" itself was no less great, she had, quite newly, if dimly, foreseen herself in a more majestic rôle than that of a mere technical *directrice*.

Politics? Yes, it undoubtedly was the Great Game. Strong men fancied themselves somewhat at it, and conceited themselves, after the fashion of men, that it was they who wrought this marvel or that. But was it? Had there not been women so much stronger than they that, doing apparently nothing, their nothings had been more potent than all the rest? She began to give her fancy play. For example, there was that about a face launching a thousand ships. That was an old story, of course; if a face could launch a thousand ships so many centuries ago, there was practically no limit to its powers with the British Navy at its present magnificent pitch of numerical efficiency. But that by the way. It was the idea that had seized Amory. Say a face—Helen's, she thought it was—had launched a thousand, or even five hundred ships; where was the point? Why, surely that that old Greek Lord High Admiral, whoever he was—(Amory must look him up; chapter and verse would be so very silencing if she ever had occasion to put all this into words)—surely he had thought, as all men thought, that he was obeying no behest but his own. The chances were that he had hardly wasted a thought on Helen's face as a factor in the launching....

Yet Helen's face had been the real launching force, or rather the brain behind Helen's face ... but Amory admitted that she was not quite sure of her ground there. Perhaps she was mixing Helen up with somebody else. At any rate, if she was wrong about Helen she was not wrong about Catherine of Russia. Nor about Cleopatra. Nor about the Pompadour. These had all had brains, far superior to the brains of their men, which they had used through the medium of their beauty. She knew this because she had been reading about them quite recently, and could put her finger on the very page; she had a wonderful memory for the places in books in which passages occurred.... So there were Catherine the Second, and Cleopatra, and the Pompadour, even if she had been wrong about Helen. That was a curious omission of Homer's, by the way—or was it Virgil?—the omission of all reference to the brain behind. Perhaps it had seemed so obvious that he took it for granted. But barring that, the notion of a face launching the ships was very fine. It was the Romantic Point of View. Hitherto Amory had passed over the Romantic Point

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of View rather lightly, but now she rather thought there was a good deal in it. At any rate that about the face of a woman being the real launching-force of a whole lot of ships—well, it was an exaggeration, of course, and in a sense only a poetic way of putting it—but it was quite a ripping idea.

So if a ship could be launched, apparently, not by a mere material knocking away of the thingummy, but by the timeless beauty of a face, an Indian policy ought not to present more difficulties. At all events it was worth trying. Perhaps “trying” was not exactly the word. These things happened or they didn’t happen. But anybody not entirely stupid would know what Amory meant.

The maid lighted the little lamp under the water-vessel that kept the muffins hot and then withdrew. Amory turned languidly to Mr. Strong.

“Would you mind pouring out the tea? I’m so lazy,” she said.

She had put her feet up on the sofa, and her hands were clasped behind her head. The attitude allowed the wide-sleeved tea-gown into which she had changed to fall away from her upper arm, showing her satiny triceps. The studio was warm; it might be well to open the window a little; and Amory, from her sofa, gave the order. It seemed to her that she had not given orders enough from sofas. She had been doing too much of the work herself instead of lying at her ease and stilly willing it to be done. She knew better now. It was much better to take a leaf out of the book of *les grandes maitresses*. She recognized that she ought to have done that long ago.

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So Mr. Strong brought her tea, and then returned to his footstool again, where he ate enormous mouthfuls of muffin, spreading anchovy-paste over them, and drank great gulps of tea. He fairly made a meal of it. But Amory ate little, and allowed her tea to get cold. The cast which Stan had coarsely called “the fore-quarter” had been hung up on the wall at the sofa’s end, and her eyes were musingly upon it. The trotter lay out of sight behind her.

“Well, about that thing of Prang’s,” said Mr. Strong when he could eat no more. “Hadn’t we better be settling about it?”

“Don’t shout across the room,” said Amory languidly, and perhaps a little pettishly. She was wondering what was the matter with her hand that Mr. Strong had not kissed it when he had said good afternoon. He had kissed it on a former occasion.

“Head bad?” said Mr. Strong.

“No, my head’s all right, but there’s no reason we should edit the ‘Novum’ from the house-tops.”

“Was I raising my voice? Sorry.”

Mr. Strong rose from his footstool and took up a station between the tea-table and the asbestos log.

Amory was getting rather tired of hearing about that thing of Prang’s. She did not see why Mr. Strong should shuffle about it in the way he did. The article had been twice “modified,” that was to say more or less altered, and Amory could hardly be expected to go on reading it in its various forms for ever. What did Mr. Strong want? If he whittled much more at Mr. Prang’s clear statement of a point of view of which the single virtue was its admitted extremeness, he would be reducing the “Novum” to the level of mere Liberalism, and they had long ago decided that, of the Conservative who opposed and the Liberal who killed by insidious kindnesses, the former was to be preferred as a foe. Besides, there was an alluring glow about Mr. Prang’s way of writing. No doubt that was part and parcel of the glamour of the East. The Eastern style, like the Eastern blood, had more sun in it. Keats had put that awfully well, in the passage about “parched Abyssinia” and “old Tartary the Fierce,” and so had that modern man, who had spoken of Asia as lying stretched out “in indolent magnificence of bloom.” Yes, there was a funny witchery about Asia. In all sorts of ways they “went it” in Asia. Bacchus had had a spree there, and it was there—or was that Egypt?—that Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba or somebody had smuggled her satiny self into a roll of carpets and had had herself carried as a present to King Solomon or Mark Antony or whoever it was. It seemed to be in the Asian atmosphere, and Mr. Prang’s prose style had a smack of it too. Mr. Strong—his literary style, of course, she meant—might have been all the better for a touch of that blood-warmth and thrill...

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And there were ripping bits of reckless passion in Herodotus too.

But Mr. Strong continued to stand between the tea-table and the asbestos log, and to let fall irresolute sentences from time to time. Prang, he said, really was a bit stiff, and he, Mr. Strong, wasn’t sure that he altogether liked certain responsibilities. Not that he had changed his mind in the least degree. He only doubted whether in the long run it would pay the “Novum” itself to acquire a reputation for exploiting what everybody else knew as well as they did, but left severely alone. In fact, he had assumed, when he had taken the job on, that the work for which he received only an ordinary working-salary would be conditioned by what other editors did and received for doing it.... At that Amory looked up.

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“Oh? But I thought that the truth, regardless of consequences, was our motto?”

“Of course—without fear or favour in a sense—but where there are extra risks—”

What did this slow-coach of a man mean?—“What risks?” Amory asked abruptly.

“Well, say risks to Cosimo as proprietor.”

“You mean he might lose his money?” she said, with a glance round the satiny triceps and the apple-bud of an elbow.

“Well—does he *want* to lose his money?—What I mean is, that we aren’t paying our way—we’ve scarcely any advertisements, you see—”

“I think that what you mean is that we ought to become Liberals?” There was a little ring in Amory’s voice.

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Mr. Strong made no reply.

"Or Fabians, perhaps?"

Still Mr. Strong did not answer.

"Because if you *do* mean that, I can only say I'm—disappointed in you!"

Now those who knew Edgar Strong the best knew how exceedingly sensitive he was to those very words—"I'm disappointed in you." In his large and varied experience they were invariably the prelude to the sack. And he very distinctly did not want the sack—not, at any rate, until he had got something better. Perhaps he reasoned within himself that, of himself and Prang, he would be the more discreet editor, and so lifted the question a whole plane morally higher. Perhaps, if it came to the next worst, he was prepared to accept the foisting of Prang upon him and to take his chance. Anyway, his face grew very serious, and he reached for the footstool, drew it close up to Amory's couch, and sat down on it.

"I wonder," he said slowly, looking earnestly at his folded hands, "whether you'll put the worst interpretation on what I'm going to say."

Amory waited. She dropped the satiny-white upper arm. Mr. Strong resumed, more slowly still—

"It's this. We're risking things. Cosimo's risking his money, but he may be risking more than that. And if he risks it, so do I."

Into Amory's pretty face had come the look of the woman who prefers men to take risks rather than to talk about them.—"What do you risk?" she asked in tones that once more chilled Mr. Strong. [427]

"Well, for one thing, a prosecution. Prang's rather a whole-hogger. It's what I said before—we want to use him, not have him use us."

"Oh?" said Amory with a faint smile. "And can't you manage Mr. Prang?"

There was no doubt at all in Mr. Strong's mind what that meant. "Because if you can't," it plainly meant, "I dare say we can find somebody who can." Without any qualification whatever, she really was beginning to be a little disappointed in him. She wondered how Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba would have felt (had such a thing been conceivable) if, when that carpet had been carried by the Nubians into her lover's presence and unrolled, Antony or whatever his name was had blushed and turned away, too faint-hearted to take the gift the gods offered him? Risks! Weren't—Indian policies—worth a little risk?...

Besides, no doubt Cosimo was still with Britomart Belchamber....

She put her hands behind her head again and gave a little laugh.

Well, (as Edgar Strong himself might have put it in the days when his conversation had been slangier than it was now), it was up to him to make good pretty quickly or else to say good-bye to the editorship of a rag that at least did one bit of good in the world—paid Edgar Strong six pounds a week. And if it must be done it must, that was all. Damn it!...

Perhaps the satiny upper arm decided his next action. Once before he had made its plaster facsimile serve his turn, and on the whole he would have preferred to be able to do so again; but even had that object not been out of reach on the wall and its original not eighteen inches away at the sofa's end, three hundred pounds a year in jeopardy must be made surer than that. He would have given a month's screw could Cosimo have come in at that moment. He actually did give a quick glance in the direction of the door.... [428]

But no help came.

Damn it—!

The next moment he had kissed that satiny surface, and then, gloomily, and as one who shoulders the consequences of an inevitable act, stalked away and stood in the favourite attitude of Mr. Brimby's heroes under great stress of emotion—with his head deeply bowed and his back to Amory. There fell between them a silence so profound that either became conscious at the same moment of the soft falling of rain on the studio roof.

Then, after a full minute and a half, Mr. Strong, still without turning, walked to the table on which his hat lay. Always without looking at Amory, he moved towards the door.

"Good-bye," he said over his shoulder.

There was the note of a knell in his tone. He meant good-bye for ever. All in a moment Amory knew that on the morrow Cosimo would receive Edgar Strong's formal resignation from the "Novum's" editorial chair, and that, though Edgar might retain his hold on the paper until his successor had been found, he would never come to The Witan any more. He had called Mr. Prang a whole-hogger, but in Love he himself appeared to be rather a whole-hogger. He had all but told her that to see her again would mean ... she trembled. The alternative was not to see her again. His whole action had said, more plainly than any words could say, "After that—all or nothing." [429]

She had not moved. She hardly knew the voice for her own in which she said, still without turning her head, "Wait—a minute—"

Mr. Strong waited. The minute for which she asked passed.

"One moment—," murmured Amory again.

At last Mr. Strong lifted his head.—"There's nothing to say," he said.

"I'm thinking," Amory replied in a low voice.

"Really nothing."

"Give me just a minute—"

For she was thinking that it was her face, nothing else, that had launched him thus to the door. For a moment she felt compunction for its tyranny. Poor fellow, what else had he been able to do?... Yet what, between letting him go and bidding him stay, was she herself to do? At his touch her heart had swelled—been constricted—either—both; even had she not known that she was a pretty woman, now at any rate she had put it to the proof; and the chances seemed real enough

that if he turned and looked at her now, he must give a cry, stride across the studio floor, and take her in his arms. Dared she provoke him?...

The moment she asked herself whether she dared she did dare. Not to have dared would to have been to be inferior to those great and splendid and reckless ones who had turned their eyes on their lovers and had whispered, "Antony—Louis—I am here!" If she courted less danger than she knew, her daring remained the same. And the room itself backed her up. So many doctrines were enunciated in that studio, the burden of one and all of which was "Why not?" The atmosphere was charged with permissions ... perhaps for him too. He was at the door now. It was only the turning of a key....

Amory's low-thrilled voice called his name across the studio.

"Edgar—"

But he had thought no less quickly than she. He had turned. Shrewdly he guessed that she meant nothing; so much the better—damn it! There was something female about Edgar Strong; he knew more about some things than a young man ought to know; and in an instant he had found the "line" he meant to take. It was the "line" of honour rooted in dishonour—the "line" of Cosimo his friend—the "line" of black treachery to the hand that fed him with muffins and anchovy paste—or, failing these, the all-or-nothing "line."... But on the whole he would a little rather go straight than not....

Nor did he hesitate. Amory had turned on the sofa. "Edgar!" she had called softly again. He swung round. The savagery of his reply—there seemed to Amory to be no other word to describe it—almost frightened her.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he broke out. "Haven't you done enough already? What do you suppose I'm made of?"

The moment he had said it he saw that he had made no mistake. It would not be necessary to go the length of turning the key. He glared at her for a moment; then he spoke again, less savagely, but no less curtly.

"You called me back to say something," he said. "What is it?"

Instinctively Amory had covered her face with her hands. It was fearfully sweet and dangerous. Flattery could hardly have gone further than that tortured cry, "What do you think I'm made of?" Her heart was thumping—thump, thump, thump, thump. A lesser woman would have taken refuge in evasions, but not she—not she, with Cosimo carrying on with Britomart, and Dorothy Tasker no doubt whispering to her Otis or Wilbur or whatever her American's name might be, and Stan perhaps deep in an intrigue with his Spanish female at that very moment. No, she had provoked him, and he had now every right to cry, not "Have you read *The Tragic Comedians*?" but "Do you know what you're doing?"... And he was speaking again now.

"Because," he was saying quietly, "if *that's* it ... I must know. I must have a little time. There will be things to settle. I don't quite know how it happened; I suddenly saw you—and did it. Anyway, it's done—or begun.... But I won't stab Cosimo in the back.... It will have to be the Continent, I suppose. Paris. There's a little hotel I know in the Boulevard Montparnasse. It's not very luxurious, but it's cheap and fairly clean. Seven francs a day, but it would come rather less for the two of us. And you wouldn't have to spend much on dress in the Quartier. Or there's Montmartre. Or some of those out-of-the-way seaside places. I should like to take you to the sea first, and then to a town—"

He stopped, and began to walk up and down the studio.

Amory was suddenly pale. She had not thought of this. She had thought that perhaps Mr. Strong might give a cry, rush across the studio, and take her in his arms; but of this cold and almost passionless prevision of details she had not dreamed. And yet that was magnificent too. Edgar wasted no time in dalliance when there was planning to be done. There would be time enough for softer delights when the whole of the Latin Quarter lay spread out before them in indolent magnificence of bloom. He was terrifying and superb. Such a man not manage Mr. Prang! Why, here he was, ready to bear her off that very night at a word!

Paris—Montmartre—the Quartier!

It was Romance with a vengeance!

Then at a thought she grew paler still. The children! What about Corin and Bonniebell? It didn't matter so much about Cosimo; it would serve him right; but what about the twins? Were they also to be included in the seven francs a day? And wouldn't it matter how they dressed either in the Quarter? Or, did Edgar propose that they should be left behind in Cosimo's keeping, with Britomart Belchamber for a stepmother?

Edgar had reached the door again now. He was not hurrying her, but there was a look on his face that seemed to say that all she needed was a hat and a rug for the steamer.

Such a very different thing from a carpet to roll round her—

She had risen unsteadily from the sofa. She crossed the floor and stood before Edgar, looking earnestly up into his blue eyes. She moistened her lips.

"What's happened—" she began in a whisper....

He interrupted her only to make the slightest of forbidding gestures with his hand; her own hands had moved, as if she would have put them on his shoulders. And she saw that he was quite right. At the touch of her his control would certainly have broken down. She went on, appealingly and almost voicelessly.

"What's happened—had to happen, hadn't it?" she whispered. "*You* felt it sweeping us away too—didn't you?... But need we say any more about it to-night?... I want to think, Edgar. We must both think. There's—there's a lot to think about—and talk over. We mustn't be too rash. It *would* be rash, wouldn't it? Look at me, Edgar—"

"Oh—I must go—," he said with an impatience that he had not to assume.

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"But look at me," she begged. "I shan't sleep a wink to-night. I shall think about it all night. It will be lovely—but torturing—dear!—But you'll sleep, I expect...." She pouted this last.

"I'm going away," he announced abruptly.

"Oh!" she cried, startled.... "But you'll come in to-morrow?"

"I shall go away for a few days. Perhaps longer."

"But—but—we haven't settled about the paper!—"

He was grim.—"You don't suppose I can think about the paper *now*, do you?"

"No, no—of course not—but it *must* be done to-day, Edgar! Or to-morrow at the very latest!... Can't we *try* to put this on one side, just for an hour?"

He shook his head before the impossibility....

And that was how it came about that the Indian policy of the "Novum" was left in the hands of Mr. Suwarree Prang.

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## PART II

### I

#### THE PIGEON PAIR

AMORY had been at a great deal of trouble to gather all the opinions she could get about the education of her twins, Corin and Bonniebell; but it was not true, as an unkind visitor who had been once only to The Witan had said, that they were everybody's children. Just because Amory had taken Katie Deedes' advice and had had their hair chopped off short at the nape like a Boutet de Monvel drawing—and had not disdained to accept the spelling-books which Dickie Lemesurier had given them (books in which the difficult abstraction of the letter "A" was visualized for their young eyes as "Little Brown Brother," "B" as "Tabby Cat," and so on)—and had listened to Mr. Brimby when he had said what a good thing it would be to devote an hour on Friday afternoons to the study of Altruism and Camaraderie—and, in a word, had not been too proud and egotistical to make use of a good suggestion wherever she found it—because she had done these things, it did not at all follow that she had shirked her duties. If she did not influence them directly, having other things to do, she influenced those who did influence them, which came to the same thing. She influenced the Wyrons, for example, and nobody could say that the Wyrons had not made a particularly careful study of children. They had, and Walter had founded at least two Lectures directly on the twins and their education.

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But the Wyrons, who had submitted to the indignity of marriage for the sake of the race, laboured and lectured under an obvious disadvantage; they had no children of their own. And so Amory had to fill up the gaps in their experience for herself. Still, it was wonderful how frequently the Wyron's excogitations and the things Amory had found out for herself coincided. They were in absolute accord, for example, about the promise of the immediate future and the hope that lay in the generation to come. The Past was dead and damned; the Present at best was an ignoble compromise; but the Morrow was to be bright and shining.

"Walter and I," Laura sometimes said sadly, "aren't anything to brag about. There is much of the base in us. Our lives aren't what they should be. We're in the grip of inherited instincts too. We strive for the best, but the worst's sometimes too much for us. It's like Moses seeing the Promised Land from afar. We're just in the position of Moses. But these young Aarons—"

Amory thought that very modest and dignified of poor old Laura. She frequently thought of her as 'poor old Laura,' but of course she didn't mean her actual age, which was only two years more than Amory's own. And that was very good, if a little sad, about Moses. The Wyrons did look forth over a Canaan they weren't very likely ever to tread.

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Lately—that is to say since that secret and tremendous moment between herself and Edgar Strong in the studio—Amory had fallen into the habit of musing long over the sight of the twins at lessons, at play, or at that more enlightened combination that makes lessons play and play lessons. Sometimes Mr. Brimby, the novelist, had come up to her as she had mused and had asked her what she was thinking about.

"Your little Pigeon Pair, eh?" he had said. "Ah, the sweetness; ah, lucky mother! Grey books have to be the children of some of us; ah, me; yours is a pleasanter path!"

Then he would fondle the little round topiary trees of their heads. Amory was almost as sorry for Mr. Brimby as she was for Laura. His books sold only moderately well, and she had more than once thought she would like the "Novum" to serialize one of them—the one with the little boy rather like Corin and the little girl rather like Bonniebell in it—if Mr. Brimby didn't want too much money for it.

Edgar Strong, on the other hand, never fondled the children, and Amory's heart told her why. How could he be expected to do anything but hate those poor innocents who had come between him and his desire? He must have realized that only the twins had frustrated that flight to Paris. Of course he was polite about it; he said that he was not very fond of children at all; but Amory was not deceived. She was, in a way, flattered that he did not fondle them. It was such an eloquent abstention. But it would have been more eloquent still had he come to the Witan and not-fondled them oftener.

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Therefore it was that Amory looked on Corin and Bonniebell as the precious repositories of her own relinquished joys, and heirs to a happier life than she herself had known. She dreamed over

them and their future. Laura Wyrton was quite right: by the time they had grown up the fogs of cowardice and prejudice and self-seeking would have disappeared for ever. Perhaps even by that time, as in Heaven, there would be no more marrying nor giving in marriage. Things would have adjusted themselves out of the rarer and sweeter and more liberal atmosphere. Corin, grown to be twenty, would one day meet with some mite who was still in her cradle or not yet born, and the two would look at one another with amazement and delight, and the Ideal Love would be born in their eyes, and Corin would recite a few of those brave and pure and unashamed things out of "Leaves of Grass" to her, and—well, and there they would be.... And Bonniebell, too, would do the same, on a Spring morning very likely, simply clad, cool and without immodest blushes—yes, she too would see somebody, and she would say, gladly and simply, "I am here" (for there would be no reason, then, why she should wait for the youth to speak first), and—well, and there they would be too. And it would be Exogamy, or whatever the word was that Walter used. Either would go forth from the family on the appointed day—or perhaps only Corin would go, and Bonniebell remain behind—but anyway, one, if not both of them would go forth, and rove the morning-flushed hills, alone and free and singing and on the look-out for somebody, and they would look just like pictures of young Greeks, and nobody would laugh, as they did at the poor lady who walked in Greek robes down the Strand....

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And Amory herself? Alas! She would be left with the tribe. She would be old then—say fifty-something on the eleventh of October. And Edgar would be old too. They would have to recognize that *their* youth had been spent in the night-time of ignorance and suspicion. *They* would only be able to think of those spirited young things quoting "Leaves of Grass" to one another and wondering what had happened to them....

No wonder Amory was sometimes pensive....

Mr. Wilkinson, the Labour Member, had been to all intents and purposes asked not to fondle the twins. He was a tall spare man with a great bush of pepper-and-salt hair, a Yorkshire accent, and an eye that hardly rested on any single object long enough to get more than a fleeting visual impression of it. He wrote on the first and third weeks of the month the "Novum's" column of "Military Notes," and on the alternate weeks filled the same column with officially inspired "Trade Union Echoes." Between these two activities of Mr. Wilkinson's there was a connexion. He, in common with everybody else at the Witan, was loud in decrying the jobberies and vested interests of Departments, with the War Office placed foremost in the shock of his wrath. But the Trade Unions were another matter, and never a billet-creating measure came before Parliament but he strove vehemently to have its wheels cogged in with those of the existing Trade Union machine. That is to say, that while in theory he was for democratic competitive examination, in practice he found something to be said for jobbery, could the fitting Trade Unionist but be found. He was, moreover, a firebrand by temperament, and this is where the connexion between the "Military Matters" and the "Echoes" appears. Trade Unionists he declared, ought to learn to shoot. The other side, with their cant about "Law and Order," never hesitated to call out the regular troops; therefore, until the Army itself should have been won over by means of the leaflets that were disseminated for the purpose, they ought in the event of a strike to be prepared to throw up barricades, to shoot from cellar-windows, and to throw down chimney-stacks from the house-tops. Capitalist-employed troops would not destroy more property than they need; in a crooked-streeted town the advantage of long-range fire would be gone; and Mr. Wilkinson was prepared to demonstrate that a town defended on his lines could hold out, in the event of Industrial War pushed to an extreme, until it was starved into surrender.—These arguments, by the way, had impressed Mr. Prang profoundly.

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Now (to come back to the twins) on Corin's fourth birthday Mr. Wilkinson, moved by these considerations, had given him a wooden gun, and in doing so had committed a double error in Amory's eyes. His first mistake had been to suppose that even if, under the present lamentable (but nevertheless existing) conditions of militarism, Corin should ever become a soldier at all, he would be the uncommissioned bearer of a gun and not the commissioned bearer of a sword. And his second mistake had been like unto it, namely, to think that, in the case of a proletariat uprising say in Cardiff or York, Corin would not similarly have held some post of weight and responsibility on the other side. Corin shoot up through the street-trap of a coal-hole or pot somebody from behind a chimney-stack!... But Amory admitted that it must be difficult for Mr. Wilkinson to shake off the effects of his upbringing. That upbringing had been very different from, say, Mr. Brimby's. Mr. Brimby had been at Oxford, and in nobly stooping to help the oppressed brought as it were a fragrant whiff of graciousness and culture with him. Mr. Wilkinson was a nobody. He came from the stratum of need, and, when it came to fondling the twins, must not think himself a Brimby.... Therefore, Amory had had to ask him to take the gun back (a deprivation which had provoked a mighty outcry from Corin), and to give him, if he must give him something, a Nature book instead.

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Katie Deedes and Dickie Lemesurier were both permitted to fondle the twins, though in somewhat different measure. This difference of measure did not mean that either Katie or Dickie suffered from a chronic cold that the twins might have contracted. Here again the case was almost as complicated as the case of Mr. Wilkinson. Cases had a way of being complicated at The Witan. It was this:—

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Both of these ladies, as Amory had assured Mr. Brimby, were "quite all right." She meant socially. No such difference was to be found between them in this respect as that which yawned between Mr. Brimby and Mr. Wilkinson. Indeed as far as Dickie was concerned, Amory had given a little apologetic laugh at the idea of her having to place and appraise a Lemesurier of Bath at all. The two girls had equally to work for their living, and—but perhaps it was here that the difference came in. There are jobs and jobs. It was a question of tone. Dickie, running the Suffrage Book Shop, enjoyed something of the glamour of Letters; but Katie, as manageress of

the Eden Restaurant, was, after all, only a caterer. It was not Amory's fault that Romance had pronounced arbitrarily and a little harshly on the relative dignity of these occupations. She could not help it that books are books and superior, while baked beans are only baked beans, necessary, but not to be talked about. If Dickie had, by her calling, a shade more consideration than was strictly her due, while Katie, by hers, was slightly shorn of something to which she would otherwise have been entitled, well, it was not Amory who had arranged it so.

But between books and baked beans the twins did not hesitate for an instant. They saw from no point of view but their unromantic own.

Dickie, overhauling the remainder stock at the Suffrage Shop, was able to bring them a book from time to time; but Katie, whose days were spent in a really interesting place full of things to eat, brought them sweetened Proteids, and cold roasted chestnuts, and sugared Filbertine, and sometimes a pot of the Eden Non-Neurotic Honey for tea. And because the flesh was stronger in them than Amory thought it ought to be (at any rate until the day should come when they must leave the tribe with a copy of "Leaves of Grass" in their hands), they adored Katie and thought very much less of Dickie.

Now this belly-guided preference was a thing to be checked in them; and one day Amory had asked Katie (quite nicely and gently) whether she would mind *not* bringing the children things that spoiled their appetites, not to speak of their tempers when they clamoured for these comestibles at times when they were not to be had. Then, one afternoon in the nursery, Amory actually had to repeat her request. Half an hour later, when the children had been brought down into the studio for their after-tea hour, she learned that Katie had left the house. It was Corin himself who informed her of this.

"Auntie Katie was crying," he said. "About the vertisements," he added.

"*Ad*-vertisements, dear," Amory corrected him. "Say *ad*-vertisements, not vertisements."

"*Ad*-vertisements," said Corin sulkily. "But—" and he cheered up again,—"she *was*, mother."

"Nonsense," said Amory. "And you're not to say 'Auntie' to Katie. It isn't true. Your Auntie is your father's or your mother's sister, and we haven't any.... And now you've played enough. Say good-night, both of you, and take Auntie Dickie's book, and ask Miss Belchamber to read you the story of the Robin and her Darling Eggs, and then you must have your baths and go to bed."

"I want the tale about Robin Hood, that Mr. Strong once told me," Corin demurred.

"No, you must have the one about the dear Dickie Bird, who had a wing shot off by a cruel man one day, and had to hide her head under the other one, so that when her Darling Eggs were hatched out the poor little birds were all born with crooked necks—you remember what I told you about the fortress in a horrible War, when the poor mothers were all so frightened that all the little boys and girls were born lame—it's the same thing—"

"Were there guns, that went bang?" Corin demanded. He had forgotten that the story contained this really interesting detail.

"Yes."

"Great big ones?" Corin's eyes were wide open.

"Very big. It was very cruel and anti-social."

But Corin's momentary interest waned again.—"I want Robin Hood," he said sullenly.

"Now you're being naughty, and I shall have to send you to bed without any nice reading at all."

"I want Robin Hood." The tone was ominous....

"And I want some chestnuts," Bonniebell chimed in, her face also puckering....

And so Amory, who had threatened to send them bookless to bed, must keep her word. It is very wrong to tell falsehoods to children. She dismissed them, and they went draggingly out, their Boutet de Monvel hair and fringed *éponge* costumes giving them the appearance of two luckless pawns that had been pushed off the board in some game of chess they did not understand.

Amory thought it very foolish of Katie to take on in this way. She might have known that her advertisements had not been refused without good reason. Amory had fully intended to explain all about it to Katie, but she really had had so many things to do. Nor ought it to have needed explaining. Surely Katie could have seen for herself that Dickie's Bookshop List, with its names of Finot and Forel and Mill and the rest, was a distinction and an embellishment to the paper, while her own Filbertines and Protolaxatives were a positive disfigurement. The proper place for these was, not in the columns of the "Novum," but in the "Please take One" box at the Eden's door.... But if Katie intended to sulk and cry about it, well, so much the worse.... (To jump forward a little: Katie did elect to sulk. Or rather, she did worse. She was so ill-advised as to go behind Amory's back and to speak to Cosimo himself about the advertisements. With that Katie's goose—or perhaps one should say her Anserine—was cooked. Amory did not allow that kind of thing. She certainly did not intend to explain anything after that. It was plain as a pikestaff that Katie was jealous of Dickie. Amory was bitterly disappointed in Katie. Of course she would not forbid her the house; she was still free to come to The Witan whenever she liked; but—somehow Katie only came once more. She found herself treated so very, very kindly.... So she gulped down a sob, fondled the twins once more, and left.)

Miss Britomart Belchamber saw enough of the twins not to wish to fondle them very much. Amory was not yet absolutely sure that she fondled Cosimo instead, but she was welcome to do so if she could find any satisfaction in it. Cosimo fondled the twins to a foolish extreme. Mr. Prang could never get near enough to them to fondle them. Both Corin and Bonniebell displayed a most powerful interest in Mr. Prang, and would have stood stock-still gazing at him for an hour had they been permitted; but the moment he approached them they fled bellowing.

And in addition to these various fondlings there were casual fondlings from time to time

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whenever the more favoured of the "Novum's" contributors were asked to tea.

But the Wyrans remained, so to speak, the *ex-officio* fondlers, and perhaps childless Laura felt a real need to fondle at her heart. It was she who first asked Amory whether she hadn't noticed that, while Mr. Brimby and Dickie frequently fondled the twins separately, more frequently still they did so together.

"No!" Amory exclaimed. "I hadn't noticed!"

"Walter thinks they would be a perfect pair," Laura mused....

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## II

### THE 'VERT

STAN saw very little in the scheme that Dorothy darkly meditated against her aunt. He seldom saw much in Dorothy's schemes. Perhaps she did not make quite enough fuss about them, but went on so quietly maturing them that her income seemed to be merely something that happened in some not fully explained but quite natural order of events. Stan thought it rather a lucky chance that the money usually had come in when it was wanted, that was all.

But of his own job he had quite a different conception. *That* took thought. This appeared plainly now that he was able to dismiss his own past failures with a light and almost derisive laugh.

"I don't know whatever made me think there was anything in them," he said complacently one night within about ten days of Christmas. He had put on his slippers and his pipe, and was drowsily stretching himself after a particularly hard "comic film" day, in the course of which he had been required to fall through a number of ceilings, bringing the furniture with him in his downward flight. He had come home, had had a shampoo and a hot bath, and the last traces of the bags of flour and the sacks of soot had disappeared.

"I don't think now they'd ever have come to very much."

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"Hush a moment," said Dorothy, listening, her needle arrested half-way through the heel of one of his socks.... "All right. I thought I heard him—Yes?"

She could face young girls now. The third Bit had turned out to be yet another boy.

"I mean," Stan bumbled comfortably, "there wouldn't have been the money in them I thought there would. Now take those salmon-flies, Dot. Of course I can tie 'em in a way. But what I mean is, it's a limited market. Not like the boot-trade, I mean, or soap, or films. Everybody wears boots and sees films. There's more scope, more demand. But everybody doesn't carry a salmon-rod. Comparatively few people do. And the same with big-game shooting. Or deer-stalking. Everybody can't afford 'em."

"No, dear," said Dorothy, her eyes downcast.

"Then there was Fortune and Brooks," Stan continued with a great air of discovery. "I see their game now. You see it, too, don't you?—They just wanted orders. New accounts. That's what they wanted. If I could have put 'em on to a chap who'd have spent say five hundred a year on Chutney and things—well, what I mean is, where would they be without customers like that?"

"Nowhere, dear," said the dutiful Dorothy.

"Exactly. Nowhere. That's what I was leading up to. They wouldn't be anywhere. They just wanted to be put on to these things. And it's just struck me how I should have looked going out to dinner somewhere, strange house very likely, and I'd said to somebody I'd perhaps met for the first time, 'Don't think much of these salted almonds; our hostess ought to try the F. and B. Brand, a Hundred Gold Medals, and see that the blessed coupon isn't broken.'—Eh? See what I mean?"

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"I was never very keen on the idea," Dorothy admitted gravely.

"No, and I'm blessed if I see why I was, now," Stan conceded cheerfully....

She loved this change in him which a real job with real money had brought about. Poor old darling, she thought, it must have been pretty rotten for him before, borrowing half-crowns from her in the morning, which he would spend with an affected indifference on drinks and cab fares in the evening. And he *should* speak with a new authority if he wished. Not for worlds would she have smiled at His Impudence's new air of being master in his own house. He *should* be a Sultan if he liked—provided he didn't want more than one wife.

Moreover, his bringing in of money had been a relief so great that even yet she had hardly got out of the habit of reckoning on her own earnings only. It had taken her weeks to realize that now the twopences came in just a little more quickly than they went out, and that she could actually afford herself the luxury of keeping Mr. Miller waiting for his Idea, or even of not giving it to him at all. She really had no Idea to give him. She was entirely wrapped up now in her plot against Lady Tasker.

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That plot, summarized from several conversations with Stan, was as follows:—

"You see, there's the Brear, with all that land, Aunt Grace's very own. The Cromwell Gardens lease is up in June, and it's all very well for auntie to say she doesn't hate London, but she does. She spends half a rent, with one and another of them, in travelling backwards and forwards, and she's getting old, too.—Then there's us. We can't go on living here, and the Tonys will be home just as Tim's leave's up, and they're sure to leave their Bits behind. Very well. Now the Tims and the Tonys can't afford to pay much, but they can afford something, and I think they ought to pay. They're sure to want those boys to go into the Army, and they'd *have* to pay for that anyway.—So there ought to be a properly-managed Hostel sort of place, paying its way, and a fund

accumulating, and Aunt Gracie at the head of it, poor old dear, but somebody to do the work for her.—I don't see why we shouldn't clear out that old billiard-table that nobody ever uses, and throw that and the gun-room into one, and make that the schoolroom, and have a proper person down—a sort of private preparatory school for Sandhurst and Woolwich, and the money put by to help with the fees afterwards. It would be much easier if we all clubbed together. And I should jolly well make Aunt Eliza give us at least a thousand pounds—selfish old thing.”

“Frightful rows there'd be,” Stan usually commented, thinking less of Dorothy's plan than of his own last trick-tumble. “Like putting brothers into the same regiment; always a mistake. And we're all rather good at rows you know.”

“Well, they're our *own* rows anyway. We keep 'em to ourselves. And we *do* all mean pretty much the same thing when all's said. I'm going to work it all out anyway, and then tackle Aunt Grace.... I shall manage it, of course.”

She did not add that her Lennards and Taskers and Woodgates would sink their private squabbles precisely in proportion as the outside attacks on their common belief rendered a closing-up of the ranks necessary. But she *had* been to The Witan and had kept her eyes open there, and knew that there were plenty of other Witanes about. If stupid Parliament, with its votes and what not, couldn't think of anything to do about it, that was no reason why she should not do something, and make stingy old Aunt Eliza pay for the training of her Bits into the bargain.

She had not seen Amory since that day when the episode of the winter woollies had made her angry, for, though Amory had called once at the Nursing Home soon after the birth of the third Bit, Dorothy had really not felt equal to the hair-raising tale of the twins all over again, and had sent a message down to her by the nurse. There was this difference between this tragic recital of Amory's and the fervour with which Ruth Mossop always hugged to her breast the thought of the worst that could happen—that Ruth *had* known brutality, and so might be forgiven for getting “a little of her own back”; but Amory had known one hardish twelvemonths perhaps, a good many years ago and when she had been quite able to bear it, and had since magnified that period of discomfort by a good many diameters. Amory, Dorothy considered, didn't really know she was born. She was unfeignedly sorry for that. Whatever measure of contempt was in her she kept for Cosimo.

For she considered that Cosimo was at the bottom of all the trouble. If Stan, at his most impecunious and happy-go-lucky, could still stalk about the house saying “Dot, I won't have this,” or “Look here, Dorothy, that has got to stop,” it seemed to her that Cosimo, with never a care on his mind that was not his own manufacture, might several times have prevented Amory from making rather a fool of herself. But it seemed to Dorothy that kind of man was springing up all over the place nowadays. Mr. Brimby was another of them. Dorothy had read one of Mr. Brimby's books—“*The Source*,” and hadn't liked it. She had thought it terribly dismal. In it a pretty and rich young widow, who might almost have been Amory herself, went slumming, and spent a lot of money in starting a sort of Model Pawn Shop, and by and by there came a mysterious falling-off in her income, and she went to see her lawyer about it, and learned, of course, that her source of income was that very slum in which she had stooped to labour so angelically.... Dorothy didn't know very much about pawnshops, but then she didn't believe that Mr. Brimby did either; and if her interest in them ever should become really keen, she didn't think she should go to Oxford for information about them. And Mr. Brimby himself seemed to feel this “crab,” as Stan would have called it, for after “*The Source*” he had written a Preface for a book by a real and genuine tramp.... And it had been Amory who had recommended “*The Source*” to Dorothy. She had said that it just showed, that with vision and thought and heart and no previous experience (“no prejudice” had been her exact words), there need be none of these dreadful grimy establishments, with their horrible underbred assistants who refused a poor woman half a crown on her mattress and made a joke about it, but airy and hygienic rooms instead, with rounded corners so that the dust could be swept away in two minutes (leaving a balance of at least twenty-eight minutes in which the sweeper might improve himself), and really courtly-mannered attendants, full of half crowns and pity and Oxford voice, who would give everybody twice as much as they asked for and a tear into the bargain.

And Amory knew just as much about real pawnshops as did Dorothy and Mr. Brimby.

For the life of her Dorothy could not make out what all these people were up to.

And—though this was better now that Stan was earning—the thought of the money that was being squandered at The Witan had sometimes made her ready to cry. For at the Nursing Home she had had one other visitor, and this visitor had opened her eyes to the appalling rate at which Cosimo's inheritance must be going. This visitor had been Katie Deedes. Katie too, was an old fellow-student of Dorothy's; it had not taken Dorothy long to see that Katie was full of a grievance; and then it had all come out. There had been some sort of a row. It had been simply and solely because Katie ran a Food Shop. Amory thought that *infra dig*. And just because Katie had given the children a few chestnuts Amory had practically said so.

“I shan't go there again,” Katie had said, trying on Dorothy's account to keep down her tears. “I didn't marry a man with lots of money, and turn him round my finger, and make him write my *Life and Works*, and then snub my old friends! And none of the people who go there are really what she thinks they are. *She* thinks they go to see *her*, but Mr. Brimby only goes because Dickie does, and because he wants to sell the “Novum” something or other, and Mr. Strong of course has to go, and Mr. Wilkinson goes because he wants Cosimo to stop the “Novum” and start something else with him as editor, and Laura goes because they get things printed about Walter's Lectures, and I don't know what those Indians are doing there at all, and anyway *I've* been for the last time! I'm just as good as she is, and I should like to come and see you instead, Dorothy, and of course I won't bring your babies chestnuts if you don't want.... But I'm frightfully selfish; I'm tiring you out.... May an A B C girl come to see you?”

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And Katie had since been. There is no social reason why the manager of a Vegetarian Restaurant may not visit the house of a film acrobat.

As it happened, Katie came in that very night when the weary breadwinner was painstakingly explaining to his thoughtful spouse his reasons for doubting whether he would ever have got very rich had he remained one of Fortune and Brooks' well-dressed drummers. Katie had a round face and puzzled but affectionate eyes, and Stan was just beginning to school his own eyes not to rest with too open an interest on her Greenaway frocks and pancake hats. Katie for her part was intensely self-conscious in Stan's presence. She felt that when he wasn't looking at her clothes he was, expressly, *not*-looking at them, and that was worse.... But she couldn't have worn a hobble skirt and an aigrette at the "Eden."... Stan had told Dorothy that when he knew Katie better he intended to get out of her the remaining gruesome and Blue-Beard's-Chamber details which the hoof and the forequarter seemed to him to promise.

"Poor little darlings!" Dorothy exclaimed compassionately by and by—Katie had been relating some anecdote in which Corin and Bonniebell had played a part. "I *do* think it's wrong to dress children ridiculously! The other day I saw a little girl—she must have been quite six or seven—and *she'd* knickers like a little boy, and long golden hair all down her back! What *is* the good of pretending that girls are boys?"

"Awful rot," Stan remarked with a mighty stretch. "I say, I'm off to bed; I shall be yawning in Miss Deedes' face if I don't. Is there any arnica in the house, Dot?... Good night—"

"Good night," said Katie; and as the door closed behind the master of the house she settled more comfortably in her chair. "Now that he's stopped not-looking at me we can have a good talk," her gesture seemed to say; "how *does* he expect I can get any other clothes till I've saved the money?"...

They did talk. They talked of the old days at the McGrath, and who'd married who, and who hadn't married who after all, and, in this connection, of Laura Beamish and Walter Wyron, whom they had both known.... And it just showed how little glory and fame were really worth in the world. For Dorothy, who had been living in London all this time, had not heard as much as a whisper of that memorable revolt of the Wyrons against the Marriage Service, and, though she did know vaguely that Walter lectured, had not the ghost of an idea of what his lectures were about. She had been too busy minding her own petty and private and selfish affairs. Katie couldn't believe it. She thought Dorothy was joking.

"You've never heard of Walter's Lecture on '*Heads or Tails in the Trying Time*,' nor his '*Address on the Chromosome*'?" she gasped....

"No; do tell me. What is a Chromosome?"

"A Chromosome? Why, it's a—it's a—well, you know when you've a cell—or a nucleus—or a gland or something—but it isn't a gland—it's the—but you *do* astonish me, Dorothy!"

"But surely you're joking about Walter and Laura?" Dorothy exclaimed in her turn.

"Indeed I'm not! Why, I thought *everybody* knew!..."

"(It's all right—he won't come in again). But *why* did they pretend not to be married?" Dorothy asked in amazement.

"I don't know—I mean I forget for the moment—it seemed perfectly clear the way Walter explained it—you ought to go and hear him—"

"But what difference could being married—I mean not being married—make?"

"Ah!" said Katie, with satisfaction at having found her bearings again. "Walter's got a whole Lecture on that. It always thrills everybody. Amory thinks it's almost his best—after the '*Synthetic Protoplasm*' one, of course—that's admitted by everybody to be quite *the* best!"<sup>[1]</sup>

"Proto ... but I thought those were a kind of oats!" said poor Dorothy, utterly bewildered.

"Oats!" cried Katie in a sort of whispered shriek. "Why, it's—it's—but I don't know even how to *begin* to explain it! Do you mean to say you haven't read about these things?"

"No," murmured Dorothy, abashed.

"Not Monod, nor Ellen Key, nor Sebastian Faure, nor Malom!—"

"N-o." Dorothy felt horribly ashamed of herself.

"But—but—those *lovely* little boys of yours!—"

She gazed wide-eyed at the disconcerted Dorothy....

It was the humiliating truth: Dorothy had never heard of the existence of a single one of these writers and leaders of thought. She had borne Noel in black ignorance of what they had had to say about the Torch of the Race, and Jackie and the third Bit for all the world as if they had never set pen to paper. Monod had not held her hand, nor Faure been asked for his imprimatur; Key had hymned Love superfluously, and the Synthesists, equally superfluously, its supersession. For a moment she anxiously hoped that it was all right, and then, as Katie went on, the marvel of it all overwhelmed her again.

The dictum that desirable children could be born only *out* of wedlock! That stupendous suggestion of Walter's to millionaires who did not know what to do with their money, that, for the improvement of the Race, they should endow with a thousand pounds every poor little come-by-chance that weighed eleven pounds at birth! That other proposal, that twenty years could straightway be added to woman's life and beauty by a mere influencing of her thoughts about the Chromosome—whatever it was!... Poor uncultured Dorothy did not know whether she was on her head or her heels. She had never dreamed, until Katie told her, that before marrying Stan she ought to have gone to the insect-world, or to the world of molluscs and crustacæ, to learn how *they* maintained the integrity of their own highest type—whether by pulling their wings off after the flight, or devouring their husbands, or—or—or what! She had heard of the moral lessons that can be learned of the ant, but it had not struck her that she and Stan might, by means of a little

more study and care, have lifted up the economy of their little flat to the level of the marvellously-organized domesticity you see when you kick over a stone.

But Katie's hesitations and great gaps of confessed ignorance gave her a little more courage. Katie was at pains to explain that all that she herself knew about it all was that these things were what they *said*, and Dorothy must go to Walter and the books for the rest.

"They're all very expensive books, and I may not really have understood them," she said wistfully. "They must be awfully deep and so on if they're so dear—twelve and fifteen and twenty shillings! But I did try so hard, and sometimes it seemed quite reasonable and plain, especially when the print was nice and big.... Close print always seems so frightfully learned.... And I know I've explained it badly; I haven't Walter's gift of putting things. Amory has, of course. When she and Walter have a really good set-to it makes one feel positively *abject* about one's ignorance. I doubt if Cosimo can always *quite* follow them, and I'm quite sure Mr. Strong can't—I know he's only hedging when he says, 'Ah, yes, have you read Fabre on the Ant or Maeterlinck on the Bee?'—and I believe he just glances at the review books that come to the "Novum" instead of really studying them, as Walter and Amory do. And it's very funny about Mr. Strong," she rattled artlessly on. "Sometimes I've thought that it isn't just that Amory doesn't know what they all go to The Witan for, but that everybody else *does* know. They all seem to want it to themselves. Of course if Mr. Wilkinson wants Cosimo to stop the "Novum," and to start something else for him, it's only natural that he and Mr. Strong should be a little jealous of one another; but Dickie and Mr. Brimby are jealous of the Wyrons, and I suppose I was jealous of Dickie too—and everybody seems jealous of everybody, and Amory of Cosimo, and Amory's always interfering between Britomart Belchamber and the twins' lessons, and that *can't* be a very good thing for discipline, but Britomart's like me in being rather stupid, and I wish I'd her screw—she gets nearly twice as much as I do. The only people who don't seem jealous of anybody are those Indians. They're *always* affable. I suppose it's rather nice for them, so far from their own country, having a house to go to...."

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But here Dorothy's humility and self-distrust ended. The moment it came to India, she shared her aunt's deplorable narrow-mindedness and propensity to make a virtue of her intolerance. It seemed to her that it was one thing for the Tims and Tonys, in India, to have to employ a native interpreter (and to be pretty severely rooked by him) when they had their Urdu Higher Proficiency to pass, but quite another for these same natives to come over here, and to learn our law and language, and our excellent national professions, and our somewhat mitigated ways of living up to them. No, she was not one whit better than her hide-bound old aunt, and she did not intend to have too practical a brotherly love taught at that meditated foundation at the Brear....

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She became silent as she thought of that foundation again, and presently Katie rose.

"I suppose I couldn't see him in his cot?" she said wistfully.

Dorothy smiled. Katie meant the youngest Bit.

"Well ... I'm afraid he's in *our* room, you see...," she said.

Katie had been thinking of The Witan. She coloured a little.

"Sorry," she murmured; and then she broke out emphatically.

"I *like* coming to see you, Dorothy. I don't feel so—such a *fool* when I'm with you.... And do tell me where you got that frock, and how much it was; I *must* have another one as soon as I can raise the money! I do wish I could make what Britomart Belchamber makes! Two-twenty a year! Think of that!... But of course Prince Eadmond teachers do come expensive—"

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More and more it was coming to seem to Dorothy that the whole thing was terrifically expensive.

[1] I have been charged with the invention of these facetiæ. Here is the Synthetic Protoplasm idea:—

"The dream of creating offspring without the concurrence of woman has always haunted the imagination of the human race. The miraculous advances which the chemical synthesis has accomplished in these latter days seem to justify the boldest hopes, but we are still far from the creation of living protoplasm. The experiences of Loeb or of Delage are undoubtedly very confounding. But in order to produce life these scientists were obliged, nevertheless, to have recourse to beings already organized. Thousands of centuries undoubtedly separate us from any possibility of realizing the most magnificent and most disconcerting dream ever engendered in the human brain. In the meantime, as the Torch of Life must be transmitted to the succeeding generations, woman will continue gloriously to fulfil her character of mother."—"Problems of the Sexes," Jean Finot; 12s. 6d. net; p. 352.

Lightly worked up and chattily treated, this theme, as Katie said, drew quiet smiles of appreciation from every cultured audience which Walter addressed.

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### III

#### THE IMPERIALISTS

THEY were great believers in the Empire, they on the "Novum." Indeed, they were the only true Imperialists, since they recognized that ideas, and not actions, were by far and away the most potent instruments in the betterment of mankind. Everybody who was anybody knew that, a

mere sporadic outbreak here and there (such as the one in Manchuria) notwithstanding, war had been virtually impossible ever since the publication of M. Bloch's book declaring it to be so. What, they asked, was war, more than an unfortunate miscalculation on the part of the lamb that happened to lie down with the lion? And what made the miscalculation so unfortunate? Why, surely the possession by the lion of teeth and claws. Draw his teeth and cut his claws, and the two would slumber peacefully together. So with the British lion. He only fought because he had things ready to fight with. Philosophically, his aggressions were not much more than a kind of sportive manifestation of the joy of life, that happened, rather inconsequentially, to take the form of the joy of death. Take away the ships and guns, then, and everything would be all right.

These views on the Real Empire were in no way incompatible with Mr. Wilkinson's desire to see all Trade Unionists armed. For a war at home, about shorter hours and higher wages, would at any rate be a war between equals in race. It was wars between unequals that had made of the Old Empire so hideous a thing. Amory herself had more than once stated this rather well.

"I call it cowardice," she had said. "Every fine instinct in us tells us to stick up for the weaker side. It makes my blood boil! Think of those gentle and dusky millions, all being, to put it in a word, bullied—just bullied! We all know the kind of man who goes abroad—the conventional 'adventurer.' (I like 'adventurer!') He's just a common bully. He drinks disgustingly, and swears, and kicks people who don't get out of his way—but he's always careful to have a revolver in his pocket for fear they should hit him back!... And he makes a tremendous fuss about his white women, but when it comes to their black or brown ones ... well, anyway, I think he's a brute, and we want a better class of man than *that* for our readers!"

And that was briefly why, at the "Novum," they tried to reduce armaments at home, and gave at least moral encouragement to the other side whenever there was a dust-up abroad.

But it had been some time ago that Amory had said all this, and her attitude since then had undergone certain changes. One of these changes had been her acquisition of the Romantic Point of View; another had been that suspended state of affairs between herself and Mr. Strong. The first of these curtailed a good deal of the philosophy in which Mr. Strong always seemed anxious to enwrap the subject (in order, as far as Amory could see, to avoid action). It also made a little more of the position of women, white, black or brown, and especially when rolled up in carpets, in Imperial affairs. And the second, that hung-up relation between Edgar Strong and herself, had left her constantly wondering what would have happened had she taken Mr. Strong at his word and fled to Paris with him, and exactly where they stood since she had not done so.

For naturally, things could hardly have been expected to be the same after that. Since Edgar had ceased to come quite so frequently to The Witan, Amory had thought the whole situation carefully over and had come to her conclusion. Perhaps the histories of *les grandes maitresses* and the writings of Key had helped her; or, more likely, Key in Sweden (or wherever it was) and herself in England had arrived at the same conclusion by independent paths. That conclusion, stated in three words, was the Genius of Love.

It was perfectly simple. Why had Amory Towers, the painter of that picture ("Barrage") so enthusiastically acclaimed by the whole of Feminist England, now for so long ceased to paint? What had become of the Genius that had brought that picture into being? It is certain that Genius cannot be stifled. Deny it one opportunity and it will break out somewhere else—in another art, in politics, in leadership in one form or another, or it may be even in crime.

Even so, Amory was conscious, her own Genius had refused to be suppressed. It had found another outlet in politics, directed in a recumbent attitude from a sofa.

Yet that had landed her straightway in a dilemma—the dilemma of Edgar and the twins, of Paris on seven francs a day and the comforts Cosimo allowed her, of a deed that was to have put even that of the Wyrons into the shade and a mere settling down to the prospect of seeing Edgar when it pleased him to put in an appearance.

She had not seen this protean property of Genius just at first. That could only have been because she had not examined herself sufficiently. She had been introspective, but not introspective enough.

And lest she should be mistaken in the mighty changes that were going on within herself, at first she had tried the painting again. Her tubes were dry and her brushes hard, but she had got new ones, and one after another she had taken up her old half-finished canvases again. A single glance at them had filled her with astonishment at the leagues of progress, mental and emotional, that she had made since then. She had laughed almost insultingly at those former attempts. That large canvas on the "*Triumph of Humane Government*" was positively frigid! And Edgar had liked it!... Well, that only showed what a power she now had over Edgar if she only cared to use it. If he had liked that chilly piece of classicism, he would stand dumb before the canvas that every faculty in her was now straining to paint. She began to think that canvas out...

It must be Eastern, of course; nay, it must be The East—tremendously voluptuous and so on. She would paint it over the "*Triumph*." It should be bathed in a sunrise, rabidly yellow (they had no time for decaying mellowness in those vast and kindling lands to which Amory's inner eye was turned)—and of course there ought to be a many-breasted what-was-her-name in it, the goddess (rather rank, perhaps, but that was the idea, a smack at effete occidental politeness). And there ought to be a two-breasted figure as well, perhaps with a cord or something in her hand, hauling up the curtain of night, or at any rate showing in some way or other that her superb beauty was actually responsible for the yellow sunrise....

And above all, she must get *herself* into it—the whole of herself—all that tremendous continent that Cosimo had not had, that her children had not had, that her former painting had left unexpressed, that politics had not brought out of her....

The result of that experiment was remarkable. Two days later she had thrown the painting

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aside again. It was a ghastly failure. But only for a moment did that depress her; the next moment she had seen further. She was a Genius; she knew it—felt it; she was so sure about it that she would never have dreamed of arguing about it; she had such thoughts sometimes.... And Genius could never be suppressed. Very well; the Eastern canvas was a total failure; she admitted it. Ergo, her Genius was for something else than painting.

That was all she had wanted to know.

For what, then? No doubt Edgar Strong, who had enlightened her about herself before, would be able to enlighten her again now. And if he would not come to see her, she must go and see him. But already she saw the answer shining brightly ahead. She must pant, not paint; live, not limn. Her Genius was, after all, for Love.

True, at the thought of those offices in Charing Cross Road she had an instinctive shrinking. Their shabbiness rather took the shine out of the voluptuousnesses she had tried, and failed, to get upon her canvas. But perhaps there was a fitness in that too. Genius, whether in Art or in Love, is usually poor. If she could be splendid there she could be so anywhere. No doubt heaps and heaps of grand passions had transfigured grimy garrets, and had made of them perfectly ripping backgrounds....

So on an afternoon in mid-January Amory put on her new velvet costume of glaucous sea-holly blue and her new mushroom-white hat, and went down to the "Novum's" offices in a taxi. It seemed to her that she got there horribly quickly. Her heart was beating rapidly, and already she had partly persuaded herself that if Edgar wasn't in it might perhaps be just as well, as she had half-promised the twins to have tea with them in the nursery soon, and anyway she could come again next week. Or she might leave Edgar a note to come up to The Witan. There were familiar and supporting influences at The Witan. But here she felt dreadfully defenceless.... She reached her destination. Slowly she passed through the basement-room with the sandwich-boards, ascended the dark stairs, and walked along the upper corridor that was hung with the specimens of poster-art.

Edgar was in. He was sitting at his roll-top desk, with his feet thrust into the unimaginable litter of papers that covered it. He appeared to be dozing over the "Times," and had not drunk the cup of tea that stood at his elbow with a sodden biscuit and a couple of lumps of sugar awash in the saucer.—Without turning his head he said "Hallo," almost as if he expected somebody else. "Did you bring me some cigarettes in?" he added, still not turning. And this was a relief to Amory's thumping heart. She could begin with a little joke.

"No," she said. "I didn't know you wanted any."

There was no counterfeit about the start Mr. Strong gave. So swiftly did he pluck his feet away from the desk that twenty sheets of paper planed down to the floor, bringing the cup of tea with them in their fall.

But Mr. Strong paid no attention to the breakage and mess. He was on his feet, looking at Amory. He looked, but he had never a word to say. And she stood looking at him—charming in her glaucous blue, the glint of rich red that peeped from under the new white hat, and her slightly frightened smile.

"Haven't you any?" she said archly.

At that Mr. Strong found his tongue.

"Excuse me just a moment," he muttered, striding past her and picking up something from his desk as he went. "Sit down, won't you?" Then he opened the door by which Amory had entered, did something behind it, and returned, closing the door again. "Only so that we shan't be disturbed," he said. "They go into the other office when they see the notice.—I wasn't expecting you."

Nor did he, Amory thought, show any great joy at her appearance. On the contrary, he had fixed a look very like a glare on her. Then he walked to the hearth. A big fire burned there behind a wire guard, and within the iron kerb stood the kettle he had boiled to make tea. He put his elbows on the mantelpiece and turned his back to her. Again it was Mr. Brimby's sorrowing Oxford attitude. Amory had moved towards his swivel chair and had sat down. Her heart beat a little agitatedly. He remembered!...

He spoke without any beating about the bush,— "Ought you to have done this?" he said over his shoulder.

She fiddled with her gloves.— "To have done what?" she asked nervously.

"To have come here," came in muffled tones back. It was evident that he was having to hold himself in.

Then suddenly he wheeled round. This time there was no doubt about it—it was a glare, and a resolute one.

But he had not been able to think of any new line. It was the one he had used before. He made it a little more menacing, that was all.

"I'm only flesh and blood—," he said quickly, his hands ever so slightly clenching and unclenching and his throat apparently swallowing something.

Her heart was beating quickly enough now.— "But—but—," she stammered,— "if you only mean my coming here—I've been here lots of times before—"

He wasted few words on that.

"Not since——" he rapped out. He was surveying her sternly now.

"But—but—," she faltered again, "—it's only me, Edgar—I *am* connected with the paper, you know—that is to say my husband is—"

"That's true," he groaned.

"And—and—I should have come before—I've been intending to come—but I've been so busy—"

But that also he brushed aside for the little it was worth. "Must you compromise yourself like this?" he demanded. "Don't you see? I'm not made of wood, and I suppose your eyes are open too. Prang may be here at any moment. He'll see that notice on the door and wait ... and then he'll see you go out. You oughtn't to have come," he continued gloomily. "Why did you, Amory?"

Once more she quailed before the blue mica of his eye. Her words came now a bit at a time. The victory was his.

"Only to—to see—how the paper was going on—and to—to talk things over—," she said.

"Oh!" He nodded. "Very well."

He strode forward from the mantelpiece and approached the desk at which she sat.

"I suppose Cosimo wants to know; very well. As a matter of fact I'm rather glad you've come. Look here—"

He grabbed a newspaper from the desk and thrust it almost roughly into her hands.

"Read that," he said, stabbing the paper with his finger.

The part in which he stabbed it was so unbrokenly set that it must have struck Katie Deedes as overwhelmingly learned.—"There you are—read that!" he ordered her.

Then, striding back to the mantelpiece, he stood watching her as if he had paid for a seat in a playhouse and had found standing-room only.

Amory supposed that it must be something in that close and grey-looking oblong that was at the bottom of his imperious curtness. She was sure of this when, before she had read half a dozen lines, he cut it with a sharp "Well? I suppose you see what it means to us?"

"Just a moment," she said bewilderedly; "you always did read quicker than I can—"

"Quicker!—" he said. "Just run your eye down it. That ought to tell you."

She did so, and a few capitals caught her eye.

"Do you mean this about the North-West Banks?" she asked diffidently.

"Do I mean—! Well, yes. Rather."

"I do wish you'd explain it to me. It seems rather hard."

But he did not approach and point out particular passages. Instead he seemed to know that leaden oblong by heart. He gave a short laugh.

"Hard? It's hard enough on the depositors out there!... They've been withdrawing again, and of course the Banks have had to realize."

"Yes, I saw that bit," said Amory.

"A forced realization," Mr. Strong continued. "Depreciation in values, of course. And it's spreading."

It sounded to Amory rather like smallpox, but, "I suppose that's the Monsoon?" she hazarded.

"Partly, of course. Not altogether. There's the rupee too, of course. At present that's at about one and twopence, but then there are these bi-metallists.... So until we know what's going to happen, it seems to me we're bound hand and foot."

Amory was awed.—"What—what do you think will happen?" she asked.

Edgar gave a shrug.—"Well—when a Bank begins paying out in pennies it's as well to prepare for the worst, you know."

"Are—are they doing that?" Amory asked in a whisper. "Really? And is that the bi-metallists' doing—or is it the Home Government? Do explain it to me so that I can visualize it. You know I always understand things better when I can visualize them. That's because I'm an artist.—Does it mean that there are long strings of natives, with baskets and things on their heads to put the pennies in, all waiting at the Banks, like people in the theatre-queues?"

"I dare say. I suppose they have to carry the pennies somehow. But I'm afraid I can't tell you more than's in the papers."

Amory's face assumed an expression of contempt. On the papers she was quite pat.

"The papers! And how much of the truth can we get from the capitalist press, I should like to know! Why, it's a commonplace among us—one is almost ashamed to say it again—that the 'Times' is always wrong! We have *no* Imperialist papers really; only Jingo ones. Is there *no* way of finding out what this—crisis—is really about?"

This was quite an easy one for Mr. Strong. Many times in the past, when pressed thus by his proprietor's wife for small, but exact, details, he had wished that he had known even as much about them as seemed to be known by that smart young man who had once come to The Witan in a morning coat and had told Edgar Strong that he didn't know what he was talking about. But he had long since found a way out of these trifling difficulties. Lift the issue high enough, and it is true of most things that one man's opinion is as good as another's; and they lifted issues quite toweringly high on the "Novum." Therefore in self-defence Mr. Strong flapped (so to speak) his wings, gave a struggle, cleared the earth, and was away in the empyrean of the New Imperialism.

"The 'Times' always wrong. Yes. We've got to stick firmly to that," he said. "But don't you see, that very fact makes it in its way quite a useful guide. It's the next best thing to being always right, like us; we can depend on its being wrong. We've only got to contradict it, and then ask ourselves why we do so. There's usually a reason.... So there is in this—er—crisis. Of course you know their argument—that a lot of these young native doctors and lawyers come over here, and stop long enough to pick up the latest wrinkles in swindling—the civilized improvements so to speak—and then go back and start these wildcat schemes, Banks and so on, and there's a smash. I think that's a fair statement of their case.—But what's ours? Why, simply that what they're really doing is to give the Home Government a perfectly beautiful opportunity of living up to its own humane professions.... But we know what that means," he added sadly.

"You mean that it just shows," said Amory eagerly, "that we aren't humane at all really? In fact, that England's a humbug?"

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Mr. Strong smiled. He too, in a sense, was paying out in pennies, and so far quite satisfactorily.

"Well ... take this very crisis," he returned. "Oughtn't there to be a grant, without a moment's loss of time, from the Imperial Exchequer? I'm speaking from quite the lowest point of view—the mere point of view of expediency if you like. Very well. Suppose one or two natives *are* scoundrels: what about it? Are matters any better because we know that? Don't the poverty and distress exist just the same? And isn't that precisely our opportunity, if only we had a statesman capable of seeing it?... Look here: We've only got to go to them and say, 'We are full of pity and help; here are a lot of—er—lakhs; lakhs of rupees; rupee one and twopence: you may have been foolish, but it isn't for us to cast the first stone; it's the conditions that are wrong; go and get something to eat, and don't forget your real friends by and by.'—Isn't that just the way to bind them to us? By their gratitude, eh? Isn't getting their gratitude better than blowing them from the muzzles of guns, eh? And isn't that the real Empire, of which we all dream? Eh?..."

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He warmed up to it, while keeping one ear open for anybody who might come along the passage; and when he found himself running down he grabbed the newspaper again. He doubled it back, refolded it, and again thrust it under Amory's nose.... There! That put it all in a nutshell, he said! The figures spoke for themselves. The Home Government, he said, knew all about it all the time, but of course they came from that hopeless slough of ineptitude that humorists were pleased to call the "governing classes," and that was why they dragged such red herrings across the path of true progress as—well, as the Suffrage, say.... What! Hadn't Amory heard that all this agitation for the Suffrage was secretly fomented by the Government itself? Oh, come, she must know that! Why, of course it was! The Government knew dashed well what they were doing, too! It was a moral certainty that there was somebody behind the scenes actually planning half these outrages! Why? Why, simply because it got 'em popular sympathy when a Minister had his windows smashed or a paper of pepper thrown in his face. They were only too glad to have pepper thrown in their faces, because everybody said what a shame it was, and forgot all about what fools they'd been making of themselves, and when a real—er—crisis came, like this one, people scarcely noticed it.... But potty little intellects like Brimby's and Wilkinson's didn't see as deep as that. It was only Edgar Strong and Amory who saw as deep as that. That was why they, Edgar and Amory, were where they were—leaders of thought, not subordinates....

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"Just look rather carefully at those figures," he concluded....

Nevertheless, lofty as these flights were, they had a little lost their thrill for Amory. She had heard them so very, very often. She had trembled in the taxi in vain if *this* was all that her stealthy coming to the "Novum's" offices meant. Nor had she put on her new sea-holly velvet to be told, however eloquently, that Wilkinson and Brimby were minor lights when compared with Edgar and herself, and that the "Times" was always wrong. Perhaps the figures that Edgar had thrust under her nose as if he had been clapping a muzzle on her meant something to the right person, but they meant nothing to Amory, and she didn't pretend they did. They were man's business; woman's was "visualizing." The two businesses, when you came to think of it, *were* separate and distinct. Whoever heard of a man wrapping himself up in a carpet and being carried by Nubians into his mistress's presence? Whoever heard of a man's face launching as much as an upriver punt, let alone fleets and fleets of full-sized ships? And whoever heard of the compelling beauty of a man's eyes, as he lay on a sofa with one satiny upper-arm upraised, simply making—making—a woman come and kiss him?... It was ridiculous. Amory saw now. Even Joan of Arc must have put on her armour, not so much because of all the chopping and banging of maces and things (which must have been very noisy), but more with the idea of *inspiring*.... Yes, inspiring: that was it. There *was* a difference. Why, even physically women and men were not the same, and mentally they were just as different. For example, Amory herself wouldn't have liked to blow anybody from the mouth of a gun, but she wasn't sure sometimes that Edgar wouldn't positively enjoy it. He had that hard eye, and square head, and capacity for figures....

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She wasn't sure that her heart didn't go out to him all the more because of that puzzle of noughts and dots and rupees he had thrust into her hands....

And so, as he continued (so to speak) to gain time by paying in pennies, and to keep an ear disengaged for the passage, it came about that Edgar Strong actually overshot himself. The more technical and masculine he became, the more Amory felt that it was fitting and feminine in her not to bother with these things at all, but just to go on inspiring. She still kept her eyes bent over the column of figures, but she was visualizing again. She was visualizing the Channel steamer, and the Latin Quarter, and satiny upper-arms. And the taxi-tremor had returned....

Suddenly she looked softly yet daringly up. She felt that she must be Indian—yet not too Indian.

"And then there's suttee," she said in a low voice.

"Eh?" said Strong. He seemed to scent danger. "Abolished," he said shortly.

But here Amory was actually able to tell Edgar Strong something. She happened to have been reading about suttee in a feminist paper only a day or two before. No doubt Edgar read nothing but figures and grey oblongs.

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"Oh, no," she said softly but with a knowledge of her ground. "That is, I know it's prohibited, but there was a case only a little while ago. I read it in the 'Vaward.' And it was awful, but splendid, too. She was a young widow, and I'm sure she had a lovely face, because she'd such a noble soul.—Don't you think they often go together?"

But Edgar did not reply. He had walked to a little shelf full of reference books and books for review, and was turning over pages.

"And the whole village was there," Amory continued, "and she walked to the pyre herself, and said good-bye to all her relatives, and then——"

Edgar shut his book with a slap.—"Abolished in 1829," he said. "It's a criminal offence under the Code."

Amory smiled tenderly. Abolished!... Dear, fellow, to think that in such matters he should imagine that his offences and Codes could make any difference! Of course the "Vaward" had made a mere Suffrage argument out of the thing, but to Amory it had just showed how cruel and magnificent and voluptuous and grim the East could be when it really tried.... And then all at once Amory thought, not of any particular poem she had ever read, but what a ripping thing it would be to be able to write poetry, and to say all those things that would have been rather silly in prose, and to put heaps of gorgeous images in, like the many-breasted what-was-her-name, and Thingummy—what-did-they-call-him—the god with all those arms. And there would be carpets and things too, and limbs, not plaster ones, but flesh and blood ones, as Edgar said his own were, and—and—and oh, stacks of material! The rhymes might be a bit hard, of course, and perhaps after all it might be better to leave poetry to somebody else, and to concentrate all her energies on inspiring, as Beatrice inspired Dante, and Laura Petrarch, and that other woman Camoens, and Jenny Rossetti, and Vittoria Colonna Michael Angelo. She might even inspire Edgar to write poetry. And she would be careful to keep the verses out of Cosimo's way....

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"Abolished!" she smiled in gay yet mournful mockery, and also with a touch both of reproach and of disdain in her look.... "Oh well, I suppose men think so...."

But at this he rounded just as suddenly on her as he had done when he had told her that she ought not to have come to the office. Perhaps he felt that he was losing ground again. You may be sure that Edgar Strong, actor, had never had to work as hard for his money as he had to work that afternoon.

"Amory!" he called imperiously. "I tell you it won't do—not at this juncture! I'd just begun to find a kind of drug in my work; I've locked myself up here; and now you come and undo it all again with a look! I see we must have this out. Let me think."

He began to pace the floor.

When he did speak again, his phrases came in detached jerks. He kept looking sharply up and then digging his chin into his red tie again.

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"It was different before," he said. "It might have been all right before. We were free then—in a way. It was different in every way.... (Mind your dress in that tea).... But we can't do anything now. Not at present. There's this crisis. That's suddenly sprung upon us. There's got to be somebody at the wheel—the 'Novum's' wheel, I mean. I hate talking about my duty, but you've read the 'Times' there. The 'Times' is always wrong, and if we desert our posts the whole game's up—U. P. Prang's no good here. Prang can't be trusted at a pinch. And Wilkinson's no better. Neither of 'em any good in an emergency. Weak man at bottom, Wilkinson—the weakness of violence—effeminate, like these, strongword poets. We can't rely on Wilkinson and Prang. And who is there left? Eh?"

But he did not wait for an answer.

"Starving thousands, and no Imperial Grant." His voice grew passionate. "Imperial Grant must be pressed for without delay. What's to happen to the Real Empire if you and I put our private joys first? Eh? Answer me.... There they are, paying in pennies—and us dallying here.... No. Dash it all, no. May be good enough for some of these tame males, but it's a bit below a man. I won't—not now. Not at present. It would be selfish. They've trusted me, and—," a shrug. "No. That's flat. I see *my* nights being spent over figures and telegrams and all that sort of thing for some time to come.... Don't think I've forgotten. I understand perfectly. I suppose that sooner or later it *will* have to be the Continent and so on—but not until this job's settled. Not till then. Everything else—everything—has got to stand down. You do see, don't you, Amory? I hope you do."

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As he had talked there had come over Amory a sense of what his love must be if nothing but his relentless sense of duty could frustrate it even for a day. And that was more thrilling than all the rest put together. It lifted their whole relation exactly where she had tried to put it without knowing how to put it there—into the regions of the heroic. Not that Edgar put on any frills about it. On the contrary. He was simple and plain and straight. And how perfectly right he was! Naturally, since the "Times" and its servile following of the capitalist Press would not help, Edgar had to all intents and purposes the whole of India to carry on his shoulders. It was exactly like that jolly thing of Lovelace's, about somebody not loving somebody so much if he didn't love Honour more. He did love her so much, and he had as much as said that there would be plenty of time to talk about the Continent later. Besides, his dear, rough, unaffected way of calling this heroic work his "job!" It was just as if one of those knights of old had called slaying dragons and delivering the oppressed his "job!"

Amory was exalted as she had never been exalted. She turned to him where he stood on the hearth, and laved him with a fond and exultant look.

"I see," she said bravely. "I was wretchedly selfish. But remember, won't you, when you're fighting this great battle against all those odds, and saying all those lovely things to the Indians, and getting their confidence, and just showing all those other people how stupid they are, that I didn't stop you, dear! I know it would be beastly of me to stop you! I shouldn't be worthy of you.... But I think you ought to appoint a Committee or something, and have the meetings reported in the 'Novum,' and I'm sure Cosimo wouldn't grudge the money. Oh, how I wish I could help!—"

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But he did not say, as she had half hoped he would say, that she did help, by inspiring. Instead, he held out his hand. As she took it in both of hers she wondered what she ought to do with it. If it had been his foot, and he had been the old-fashioned sort of knight, she could have fastened a spur on it. Or she might have belted a sword about her waist. But to have filled his fountain-pen, which was his real weapon, would have been rather stupid.... He was leading her, ever so sympathetically, to the door. He opened it, took from it the notice that had kept Mr. Prang away, and stood with her on the landing.



"Good-bye," she said.

He glanced over his shoulder, and then almost hurt her hands, he gripped them so hard.

"Good-bye," he said, his eyes looking into hers. "You *do* understand, don't you, Amory?"

"Yes, Edgar."

Even then he seemed loth to part from her. He accompanied her to the top of the stairs.

—"You'll let me know when you're coming again, won't, you?" he asked.

"Yes. Good-bye."

And she tore herself away.

At the first turning of the stairs Amory stood aside to allow a rather untidy young woman to pass. This young woman had a long bare neck that reminded Amory of an artist's model, and her hands were thrust into the fore-pockets of a brown knitted coat. She was whistling, but she stopped when she saw Amory.

"Do you know whether Mr. Dickinson, the poster artist, is up here?" she asked.

"The next floor, I think," Amory replied.

"Thanks," said the girl, and passed up.

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#### IV

#### THE OUTSIDERS

"NO, not this week," Dorothy said. "Dot wrote a fortnight ago. This one's from Mollie. (You remember Mollie, Katie? She came to that funny little place we had on Cheyne Walk once, but of course she was only about twelve then. She's nearly nineteen now, and so tall! They've just gone to Kohat).—Shall I read it, auntie?"

And she read:—

"I'm afraid I wrote you a hatefully skimpy letter last time—," h'm, we can skip that; here's where they started: "It was the beastliest journey that I ever made. To begin with, we were the eighteenth tonga that day, so we got tired and wretched ponies; we had one pair for fifteen miles and couldn't get another pair for love or money. We left Murree at two o'clock and got to Pindi at nine. The dust was ghastly. Mercifully Baba slept like a lump in our arms from five till nine, so he was all right. We had from nine till one to wait in Pindi Station, and had dinner, and Baba had a wash and clean-up and a bottle, and we got on board the train and off. Baba's cot, etc.; and we settled down for the night. Nurse and Baba and Mary and I were in one carriage and Jim next door. I slept beautifully till one o'clock, and then I woke and stayed awake. The bumping was terrific, and it made me so angry to look down on the others and see them fast asleep! I had an upper berth. Baba slept from eleven-thirty till six-thirty! So we had no trouble at all with him—"

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"Well, and so they got to Kohat. (I hope this isn't boring you, Katie.)"

"It was most beautifully cool and fresh, and we had the mess tonga and drove to the bungalow. The flowering shrubs here would delight Auntie Grace. I've fallen in love with a bush of hibiscus in the compound, but find it won't live in water, but droops directly one picks it. The trees are mostly the palmy kind, and so green, and the ranges of hills behind are exactly like the Red Sea ranges. The outside of our bungalow is covered with purple convolvulus, and the verandah goes practically all round it. Jim's room is just like him—heads he's shot, study, dressing-room, and workshop, all in one, and it's quite the fullest room in the house. Beyond that there's my room, looking out over the Sinai Range—"

"Then there are the drawing and dining-rooms—"

"The curtains are a pale terra-cotta pink over the door and dark green in the bay-windows, with white net in front. The drawing-room is all green. The durrie (that's the carpet) is green, with a darker border, and the sofa and chairs and mantelpiece-cover and the screen behind the sofa all green. There's another bay-window, with far curtains of green and the near ones chintz, an awfully pretty cream spotted net with a green hem let in. That makes three lots, two in the window itself and a third on a pole where the arch comes into the room. Then over the three doors there are chintz curtains, cream, with a big pattern of pink and green and blue, just like Harrods' catalogue—"

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"Can't you *see* it all!—H'm, h'm!... Then on the Sunday morning they got the mess tonga and went out to Dhoda, with butterfly-nets, and Jim went fishing—h'm, h'm—and she says—

"It's just like the Old Testament; I shouldn't have been in the least surprised to meet Abraham and Jacob. It's the flatness of it, and the flocks and herds. There are women with pitchers on their heads, and a man was making scores of bricks with mud and straw—exactly like the pictures of the Children of Israel in "*Line upon Line*." And about a hundred horses and mules and donkeys and carts all stopped at midday, because it was so hot, and it was just what I'd always imagined Jacob doing. But inside cantonments it isn't a bit Biblical, but rather too civilized, etc.'

("Isn't Katie patient, listening to all this, auntie!")



"But you can't go far afield at Kohat. At Murree you could always get a three or four mile walk round Pindi Point, but here it's just to the Club and back. We go to the Central Godown and the Fancy Godown to shop. The Central is groceries, and the Fancy toothpowder, Scrubb's Ammonia, etc. On Saturday they were afraid Captain Horrocks had smallpox, and so we all got vaccinated, but now that we've all taken beautifully it seems it isn't smallpox after all, and we've all got swelled arms, but Captain Horrocks is off the sick-list to-morrow. Colonel Wade is smaller than ever. Mrs. Wade is coming out by the "Rewa." Mrs. Beecher came to tea on Sunday—'

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("Is that *our* Mrs. Beecher, when Uncle Dick was at Chatham, auntie?")—

"—and I forgot to say that Dot's parrots stood the journey awfully well, but they've got at the loquat trees and destroyed all the young shoots. Jim saw us safely in and is now off on his Indus trip. The 56th are going in March, and the 53rd come instead. I'm sure the new baby's a little darling; what are you going to call him?—'

"And so on. I *do* think she writes such good letters. Now let's have yours, Aunt Grace (and that really *will* be the end, Katie)."

And Lady Tasker's letters also were "put in."

It was a Sunday afternoon, at Cromwell Gardens. Stan was away with his film company for the week-end, and Dorothy had got Katie to stay with her during his absence and had proposed a call on Lady Tasker. They had brought the third Bit with them, and he now slept in one of the cots upstairs. Lady Tasker sat with her crochet at the great first-floor window that looked over its balcony out along the Brompton Road. On the left stretched the long and grey and red and niched and statued façade of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the failing of the western flush was leaving the sky chill and sharp as steel and the wide traffic-polished road almost of the same colour. Inside the lofty room was the still glow of a perfect "toasting-fire," and Lady Tasker had just asked Katie to be so good as to put more coal on before it sank too low.

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Katie Deedes had made no scruple whatever about changing her coat in more senses of the words than one. She had bought a navy-blue costume and a new toque (with a wing in it), and since then had got into the way of expressing her doubts whether Britomart Belchamber's hockey legs and Dawn of Freedom eye were in the truest sense feminine. Nay, that is altogether to understate the change in Katie. She had now no doubt about these things whatever. As Saul became Paul, so Katie now not only reviled that which she had cast off, but was even prepared, like the Apostle at Antioch, to withstand the older Peters of Imperialism to their faces, did she detect the least sign of temporizing in them. And this treason had involved the final giving-way of every one of her old associates. She was all for guns and grim measures; and while she looked fondly on Boy Scouts in the streets and talked about "the thin end of the wedge of Conscription," she scowled on the dusky-skinned sojourners within London's gates, and advocated wholesale deportations.

And in all this Katie Deedes was only returning to her own fold, though her people were not soldiers, but lawyers. For the matter of that, her father's cousin was a very august personage indeed, for whose comfort, when he travelled, highly-placed railway officials made themselves personally responsible, and whose solemn progress to Assize was snapshotted for the illustrated papers and thrown on five hundred cinema screens. In the past Katie had been privileged to call this kingpost of the Law "Uncle Joe."...

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And then Mr. Strong had got hold of her....

And after Mr. Strong, Mr. Wilkinson....

And according to Mr. Wilkinson, the most ferocious of the hanging-judges had been a beaming humanitarian by comparison with Sir Joseph. Mr. Wilkinson had the whole of Sir Joseph's career at his fingers' ends: the So-and-So judgment—this or that flagrant summing up—the other deliberate and wicked misdirection to the jury. Sir Joseph's heart was black, his law bunkum, and he had only got where he was by self-advertisement and picking the brains of men a hundred times fitter for heaven than himself....

Therefore Katie, hearing this horrible tale, had quailed, and had straightway given away this devil who was the sinister glory of her house. She had agreed that he was a man whom anybody might righteously have shot on sight, and had gathered her Greenaway garments about her whenever she had passed within a mile of Sir Joseph's door....

But now he was "Uncle Joe" again, and—well, it must have been rather funny. For Katie's impressionable conscience had given her no rest day or night until she had sought Uncle Joe out and had made a clean breast of it all before him. Katie had fancied she had seen something like a twinkle in those sinful old eyes, but (this was when she mentioned the name of the "Novum") the twinkle had vanished again. Oh, yes, Sir Joseph, had heard of the "Novum." Didn't a Mr. Prang write for it?...

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And thereupon Katie had given Mr. Prang away too....

But in the end Sir Joseph had forgiven her, and had told her that she had better not be either a revolutionary, nor yet the kind of Conservative that is only a revolutionary turned inside-out, but just a good little girl, and had asked her how she was getting on, and why she hadn't been to see her Aunt Anne, and whether she would like some tickets for a Needlework Exhibition; and now she was just beginning to forget that he had ever been anything but "Uncle Joe," who had given her toys at Christmas, and Sunday tickets for the Zoo whenever she had wanted to go there on that particularly crowded day.

Dorothy had had something of this in her mind when she had brought Katie to Cromwell Gardens that Sunday afternoon. From Katie's new attitude to her own Ludlow project was not so

far as it seemed. If she could lead the zealous 'vert to such promising general topics as Boy Scouts, Compulsory Service, and the preparation of boys for the Army (topics that Katie constantly brought forward by denunciation of their opposites), her scheme would certainly not suffer, and might even be advanced.

And, as it happened, no sooner had Dorothy tucked her last letter back into its envelope than Katie broke out—earnestly, proselytizingly, and very prettily on the stump.

"There you are!" she exclaimed. "That's all *exactly* what I mean! Why, any one of those letters ought to be enough to convince anybody! Here are all these stupid people at home, ready to believe everything a native tells them, going on as they do, and hardly one of them's ever set foot out of England in his life! Of course the Indians know exactly what *they* want, but don't you see, Dorothy—," very patiently she explained it for fear Dorothy should not see, "—don't you see that it's all so much a matter of course to Mollie and those that they can actually write whole letters about window-curtains! I *love* that about the window-curtains! It's all such an old story to *them*! They *know*, you see, and haven't got to be talking about it all the time in order to persuade themselves! There it *is*!—But these other people don't know anything at all. They don't even see what a perfect answer window-curtains are to them! They go on and on and on—you *do* see what I mean, Dorothy?—"

"Yes, dear," said Dorothy, mildly thinking of the great number of people there were in the world who would take no end of trouble to explain things to her. "Go on."

And Katie continued to urge upon her friend the argument that those know most about a country who know most about it.

Katie had got to the stage of being almost sure that she remembered Mollie's coming into the studio in Cheyne Walk one day, when Lady Tasker, who had not spoken, suddenly looked up from her crochet and said, "Look, Dorothy—that's the girl I was speaking about—coming along past the Museum there."

Dorothy rose and walked to the window.—"Where?" she said.

"Passing the policeman now."

Dorothy gave a sudden exclamation.—"Why," she exclaimed, "—come here, Katie, quick—it's Amory Towers!—It is Amory, isn't it?"

Katie had run to the window, too. The two women stood watching the figure in the mushroom-white hat and the glaucous blue velvet that idled forlornly along the pavement.

"Do you mean Mrs. Pratt?" said Lady Tasker, putting up her glass again. "Are you quite sure?"

Once before in her life, in the days before her marriage, Amory Towers had done the same thing that she was doing now. Then, seeking something, perhaps a refuge from herself, she had walked the streets until she was ready to drop with fatigue, watching faces passing, passing, for ever passing, and slowly gathering from them a hypnotic stupor. Sometimes, for hour after hour, she had seen nothing but eyes—eyes various in shape and colour as the pebbles on a beach, sometimes looking into hers, sometimes looking past her, sometimes tipped with arrow-heads of white as they turned, sometimes only to be seen under their lids as a finger-nail is seen within the finger of a glove. And at other times, weary of her fellow-beings and ceasing to look any more at them, she had seen nothing but doors and windows, or fan-lights, or the numbers of houses, or window-boxes, or the patterns of railings, or the serried shapes of chimneys against the sky. She had been looking, and yet not looking, for Cosimo Pratt then; she was looking, and yet not looking, for Edgar Strong now. Had she met him she had nothing new to say to him; she only knew that he had taken weak possession of her mind. She was looking for him in South Kensington because he had once told her, when asked suddenly, that he lived in Sydney Street, S. W., and frequently walked to the Indian section of the Imperial Institute in order to penetrate into the real soul of a people through its art; and she was not looking for him, because one day she had remembered that he had said before that he lived in South Kentish Town—which was rather like South Kensington, but not the same—and something deep down within her told her that the other was a lie.

But yet her feet dragged her to the quarter, as to other quarters, and she talked to herself as she walked. She told herself that her husband did not understand her, and that it would be romantic and silencing did she take a lover to her arms; and she could have wept that, of all the flagrant splendours of which she dreamed, London's grey should remain her only share. And she knew that the attendants of the Imperial Institute had begun to look at her. Once she had spoken to one of them, but when she had thought of asking him whether he knew a Mr. Strong who came there to study Indian Art, her heart had suddenly failed her, and the question had stayed unspoken. Nevertheless, she had feared that the man had guessed her thought, and must be taking stock of her face against some contingency (to visualize which passed the heavy time on) that had a Divorce Court in it, and hotel porters and chambermaids who gave evidence, and the Channel boat, and two forsaken children, and grimy raptures in the Latin Quarter, and its hectic cafés at night....

And so she walked, feeling herself special and strange and frightened and half-resolved; and thrice in as many weeks Lady Tasker, sitting with her crochet at her window, had seen her pass, but had not been able to believe that this was the woman, with a husband and children, on whom she had once called at that house with the secretive privet hedge away in Hampstead.

"It *is* Amory!" Dorothy exclaimed. "Is she coming here?"

Lady Tasker spoke reflectively.—"I don't know. I don't think so. But—will you fetch her in? I should like to see her."

"If you like, auntie," said Dorothy, though a little reluctantly.

But Lady Tasker seemed to change her mind. She laid down her crochet and rose.

"No, never mind," she said. "I'll fetch her myself."

And the old lady of seventy passed slowly out of the room, and Katie and Dorothy moved away from the window.

Lady Tasker was back again in five minutes, but no Amory came with her. She walked back to her chair, moved it, and took up her work again.—"Switch the table light on," she said.

"Was it Amory?" Dorothy ventured to ask after a silence.

"Yes," Lady Tasker replied.

"And wouldn't she come in?"

"She said she was hurrying back home."

That raised a question so plain that Dorothy thought it tactful to make rather a fuss about finding some album or other that should convince Katie that she really had met the Mollie who had written the letter about the window-curtains. Lady Tasker's needle was dancing rather more quickly than usual. Dorothy found her album, switched on another light, and told Katie to make room for her on her chair.

Amory, dawdling like that, and then, when spoken to, to have the face to say that she was hurrying back home!—

It was some minutes later that Lady Tasker said off-handedly, "Has she any children besides those twins?"

"Amory?" Dorothy replied, looking up from the album. "No."

"How old is she?" Lady Tasker asked.

"Thirty-two, isn't she, Katie?"

"About that."

"Is she very—athletic?" Lady Tasker next wanted to know.

"Not at all, I should say."

"I mean she doesn't go in for marathon races or Channel swimming or anything of that kind?"

"Amory? No," said Dorothy, puzzled.

"And you're sure of her age?" the old lady persisted.

"Well—she may only be thirty-one."

"I don't mean is she younger. Is she *older* than that?"

"No—I know by my own age."

"H'm!" said Lady Tasker; and again her needle danced....

Dorothy was explaining to Katie that Mollie was fair, about her own colour, but of course the hair never came out right in a photograph, when Lady Tasker suddenly began a further series of questions.

"Dorothy——"

"Yes?"

"Did she—develop—early?"

"Who—Amory? I don't know. Did she, Katie? Of course she was quite the cleverest girl at the McGrath."

"Ah!... What did she do at the McGrath?"

"Why, painted. You're awfully mysterious, auntie! It was soon after she left the McGrath that she painted 'Barrage'—you've heard of her feminist picture that made such a stir!"

"Ah, yes. Yes. I didn't see it, but I did hear about it. I don't know anything about art.—Had she any affair before she married young Pratt?"

"No. I'm sure of that. I knew her so well." Dorothy was quite confident on that point, and Katie agreed. Lady Tasker's questions continued.

And then, suddenly, into this apparently aimless catechism the word "doctor" came. Dorothy gave a start.

"Aunt Grace!... Do you mean Amory's ill?" she cried.

Lady Tasker did not look up from her crochet.—"Ill?" she said. "I've no reason to suppose so. I didn't say she was ill. There's no illness about it.... By the way, I don't think I've asked how Stan is."

But for the curiously persistent questions, Dorothy might have seized the opportunity to hint that Stan was made for something more nationally useful than getting himself black and blue by stopping runaway horses for the film or running the risk of double pneumonia by being fished out of the sea on a January day—which was the form his bread-winning was taking on that particular week-end. But the Ludlow design was for the moment forgotten. She would have liked to ask her aunt straight out what she really meant, but feared to be rude. So she turned to the album again, and again Katie, turning from turban to staff-cap and from staff-cap to pith helmet, urged that *those* were the people who really knew what they were talking about—surely Dorothy saw *that!*—

Then, in the middle of Dorothy's bewilderment, once more the questions.... About that painting of her friend's, Lady Tasker wanted to know: did Mrs. Pratt get any real satisfaction out of it?—Any emotional satisfaction?—Was she entirely wrapped up in it?—Or was it just a sort of hitting at the air?—Did it exhaust her to no purpose, or was it really worth something when it was done?—

"If Dorothy doesn't know, surely you do, Katie."

Katie coloured a little.—"I liked 'Barrage' awfully at the time," she confessed, "but—," and she cheered up again, "—I *hate* it now."

"But did her work—what's the expression?—fill her life?"

Here Dorothy answered for Katie.—“I think she rather liked the fame part of it,” she said slowly.

“Does she paint now?”

“Very little, I think, Lady Tasker.”

“Has her children to look after, I suppose?”

“Well—she has both a nurse and a governess——”

“They’re quite well off, aren’t they? I seem to remember that Pratt came into quite a lot.”

“They seem to spend a great deal.”

“But that’s only a small house of theirs?”

“Oh, yes, they’re rather proud of that. They don’t spend their money selfishly. It goes to the Cause, you see.”

“What Cause?” Lady Tasker asked abruptly.

This was Katie’s cue....

She ceased, and Lady Tasker muttered something. It sounded rather like “H’m! Too much money and not enough to do!” but neither of her companions was near enough to be quite sure.

And thereupon the questions stopped.

But a surmise of their drift had begun to dawn glimmeringly upon Dorothy. She ceased to hear the exposition of Imperialism’s real needs into which Katie presently launched, and fell into a meditation. And of that meditation this was about the length and breadth:—

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Until the law should allow a man to have more wives than one (if then), of course only one woman in the world could be perfectly happy—the woman who had Stan. That conviction came first, and last, and ran throughout her meditation. And of what Dorothy might compassionately have called secondary happinesses she had hitherto not thought very much. She had merely thanked her stars that she had not married a man like Cosimo, had once or twice rather resented Amory’s well-meant but left-handed kindnesses, and that had been the extent of her concern about the Pratt household. But first Katie, and now her aunt, had set her wondering hard enough about that household now.

What, she asked herself, had the Pratts married on? What discoveries had they made in one another, what resources found within themselves? Apart from their talks and books and meetings and “interests” and that full pack of their theories, what *was* their marriage? Thrown alone together for an hour, did they fret? Did their yawning cease when the bell rang and a caller was admitted? Did even the same succession of callers become stale and a bore, so that strangers had to be sought to provide a stimulus? And did they call these and half a hundred other forms of mutual boredom by the rather resounding names that blabbing Katie had repeated to her —“wider interests,” “the broad outlook,” “the breaking down of personal insularity,” and the rest?

And for once Dorothy dropped her excusatory attitude towards her friend. She dropped it so completely that by and by she found herself wondering whether Amory would have married Cosimo had he been a poor man. She was aware that, stated in that way, it sounded hideous; nor did she quite mean that perhaps Amory had married Cosimo simply and solely because he *had* not been poor; no doubt Amory had assumed other things to be equal that as a matter of fact had unfortunately proved to be not equal at all; but she *did* doubt now whether Amory had not missed that something, that something made of so many things, that caused her own heart suddenly to gush out to the absent Stan. The thought frightened her a little. Had Amory married and had babies—all, as it were, beside the mark?...

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Dorothy did not know.

But an obscurer hint still had seemed to lie behind her aunt’s persistent questions. “Was Amory ill?” she herself had asked in alarm when that unexpected word “doctor” had been quietly dropped; and “Ill? I didn’t say she was ill; there’s no illness about it,” Lady Tasker had replied. No illness about what? Apparently about something Lady Tasker saw, or thought she saw, in Amory.... An old lady whose years had earned her the right to sit comfortably in her chair had gone so far as to descend the stairs and go out into the street to have a closer look at a young one: why? Why ask “Is she a Channel swimmer?” and “Is her painting a mere hitting of the air?” Why this insistence on some satisfaction for labour, as if without that satisfaction the labour wreaked on the labourer some sort of revenge? What sort of a revenge? And why on Amory?

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Yes, Dorothy would have liked to ask her aunt a good many questions....

She did not know that Lady Tasker could not have answered them. She did not know that the whole world is waiting for precisely those replies. She did not know that the data of a great experiment have not yet begun to be gathered together. She did not know that, while she and Stan would never see the results of that experiment, little Noel and the other Bits, and Corin and Bonniebell might. She only knew that her aunt was a wise and experienced woman, with an appetite for life and all belonging to it that only grew the stronger as her remaining years drew in, and that apparently Lady Tasker found something to question, if not to fear.

“Is she a Channel swimmer? Does she get any emotional satisfaction out of what she does?”

They were oddly precise questions....

Much less odd was that homely summing-up of Lady Tasker’s: “Too much money, and not enough to do.”...

Dorothy had often thought that herself.

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THE gate in the privet hedge of The Witan had had little rest all the afternoon. It was a Sunday, the one following that on which Lady Tasker had issued bareheaded from her door, had crossed the road, and had caused Amory to start half out of her skin by suddenly speaking to her. The Wyrons had come in the morning; they had been expressly asked to lunch; but it was known that Dickie Lemesurier was coming in afterwards to discuss an advertisement, and if Dickie came the chances were that Mr. Brimby would not be very long after her. As a matter of fact Dickie and Mr. Brimby had encountered one another outside and had arrived together at a little after three, bringing three young men, friends of Mr. Brimby's still at Oxford, with them. These young men wore Norfolk jackets, gold-pinned polo-collars, black brogues and turned-up trousers; and apparently they had hesitated to take Cosimo at his word about "spreading themselves about anywhere," for they stood shoulder to shoulder in the studio, and when one turned to look at a picture or other object on the wall, all did so. Then, not many minutes later, Mr. Wilkinson had entered, in his double-breasted blue reefer, bringing with him a stunted, bow-legged man who did not carry, but looked as if he ought to have carried, a miner's lamp; and by half-past four, of The Witan's habitués, only Mr. Prang and Edgar Strong were lacking. But Edgar was coming. It had been found impossible, or at any rate Amory had decided that it was impossible, to discuss the question of Dickie's advertisement without him. But he was very late.

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When Britomart Belchamber came in simultaneously with the tea and the twins at a little before five, the studio was full. The asbestos log purred softly, and Mr. Brimby's three Oxford friends, glad perhaps of something to do, walked here and there, each of them with a plate of bread and butter in either hand, not realizing that at The Witan the beautiful Chinese rule of politeness was always observed—"When the stranger is in your melon-patch, be a little inattentive." Had Dickie Lemesurier and Laura Wyron eaten half the white and brown that was presented to them, they must have been seriously unwell. It was Cosimo, grey-collared and with a claret-coloured velvet waistcoat showing under his slackly-buttoned tweed jacket, who gave the young men the friendly hint, "Everybody helps themselves here, my dear fellows." Then the Norfolk jackets came together again, and presently their owners turned with one accord to examine the hock and the top-side that hung on the wall over the sofa.

Not so much a blending of voices as an incessant racket of emphatic and independent pronouncements filled the studio. Walter Wyron had fastened upon the man who looked as if he ought to have carried a miner's lamp, and his forefinger was wagging like a gauge-needle as he explained that one of his Lectures had been misrepresented, and that he had *never* taken up the position that a kind of Saturnalia should be definitely state-established. He admitted, nevertheless, that the question of such an establishment ought to be considered, like any other question, on its merits, and that after that the argument should be followed whithersoever it led.—Dickie Lemesurier, excessively animated, and with the whites showing dancingly all round her pupils, was talking Césanne and Van Gogh to Laura, and declaring that something was "quite the" something or other.—Mr. Brimby's hand was fondling Bonniebell's head while he deprecated the high degree of precision of the modern rifle to Mr. Wilkinson. "If only it wasn't so ruthlessly logical!" he was sighing. "If only it was subject to the slight organic accident, to those beautiful adaptations of give-and-take that make judgment harsh, and teach us that we ought never to condemn!"—Corin, drawn by the word "gun," was demanding to be told whether that was the gun that had been taken away from him.—And Britomart Belchamber, indifferent alike to the glances of the Oxford men and their trepidation in her presence, stood like a caryatid under a wall-bracket with an ivy-green replica of Bastianini's Dante upon it.

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"No, no, not for a moment, my dear sir!" Walter shouted to the man who looked like (and was) a miner. "That is to ignore the context. I admit I used the less-known Pompeian friezes as a rough illustration of what I meant—but I did *not* suggest that Waring & Gillow's should put them on the market! What I did say was that we moderns must work out our damnation on the same lines that the ancients did. Read your Nietzsche, my good fellow, and see what *he* says about the practical serviceability of Excess! I contend that a kind of general *oubliance*, say for three weeks in the year, to which everybody without exception would have to conform (so that we shouldn't have the superior person bringing things up against us afterwards)——"

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"Ah doan't see how ye could mak' fowk——," the miner began, in an accent that for a moment seemed to blast a hole clean through the racket. But the hole closed up again.

"Ah, at present you don't," Walter cried. "The spade-work isn't done yet. We need more education. But every new and great idea——"

But here an outburst from Mr. Wilkinson to Mr. Brimby drowned Walter's voice. Mr. Wilkinson raised his clenched fist, but only for emphasis, and not in order to strike Mr. Brimby.

"Stuff and nonsense! There you go, Brimby, trimming again. We've heard all that: 'A great deal to be said on both sides,'"—(Mr. Wilkinson all but mimicked Mr. Brimby). "There isn't—not if you're going to do anything! There's only one side. You've got to shoot or be shot. I'm a shooter. Give me five hundred real men and plenty of barricade stuff——"

"Oh, oh, oh, my dear friend!" Mr. Brimby protested. "Why, if your principles were universally applied——"

"Who said anything about applying 'em universally? Hang your universal applications! I'm talking about the Industrial Revolution. I'll tell you what's the matter with you, Brimby: you don't like the sight of blood. I'm not blaming you. Some men are like that. But it's in every page of your writing. You've got a bloodless style. I don't mind admitting that I liked some of your earlier

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work, while there still seemed a chance of your making up your mind some day——”

But here Mr. Wilkinson in his turn was drowned, this time by an incredulous laugh from Cosimo, who had joined Dickie and Laura.

“Van Gogh says *that?*” his voice mounted high. “Really? You’re sure he wasn’t joking? Ha ha, ha ha!... But it’s rather pathetic really. One would think Amory’d never painted ‘Barrage,’ nor the ‘White Slave,’ nor that—,” he pointed to the unfinished canvas of “The Triumph of Humane Government” on the wall. “By Jove, I must make an Appendix of that!... Here—Walter!—Have you told him, Dickie?—Walter!——”

But Walter was now at deadly grips with the man who had forgotten his miner’s lamp.

“I tell you I never used Saturnalia in that sense at all!——”

But the miner stood his ground.

“Happen ye didn’t, but I’ll ask ye one question: Have ye ever been to Blackpool of a August Bank Holiday?——”

“My good man, you talk as if I proposed to do something with the stroke of a pen, to-morrow, before the world’s ready for it——”

“Have ye ever been to Blackpool of a Bank Holiday?”

“What on earth has Blackpool to do with it?——”

“Well, we’ll say Owdham Wakes week at t’ Isle o’ Man—Douglas——”

“Pooh! You’ve got hold of the wrong idea altogether! Do you know what Saturnalia *means?*——”

“I know there’s a man on Douglas Head, at twelve o’clock i’ t’ day, wi’ t’ sun shining, going round wi’ a stick an’ prodding ‘em up an’ telling ‘em to break away——”

“I shouldn’t have thought anybody could have been so *incredibly* slow to grasp an idea—!” cried Walter, his hands aloft.

“Have—you—ever—been—to—Blackpool—when—t’ Wakes—is on?”

Then Cosimo called again—

“Walter! I say! Come here!... Dickie’s just told me something that makes the ‘*Life and Work*’ rather necessary, I think!——”

And Walter turned his back on the miner and joined his wife and Dickie and Cosimo.

Anybody who wasn’t anybody might have supposed the noise to be a series of wrangles, but of course it wasn’t so at all really. Issues far too weighty hung in the balance. It is all very well for people whose mental range is limited by *matinéés* and Brooklands and the newest car to talk in pleasant and unimpassioned voices, but what was going to happen to Art unless Cosimo hurled himself and the ‘*Life and Work*’ against this heretic Van Gogh, and what was to become of England if Walter allowed a pig-headed man who could say nothing but “Blackpool Pier, Blackpool Pier,” to shout him down, and what would happen to Civilization if Mr. Wilkinson did not, figuratively speaking, take hold of the dilettante Brimby and shake him as a terrier shakes a rat? No: there would be time enough for empty politenesses when the battle was won.

In the meantime, a mere nobody might have thought they were merely excessively rude to one another.

Then began fresh combinations and permutations of the talk. Mr. Wilkinson, whose square-cut pilot jacket somehow added to the truculence of his appearance, planted himself firmly for conversation before Dickie Lemesurier; the miner, whose head at a little distance appeared bald, but on a closer view was seen to be covered with football-cropped and plush-like bristles, nudged Cosimo’s hip, to attract his attention: and Walter Wyron sprang forward with a welcoming “Hallo, Kaffinger!” as the door opened and two young McGrath students were added to the crowd. For a minute no one voice preponderated in the racket; it was—

“Hallo, Raff! Thought you weren’t coming!”

“I want a gun!” (This from Corin.)

“My dear Corin” (this from Bonniebell), “Miss Belchamber’s told you over and over again guns are anti-social——”

“Anybody smoking? Well, I know they don’t mind——”

“But, Miss Lemesurier, where a speaker reaches only a hundred or two, the written word——”

“Ah, but the personal, magnetic thrill——” (This was in Dickie’s rather deep voice.)

Then Walter, to somebody else, not the miner—

“I should have thought *anybody* would have known that when I said Saturnalia I meant——”

“Where’s Amory?”

“Sweet, in those little tunics!——”

“A subsidy from the State, of course——”

Then the miner, but not to Walter—

“I’ t’ daylight, proddin’ ‘em up wi’ a stick—to say nowt o’ Port Skillian bathin’-place of a fine Sunda’——”

“That hoary old lie, that Socialism means sharing——”

“Oh, at any artists’ colourman’s——”

“No; it will probably be published privately——”

“Van Gogh——”

“Oh, you’re *entirely* wrong!——”

And then, in the middle of a sudden and mysterious lull, the man who had come without his safety-lamp was heard addressing Cosimo again:—

“Well, what about t’ new paaper? Owt settled yet?... Nay, ye needn’t look; Wilkinson telled me; it’s all right; nowt ‘at’s said ‘ll go beyond these fower walls. Wilkinson’s gotten a rare list together, names an’ right, I can tell ye! But t’ way I look at it is this——”

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Cosimo looked blank.

"But, my dear—I'm afraid I didn't catch your name——," he said.

"Crabtree—Eli Crabtree. This is t' point I want to mak', mister. Ye see, I can't put things grammar; but there's lots about 'at can; so I thowt we'd get a sec'etary, an' I'd sit an' smoke whol' my thowts come, and then I'd tell him t' tale. Ye see, ye want to go slap into t' middle o' t' lives o' t' people. Now comin' up o' t' tram-top I bethowt me of a champion series: '*Back to Back Houses I've Known*.' I'll bet a crahn that wi' somb'dy to put it grammar for me——"

"My dear Crabtree, I'm afraid, don't you know, that there's been some mistake——"

And at this point, everybody becoming conscious at the same moment that they were listening, a fresh wave of sound flowed over the assembly; and presently Mr. Wilkinson was seen to take Cosimo aside and to be making the gestures of a man who is explaining some ridiculous mistake.

Then once more:—

"I beg your pardon—I thought you were Mrs. Pratt——"

"Put grammar—straight to fowk's hearts—sinks and slopstones an' all t' lot——"

"No, Balliol——"

"But listen, Pratt, the way the mistake arose——"

"Ellen Key, of course——"

"The 'Times!'—As if the 'Times' wasn't *always* wrong!——"

"There's a raucousness about her paint——"

"The Caxton Hall, at eight—do come!——"

"But we authors are so afraid of sentiment nowadays!——"

"Bombay, I think—or else Hyderabad——"

"Oh, he talks like a fool!——"

"Raff! Come here and recite '*The King is Duller*'——"

"But Love *is* Law!——"

"Suspend our judgments until we've heard the other side——"

"Only water—but they couldn't break her spirit—she was out again in three days——"

And again there came an unexpected lull.

This time it was broken by, perhaps not the loudest, but certainly the most travelling voice yet—the voice of the caryatid beneath the bracket with the bust upon it. Miss Belchamber was dressed in a sleeveless surcoat chess-boarded with large black and white squares; the skirt beneath it was of dark blue linen; and there were beards of leather on her large brown brogues. One of the young Oxford men, greatly daring, had approached her and asked her a question. She turned slowly; she gave the young man the equal-soul-to-equal-soul look; and then the apparatus of perfect voice-production was set in motion. Easily and powerfully the air came from her magnificent chest, up the splendid six-inch main of her throat, rang upon the hard anterior portion of her palate, and was cut, as it were, to its proper length and shaped into perfect enunciation by her red tongue and beautiful white teeth.

"What?" she said.

The undergraduate fell a little back.

"Only—I only asked if you'd been to many theatres lately."

"Not any."

"Oh!... I—I suppose you know everybody here?"

"Yes."

"Do point them out to me!"

"That's Walter Wyron. That's Mrs. Wyron. That's Miss Lemesurier. I don't know who the little man is. That's Mr. Wilkinson. My name's Belchamber."

"Oh—I say—I mean, thanks awfully. We've heard of them all, of course," the unhappy young man faltered.

"What?"

"All distinguished names, I mean."

"Of course."

"Rather!——"

And again everybody listened, became conscious of the fact, and broke out anew.

But where all this time was Amory?

Demonstrably, exactly where she ought to have been—in her bedroom. She was too dispirited to be accessible to the rational talk of others; she did not feel that she had energy enough to be a source of illumination herself; surely, then, merely because a lot of people, invited and uninvited, chose to come to The Witan, she need not put herself out to go and look after them. They might call themselves her "guests" if they liked; Amory didn't care what form of words they employed; the underlying reality remained—that she was intensely bored, and too fundamentally polite to bore others by going down. Perhaps she would go down when Edgar came. She had left word that she was to be informed of his arrival. But he was very late.

Nevertheless, she knew that he would come. Lately she had grown a little more perspicacious about that. It had dawned on her that, everything else apart, she had some sort of hold on him through the "Novum," and there had been a trace of command in her summons that he was pretty sure not to disregard. No doubt he would try to get away again almost directly, but she had arranged about that. She intended to keep him to supper. Also the Wyrons. And Britomart Belchamber too would be there. And of course Cosimo.

She moved restlessly between her narrow bed and the window, now polishing her nails, now glancing at her hair in the glass. From the window she could see over the privet hedge and down

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the road, but there was no sign of Edgar yet. She looked at herself again in the glass, without favour, and then sat down on the edge of her bed again.

Her meeting with Lady Tasker the week before had greatly unsettled her. Very stupidly, she had quite forgotten that Lady Tasker lived in Cromwell Gardens. She would have thought nothing at all of the meeting had Lady Tasker had a hat on her head and gloves on her hands; she would have set that down as an ordinary street-encounter; but Dorothy's aunt had evidently seen her from some window, perhaps not for the first time, and, if not for the first, very likely for the third or fourth or fifth. In a word, Amory felt that she had been caught.

And, as she had been thinking of Edgar Strong at the moment when the old lady's voice had startled her so, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that her start had seemed remarkable. Lady Tasker was so very sharp.

At all events, even Edgar was not going to have everything all his own way.

For she was sure now that she had the hold of the "Novum" on him, and that that hold was not altogether the single-minded devotion to his duty he had made it out to be on that day when she had last gone to the office. Not that she thought too unkindly of him on that account. The labourer, even in the field of Imperial Politics, is still worthy of his hire, and poor Edgar, like the rest of the world, had to make the best compromise he could between what he would have liked to do and what circumstances actually permitted him to do. Of course he would be anxious to keep his job. If he didn't keep it a worse man would get it, and India would be no better off, but probably worse. She sighed that all work should be subject to compromises of this kind. Edgar, in a word, was no longer a hero to her, but, by his very weakness, something a little nearer and dearer still.

But for all that she had not hesitated to use her "pull" in order to get him to The Witan that day.

She saw him as she advanced to the glass again. He was nearly a quarter of a mile down the road. She found a little secret delight in watching his approach when he was unconscious of her watching. His figure was still very small, and she indulged herself with a fancy, closing her eyes for a moment in order to do so. Suppose he had been, not approaching, but going away—then when she opened her eyes again he would look smaller still.... She opened them, and experienced a little thrill at seeing him nearer and plainer. She could distinguish the red spot of his tie. Now he turned his head to look at some people who passed. Now he stepped off the pavement to make room for somebody. Now he was on the pavement again—now hidden by a tree—now once more disclosed, and quite near—

She straightened herself, gave a last look into the glass, and descended.

She met him in the hall. They shook hands, but did not speak. There was no need for him to ask whether anybody had come; the babble of noise could be plainly heard through the closed studio door. They walked along the passage, descended the two steps into the garden, and reached the studio.

Strong opened the door, and—

"Ha, ha, ha! I shall tell them that at the Nursery!—"

"No—just living together—"

"Corin!—Corin!—"

"The eighteenth, at the Little Theatre—"

Then the voice of Mr. Crabtree vociferating to his friend Mr. Wilkinson.

"I thowt ye telled me 'at Pratt knew all about it—"

"One day in the High, just opposite Queens—"

"Not know the '*Internationale*'!—Debout, les damnés de la terre—!"

Next, sonorously, Miss Belchamber.

"Yes, I dance 'Rufty Tufty' and 'Catching of Quails'—"

"But my good chap, don't you see that the Referendum—"

"Oh, throw it down anywhere—on the hearth—"

"Really, the bosh he talks—"

"The Minority Report—"

"Corin!—"

"Plato—"

"Prang—"

Then, before anybody had had time to notice the entry of Amory and Edgar Strong, an extraordinary, not to say a regrettable thing occurred.

Mr. Eli Crabtree had spent the last twenty minutes in going deliberately from one person to another, often thrusting himself unceremoniously between two people already engaged in conversation, and in subjecting them to questionings that had become less and less reticent the further he had passed round the room. And it appeared that this collier who had forgotten his Davy had yet another lamp with him—the lamp of his own narrow intelligence and inalienable, if worthless, experience. By the help of that darkness within him that he mistook for light, he had added inference to inference and conclusion to conclusion. Cosimo—Wilkinson—Walter Wyron—Brimby—the Balliol men—the young students of the McGrath—he had missed not one of them; but none knew the portent of his tour of the studio until he had reached the hearth again. Then he was seen to be standing with his hands behind him, as if calmly summing them up.

"By—Gow!" he said half to himself, his football-cropped head moving this way and that and his eyes blinking rapidly as he sought somebody to address.

Then, all in a moment, he ceased his attempt to single out one more than another, and was addressing them in the lump, for all the world as if he had been allowed the entrée of the house,



not as a high and memorable privilege and in order that he might learn something he had never suspected before, but as if, finding himself there, *he* might as well tell *them* a thing or two while he was about it. And though his astonishment at what he had seen might well have rendered him dumb, his good temper did not for an instant forsake him.

"By—Gow!" he said again. "But this is a menagerie, an' reight!"

The instantaneous dead silence and turn of every head might have disconcerted a prophet, but they made not the slightest impression on Mr. Crabtree.

"It *is* a menagerie!" he continued superbly. "Ding, if onnybody'd told me I wadn't ha' believed 'em!—Let's see how monny of ye there is—"

And calmly he began to count them.

"Fowerteen—fifteen—sixteen countin' them two 'at's just come in an' leavin' out t' barns. Sixteen of ye, grown men an' women, an' not a single one of ye knows ye're born! Nay, it's cappin'!—Him wi' his Salmagundys or whativver he calls 'em, an' niver been on Douglas Head!—T' maister here, 'at doesn't know what a back-to-back is, I'se warrant!—An' yon chap—," Mr. Crabtree's forefinger was straight as a pistol between Mr. Brimby's eyes, "'at says there's a deal to be said o' both sides an'll be having his pocket-ankercher out in a minute!—An' these young men thro' t' Collidge!—Nay, if it doesn't beat all! I ne'er thowt to live to see t' day!—"

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And he made a T-t-t-ing with his tongue on his palate, while his sharp little eyes looked on them all with amusement and pity.

Out of the silence of consternation that had fallen on the studio Walter Wyron was the first to come. He nudged Cosimo, as if to warn him not to spoil everything, and then, with his hands deep in the pockets of his knickers and an anticipatory relish on his face, said "I say, old chap—make us a speech, won't you?"

But if Walter thought to take a rise out of Mr. Crabtree he was quite, quite mistaken. With good-natured truculence the collier turned on him also.

"A speech?" he said. "Well, I wasn't at t' back o' t' door when t' speechifyin'-powers was given out; it wadn't be t' first time I'd made a speech, nut by a mugfull. Mony's t' time they've put Eali Crabtree o' t' table i' t' 'Arabian Horse' at Aberford an' called on him for a speech. I'd sooner mak' a speech nor have a quart o' ale teamed down my collar, an' that's all t' choice there is when t' lads begins to get lively!... I don't suppose onny o' ye's ever been i' t' 'Arabian Horse'? We owt to come, of a oppenin'-time of a Sunda' morning. Ye'd see a bit o' life. Happen ye might ha' to get at t' back o' t' door—if they started slinging pints about, that is—but it's all love, and ye've got to do summat wi' it when ye can't sup onny more. I should like to have him 'at talks about t' Paraphernalia there; it 'ld oppen his eyes a bit! An' him 'at wor reciting about t' King an' all—t' little bastard i' t' corner there—"

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At this word, used in so familiar and cheerful a sense, Laura Wyron stiffened and turned her back; but Walter still hoped for his "rise."

"Go on," he said; "give us some more, old chap."

The child of nature needed no urging.

"Ay, as much as ivver ye like," he said accommodatingly. "But I wish I'd browt my voice jewjewbes. Ay, I willn't be t' only one 'at isn't talking! T' rest on ye talks—ding, it's like a lamb's tail, waggin' all day and nowt done at neet—so we mud as weel all be friendly-like! Talk! Ay, let's have a talk! Here ye all are, all wi' your fine voices an' fine clothes, an' ivvery one o' ye wi' t' conveeance i' t' house, I don't doubt, an' I'll bet a gallon there isn't one o' ye's ivver done a hands-turn i' your lives! Nay, ye're waur nor my Aunt Kate! Come down to Aberford an' I'll show ye summat! Come—it's a invitaation—I'll see it doesn't cost ye nowt! T' lads is all working, all but t' youngest, an' we're nooan wi' out! No, we're nooan wi'out at our house! I'll interdewce ye to t' missis, an' ye can help her to peel t' potates, an' ye can go down i' t' cage if ye like! Come, an' I'll kill a pig, just for love. Come of a Sunda' dinnertime, when t' beef's hot. Wilkinson knows what I mean; he knows t' life; he reckons not to when he's wi' his fine friends, but Wilkie's had to lie i' bed while his shirt was being mended afore to-day!... Nay, the hengments!" He broke into a jovial laugh. "Ye know nowt about it, an' ye nivver will! These 'ere young pistills fro' t' Collidge—what are they maalakin' at? It doesn't tak' five thousand pound a year to learn a lad not to write a mucky word on a wall!" (Here Dickie Lemesurier turned her back on the speaker)... "They want to get back to their Collidges. T' gap's ower wide. They'll get lost o' t' road. Same as him 'at wrote t' book about t' pop-shop—," again Mr. Crabtree's forefinger was levelled between Mr. Brimby's eyes. "Brimbyin' about, an' they don't know a black puddin' from a Penny Duck! Has he ivver had to creep up again t' chimley-wall to keep himself warm i' bed, or to pull t' kitchen blinds down while he washed himself of a Saturda' afternooin? But ye can all come an' see if ye like. We've had to tew for it, but we're nooan wi'out now. An' I'll show ye a bit o' sport too. We all have we'r whippets, an' we can clock t' pigeons in, an' see what sort of a bat these young maisters can mak' at knurr-an'-spell—eighteen-and-a-half score my youngest lad does! Ay, we enjoy we'rsens! An' there's quoits an' all. Eighteen yards is my distance if onnybody wants to laake for a beast's-heart supper! Come—ding it, t' lot o' ye come! We can sleep fower o' ye, wed 'uns, heads to tails, if ye don't mind all being i' t' little cham'er—"

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By this time Mr. Crabtree was having to struggle to keep his audience. Mr. Brimby too had turned away, and Mr. Wilkinson, and even Miss Belchamber had spoken several words of her own accord to the young Balliol boy. The tide of sound began to rise again, so that once more Mr. Crabtree's voice was only one among many. Then Walter started forward with an "Ah, Amory!" and "Hallo, Strong!" Mr. Raffinger of the McGrath exclaimed...

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"Perseverance Row, fower doors from t' 'Arabian Horse'—," Mr. Crabtree bawled hospitably through the hubbub...

"Oh, you *must* see it—the New Greek Society, on the seventeenth—"

"But I say—what *is* 'Catching of Quails,' Miss Belchamber—?"  
 "Mr. Wilkinson brought him, I think—"  
 "Fellow of All Souls, wasn't he?—"  
 Then that genial Aberford man again:  
 "I tell ye t' gap's ower wide, young man—ye'll get lost o' t' road—"  
 "No, the children take her name—"  
 "Got a match, old fellow?—"  
 "Rot, my dear chap!—"  
 "But what *is* condonation if that isn't?—"  
 "Oh, the ordinary brainless Army type—"  
 "I read it in the German—"  
 "They gained time by paying in pennies—"  
 "In Père Lachaise—"  
 "Well, we can talk about it at suppertime—"  
 "But with cheaper Divorce—"  
 "One an' all—whenivver ye like—Eali Crabtree, Perseverance Row, Aberford, fower doors from  
 t' 'Arabian Horse'—"  
 "Nietzsche—"  
 "Finot—"  
 "Weininger—"  
 "Wadham—"  
 "Aberford—"  
 "Rufty Tufty—"

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## VI

### THE SOUL STORM

"I — SAY! —"  
 "Wasn't he priceless! —"  
 "You got his address, Cosimo? I *must* cultivate him! —"  
 "Pure delight! —"  
 "You had come in, hadn't you, Amory? —"  
 "He *shot* Brimby! —"  
 "To all intents and purposes—with his finger —"  
 "Can you do his accent, Walter? —"  
 "I will in a week, or perish —"  
 "His bath in the kitchen! —"  
 "T' wed 'uns can sleep i' t' little chamber —"  
 "No—he didn't sound the 'b' in 'chamber,' and there were at least three 'a's' in it —"  
 "'T' little chaaam'er' —"  
 "No, you haven't quite got it —"  
 "Give me a little time —"

The party had dwindled to six—Cosimo and Amory, the Wyrans, and Britomart Belchamber and Mr. Strong. They were still in the studio, but they were only waiting for the supper-gong to ring. Cigarette ends were thickly strewn about the asbestos log. The bandying of short ecstatic phrases had been between Walter and his wife, with Cosimo a little less rapturously intervening; the subject of them was, of course, Mr. Crabtree. To his general harangue Mr. Crabtree had added, before leaving, more particular words of advice, making a second tour of the studio for the purpose; and he had distinguished Walter above all the rest by inviting him, not merely to the house four doors from the "Arabian Horse," but to spend a warm afternoon with him on Douglas Head also.

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But the Wyrans had these raptures pretty much to themselves. Perhaps Cosimo was thinking of Mr. Wilkinson, of some new paper of which he had never heard, and of the assumption that he, apparently, was to find the money for it. Miss Belchamber was rarely rapturous, so that her silence was nothing out of the way. Edgar Strong could be rapturous when he chose, but he evidently didn't choose now. And Amory had far too much on her mind.

Her original idea in asking the Wyrans to stay to supper had been that they, as acknowledged experts in the subject that perplexed her, would be the proper people to keep the ring while the four persons immediately concerned talked the whole situation quietly and reasonably and thoroughly out. But she was rather inclined now to think again before submitting her case to them. It would be so much better, if the case must be submitted to anybody, that Cosimo should do it. Then she herself would be able to shape her course in the light of anything that might turn up. Nothing, she had to admit, had turned up yet, and Amory was not sure that in that very fact there did not lie a sufficient cause for resentment. Had Cosimo pleaded a passion for Britomart Belchamber he would have had Passion's excuse. Lacking Passion, it could only be concluded that he was bored with Amory herself.

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And that amounted to an insult....

The booming of the gong, however, cut short her brooding. They passed to the dining-room. Britomart and Walter sat with their backs to the tall black dresser with the willow pattern stretching up almost to the ceiling; Laura and Edgar took the German chairs that had their backs to the copper-hooded fireplace; and Cosimo and Amory occupied either end of the highly polished clothless table. This absence of cloth, by the way, gave a church-like appearance to the flames of the candles in the spidery brass sticks that had each of them a ring at the top to lift it up by; the preponderance of black oak and dull black frames on the walls further added to the effect of gloom; and the putting down of the little green pipkins of soup and the moving of the green-handled knives and round-bowled spoons made little knockings from time to time.

Again Walter and Laura, with not too much help from Cosimo, sustained the weight of the conversation; and it was not until Amory asked a question in a tone from which rapture was markedly absent that they sponged, as it were, the priceless memory of Mr. Crabtree from their minds. Amory's question had been about Walter's new Lecture, still in course of preparation, on "*Post-Dated Passion*"; and Walter cursorily ran over its heads for the general benefit.

"I admit I got the idea from Balzac," he said between mouthfuls (whenever they came to The Witan the Wyrons supped almost as heartily as did Edgar Strong himself). "'Comment l'amour revient aux vieillards,' you know. But of course that hasn't any earthy interest for anybody. 'Aux vieilles' it ought to be. Then—well, then you've simply got 'em."

"Why not 'vieillards?'" Amory asked, not very genially.

"I say, Cosimo, I'll have another outlet if I may.—Why not 'vieillards?' Quite obvious. Men aren't the interest. I've tried men, and you can ask Laura how the bookings went.—But 'vieilles' and I've got 'em. Really, Amory, you're getting quite dull if you don't see that! I'll explain. You see, I've already got the younger ones, like Brit here—shove the claret along, Brit—but the others, of forty or fifty say, well, they've all had their affairs—or if they haven't better still—and it's merely a question of touching the right chord. Regrets, time they've lost, fatal words 'Too late' and so on—it's simply *made* for me! Touch the chord and they do the rest for themselves. They probably won't hear half of it for sobbing.—Of course I shall probably have to modify my style a bit—not quite so—what shall I say—"

"Jaunty," his wife suggested, "—in the best sense, I mean—"

"Hm—that's not quite the word—but never mind. It's a great field. Certainly women, not men, are the draw."

Amory made a rather petulant objection, and the argument lasted some minutes. In the end Walter triumphantly gained his first point, that women and not men were the "draw" in the box-office sense; and also his second one, namely, that not the Britomarts, but the older women, who would put their hearts into his hands and pay him for exploiting their helplessness and ache and tenderness and regret, and never suspect that they were being practised upon, were "simply made for him...." "What do you think of my title?" he asked.

And the title was discussed.

Amory was beginning to find Walter just a little grasping. She wished that after all she had not asked the Wyrons to stay to supper. Formerly she had thought that marriage-escapade of theirs big and heroic (that too, by the way, had been in the Latin Quarter, and probably on seven francs a day); but now she was less sure about that. Quite apart from the inapplicability of the Wyrons' experience to her own case, she now wondered whether theirs had in fact been experience at all. Now that she came to think of it, they had taken no risks. They *had* been married, and in the last event could always turn round on their critics and silence them with that fact....

Nor was she quite so ready now to lay even the souls of Britomart and Cosimo on the dissecting-table for the sake of seeing Walter exercise his professional skill upon them. This was not so much that she wanted to spare Cosimo and Britomart as that she did not want to give Walter a gratification. She was inclined to think that if Walter couldn't be a little more careful about contradicting her he might find his advertisement omitted from the "Novum" one week, as Katie Deedes' had been omitted, and where would he be then? The way in which he had just said that she was "getting quite dull" had been next door to a rudeness....

But she had to admit that she felt dull. Edgar, who sat next to her, did not speak, and Cosimo, who faced her, was apparently still brooding on people who planned the spending of his money without thinking it necessary to consult him first. She was tired of the whole of the circumstances of her life. Paris on seven francs a day could hardly be much worse. Nor, if she could but shake off her lethargy, need that sum be fixed as low as seven francs. For she had lately remembered an arrangement made between herself and Cosimo before she had ever consented to become engaged to him. It was a long time since either of them had spoken of this arrangement—so long that Cosimo would have been almost within his rights had he maintained that the circumstances had so altered as to make it no longer binding; but there it was, or had been, and it had never been expressly revoked. It was the arrangement by which they had set apart a fund to insure themselves, either or both of them, against any evils that might arise from incompatibility. Amory had no idea how the matter now stood. She didn't suppose for a moment that Cosimo had actually set a sum by each week or month; but, hard and fast or loose and fluid, he must have made, or be still ready to make, some provision. It was an inherent part of the contract that a solemn affirmation, with reason shown (spiritual, not mere legal reason) by either one or the other, should constitute a sufficient claim on this fund.

Therefore Paris need not necessarily be the worst penury.

But, for all her new inclination to leave the Wyrons out of it, she still thought it a prudent idea to carry the fight (not that there would be any fight—that was only a low way of expressing the high reasonableness that always prevailed at The Witan) to Cosimo and Britomart, rather than to have it centre about Edgar and herself. Walter's eyes were mainly on the box-office nowadays.

The original virtue of that fine protest of theirs was—there was no use in denying it—gone. He spread his Lectures frankly now as a net. Well, that was only one net more among the many nets of which she was becoming conscious. Edgar too, poor boy, was compelled to regard even the “Novum” as in some manner a net. Mr. Brimby, Amory more than guessed, had nets to spread. Mr. Wilkinson, in his own way, was out for a catch; and Dickie fished at the Suffrage Shop; and Katie had fished at the Eden; and the only one who didn’t fish was Mr. Prang, who wrote his articles about India for nothing, just to be practising his English.

All these nets were spread for somebody’s money—a good deal of it Cosimo’s. It had been the same, though perhaps not quite so bad, at Ludlow. That experiment on the country-side had been alarmingly costly. And all this did not include the dozens and dozens of nets of narrower mesh. The “Novum” might gulp down money by the hundred, but the lesser things were hardly less formidable in the sum of them—subscriptions, contributions, gifts, loans, investments, shares in the Eden and the Book Shop, mortgages, second mortgages, subsidies, sums to “tide over,” backings, guarantees, losses cut, more good money sent to bring back the bad, fresh means of spending devised by somebody or other almost every day. It had begun to weary even Amory. The people who came to The Witan became rather curiously better-dressed the longer their visiting continued; but the things they professed to hold dear appeared very little further advanced. All that first brightness and promise had gone. Amory’s interest had gone. She wanted to escape from it all, and to go away with Edgar appeared once more to be the readiest way out.

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But, though she might now wish to keep Walter Wyron out of it all, that did not necessarily mean that Walter would be kept out. This *ex-officio* specialist on the (preferably female) heart, this professional rectifier of unfortunate marriages, had not done a number of years’ platform-work without having discovered the peculiar beauties of the *argumentum ad hominem*, and it was one of his practices to enforce his arguments with “Take the case of Brit here”—or “Let’s get down to the concrete: suppose Amory—” And these descents to the particular had always a curiously accusatory effect. Walter, interrupting Amory’s meditation, broke into one of them now.

“But my dear chap,”—this was to Cosimo, “—I can’t imagine what’s come over all of you tonight! First Amory, now you! You’re usually quicker than this! Let’s take a case.—Brit here—”

One sterno-mastoid majestically turned the caryatid’s head. Again Miss Belchamber’s grand thorax worked as if somebody had put a penny into the slot.

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“What?” she said.

“Quiet, Brit; I’m only using you as an illustration.—Suppose Brit here was to develop a passion for somebody—Cosimo, say; yes, Cosimo’ll do capitally; awfully good instance of the cant that’s commonly talked about ‘treachery’ and ‘under his own roof’ and all the rest of it—as if a roof wasn’t a roof and it hadn’t got to be under somebody’s—unless they went out on the Heath!—Well, suppose it was to happen to Cosimo and Brit; what then? We’re civilized, I hope. We’re a little above the animals, I venture to think. Amory wouldn’t fly at Brit’s eyes, and Brit’s father wouldn’t come round with a razor to cut Cosimo’s throat. In fact—”

“My fa-ther al-ways uses a safety-razor,” said Miss Belchamber with a reminiscent air.

“Don’t interrupt, Brit.—I was going to say that the world’s got past all that. Nor Brit wouldn’t fly at Amory, nor Cosimo kick the old josser out of the house—though we should be much more ready to condone that part of it if they did—if it was only to get quits with the past a bit—”

“My fa-ther’s forty-five,” Miss Belchamber announced, as the interesting result of an interesting mental process of computation. “Next June,” she added.

“More interruptions from the back of the hall.—In fact, I’m not sure that *wouldn’t* be entirely defensible—Brit going for Amory and Cosimo kicking the old dodderer out, I mean. That’s the justification of the *crime passionel*. It’s the Will to Live. And by Live I mean Love. It’s the old saying, that kissing lips have no conscience. Or Jove laughs at lovers’ oaths. Quite right. It’s the New Greek Spirit. But for all that we’re modern and rational about these things. If Strong here wanted to take Laura from me I should simply say, ‘All you’ve got to do, my dear chap, is to table your reasons, and if they’re stronger than mine you take her.’ See?”

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At that Edgar Strong, like Britomart, looked up. He spoke for the first time.—“What’s that you’re saying?” he asked.

“I don’t suppose you’d want her, but suppose you did....”

Mr. Strong dropped his eyes to his plate again.—“Ah, yes,” he said. “Ellen Key’s got something about that.” And he relapsed into silence again.

It sounded to Amory idiotic. Walter was so evidently “trying” it on them in order to see how it would go down with an audience afterwards. She wouldn’t have scratched Britomart’s eyes out for Cosimo,—but she coloured a little, and bit her lip, at the thought that somebody might want to come between herself and Edgar.... But perhaps that was what Walter meant—real affinities, as distinct from the ordinary vapid assumptions about marriages being made in Heaven. If so, she agreed with him—not that she was much fonder of him on that account. She wished he would keep his personalities for Cosimo and Britomart, and leave herself and Edgar alone.—Walter went on.

“And then, when you’ve got your New Greek Certificate, so to speak, it’s plainly the duty of everybody else, not to put obstacles in your way and to threaten you with razors and cutting off supplies, but to sink their personal feelings and to do everything they can to help you. And without snivelling either. I shouldn’t snivel, I hope, if anybody took Laura, and she wouldn’t if anybody took me—”

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Here Laura interposed softly.—“I don’t want any one to take you, dear,” she said.

Walter turned sharply.

“Eh?... Now you’ve put me off my argument.... What was I saying?... Haven’t I told you you must *never* do that, Laura?... No, it’s quite gone.... You see....”

Laura murmured that she was very sorry...

"No, it's gone," said Walter, almost cheerfully, as if not sorry that for once the worth of what he had been about to say should be measured by the sense of loss. "So since Laura wishes it I'll shut up."

He passed up his plate for a second helping of trifle.

By this time Amory was perhaps rather glad that she had had the Wyrans after all. That about people not putting obstacles in the way was quite neat. "A plain duty," he had said. She hoped Cosimo'd heard that, and would remember it when she raised the subject of the fund. And so far was she herself from putting obstacles in *his* way that, although she could have sent Britomart Belchamber packing with her wages at any moment, she had not done so. That, as Walter had said, would only have been another way of flying at her eyes.... Besides, Amory had been far too deeply occupied to formulate definitely her charges against Cosimo and Britomart. For all she knew it might have gone much, much further than she had thought. Sometimes, when Amory took breakfast in her own room, she did not see Cosimo until the evening, and Britomart too had heaps of time on her hands when she had finished with Corin and Bonniebell. Cosimo must not tell her that the "*Life and Work*" occupied him during every minute of his time....

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Then, presently, she was sorry again that the Wyrans had been asked, for Walter had suddenly remembered the thread of his discourse, and, in continuing it, had been almost rude to Laura. She wondered whether he would have turned with a half angry "Why, what's the matter?" had Laura cried. Perhaps it was really a good thing the Wyrans hadn't any children, for this kind of thing would certainly have been a bad example for them. She herself was never rude to Cosimo before Corin and Bonniebell. She was always markedly polite. There were excuses to be made for Passion, but none for rudeness.

By this time Edgar Strong had finished his last piece of cheese and was wiping his lips with his napkin. Then he looked at his watch, and for the second time during the course of the meal spoke.

"Look here, Cosimo, I've got to be off presently, and we haven't settled about those advertisements yet. And there's something else I want to say to you too. Could we hurry coffee up? Where do we have it? In the studio, I suppose? Or do the others go into the studio and you and Walter and I have ours here?"

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"We might as well all go into the studio," said Cosimo, rising; and they left the sombre room and sought the studio, all except Miss Belchamber, who went upstairs.

The sight of the innumerable cigarette-ends about the asbestos log reminded Walter of Mr. Crabtree again; and for a minute or two—that is to say during the time that Walter, taking her aside, told her of the quiet but penetrating side-light Mr. Crabtree had innocently shed on Mr. Wilkinson's scheme for some new paper or other that Cosimo was to finance—Amory was once more glad that the Wyrans had come. But the next moment, as Walter loitered away and Laura came and sat softly down beside her, she was sorry again. Laura was gently crying. That struck Amory as stupid. As if she hadn't enough great troubles of her own, without burdening herself with the Wyrans' trivial ones!

So, as she had nothing really helpful to say to Laura, she left her, and sat down on the footstool she had occupied on the day when Edgar Strong had said that he liked the casts and had asked her whether she had read something or other—she forgot what.

Edgar was talking in low tones to Cosimo, and Amory thought she heard the name of Mr. Prang. Then Cosimo, who always thought more Imperially with a map before him, got out the large atlas, and the two of them bent over it together. Walter joined them, and, after an interlude that appeared to be about the Lectures' advertisement, Walter strolled away again and joined Laura. Amory heard an "Eh?" and a moment later the word "touchy," and Walter went off to the window with his hands in the pockets of his knickers, whistling. Edgar took not the least notice of Amory's eyes intently fixed upon him. He continued to talk to Cosimo. Walter, who was examining a Japanese print, called over his shoulder, "This a new one, Amory? What is it—Utamaro?" Then he walked up to where Laura sat again. He was speaking in an undertone to her: "Rubbish ... take on like that ... better clear off then"; and a moment later, seeing Edgar Strong buttoning up his coat, he called out, "Wait a minute, Strong—we're going down too—get your hat, Laura—"

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Five minutes later Cosimo Pratt and his wife were alone.

It was the first time they had been so for nearly a fortnight. Indeed, for weeks the departure of the last visitor had been the signal for their own good-night, Cosimo going his way, she hers. There had never been anything even remotely approaching a "scene" to account for this. It had merely happened so.

Therefore, finding himself alone with his wife in the studio again, Cosimo yawned and stretched his arms above his head.

"Ah-h-h!... You going to bed?"

As he would hardly be likely to take himself off before she had answered his question, Amory did not reply at once. She sat down on the footstool and stretched her hands out to the asbestos log. Then, after a minute, and without looking up, she broke one of their tacitly accepted rules by asking a direct question.

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"What were you and Edgar Strong discussing?" she asked.

He yawned again.—"Oh, the Bookshop advertisement—and advertisements generally. It begins to look as if we should have to be less exclusive about these things. Strong tells me that it's unheard of for a paper to refuse any advertisement it can get."

"I mean when you got out the atlas."

"Oh—India, of course. The Indian policy. Strong isn't altogether satisfied about Prang. He seems to think he might get us into trouble."

"How? Why?" Amory said, her eyes reflectively on the purring gas-jets.

"Can't make out. Some fancy of his. The policy hasn't changed, and Prang hasn't changed. I wonder whether Wilkinson's right when he says Strong's put his hand to the plough but is now ... *ah!* That reminds me!—Were you here when that preposterous fellow—what's his name—Crabtree—rather let the cat out of the bag about Wilkinson?"

"You mean about another paper? No. But Walter said something about it."

"Yes, by Jove! He seems to have it all cut-and-dried! Crabtree seems to think I knew all about it. Of course I did know that Wilkinson had a scheme, but I'd no idea he was jumping ahead at that rate. I don't want two papers. One's getting rather serious."

Still without looking at her husband, Amory said, "How, serious?"

"Why, the expense. I'm not sure that we didn't take the wrong line about the advertisements. Anyway, something will have to be done. Thirty pounds a week is getting too stiff. I'm seriously thinking of selling out from the Eden and the Bookshop. Do you know that with one thing and another we're down more than three thousand pounds this year?"

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Amory was surprised; but she realized instinctively that that was not the moment to show her surprise. Were she to show it, the moment would not be opportune for the raising of the subject of the fund, and she wanted to raise that subject. And she wanted to raise it in connexion with Cosimo and Britomart Belchamber. She continued to gaze at the log. The servants, she thought, might have taken the opportunity of dinner to sweep up the litter of cigarette-ends that surrounded it; and then she had a momentary fancy. It was, that the domestic relations that existed between herself and Cosimo were a thing that, like that mechanical substitute for a more generous fire, could be turned off and on as it were by the mere touching of a tap. She wondered what made her think of that....

Cosimo had taken out his penknife and was scraping his nails, moodily running over items of disbursement as he scraped; and then the silence fell between them again.

It was Amory who broke it, and in doing so she turned her head for the first time. She gave her husband a look that meant that, though he might talk about expenses, she also had a subject.

"Walter was excessively stupid to-night," she said abruptly.

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He said "Oh?" and went on scraping.

"At the best he's never a model of tact, but I thought he rather overstepped the mark at dinner."

Again he said "Oh?" and added, "What about?"

"His manners. His ideas are all right, I suppose, but I'm getting rather tired of his platform-tricks."

"His habit of illustration and so on?"

"And his want of tact generally. In fact I'm not sure it isn't more than that. In a strange house it would have been simply a *faux pas*, but he knows us well enough, and the arrangement between us. He might at any rate wait till he's called in."

Cosimo started on another nail.—"What arrangement?" he said.

Again Amory gave him that look that might have told him that, though he might think that only a lot of money had gone, she knew that something far more vital had gone with it.

"Do you mean that you didn't hear what he was saying about you and Britomart Belchamber?"

"Yes, I heard that, of course. Of course I heard it."

"Well?"

"Well!"

And this time their eyes met in a long look....

Cosimo had only himself to thank for what happened to him then. After all, you cannot watch a superb piece of female mechanism playing "Catching of Quails," and openly admire the way in which it can shut up like a clasp-knife and fold itself upon itself like a multiple lever, and pretend to be half in love with it lest sharp eyes should see that you are actually half in love with it, and take it for walks, and discuss Walter's Lectures with it, and tell it frequently how different things might have been had you been ten years younger, and warn it to be a good girl because of dangerous young men, and stroke its hair, and tell it what beautiful eyes it has, and kiss its hand from time to time, and walk with your arm protectingly about its waist, and so on and so forth, day after day—you cannot, after all, do these things and be entirely unflurried when your ever-so-slightly tiresome wife reminds you that, be it only by way of illustration, a young expert in such matters has coupled your name with that of the passive object of your philanderings. Nor can you reasonably be surprised when that wife gives you a long look, that doesn't reproach you for anything except for your stupidity or hypocrisy if you pretend not to understand, and then resumes her meditative gazing into a patent asbestos fire. Appearances *are* for the moment against you. You *cannot* help for one moment seeing it as it must have appeared all the time to somebody else. Of course you know that you are in the right really, and the other person entirely wrong, and that with a little reasonableness on that other person's part you could make this perfectly clear; but you *are* rather trapped, you know it, and the state of mind in which you find yourself is called by people who aren't anybody in particular "flurry."

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Which is perhaps rather a long way of saying that Cosimo was suddenly and entirely disconcerted.

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And his flurry included a certain crossness and impatience with Amory. She was—could be—only pretending. She knew perfectly well that there was nothing really. The least exercise of her imagination must have told her that to press Britomart Belchamber's hand, for example, was the most innocent of creature-comforts. Why, he had pressed it with Amory herself there; he had said, jokingly, and Amory had heard him, that it was a desirable hand to press, and he had

pressed it. And so with Britomart's dancing of "Rufty Tufty." Amory, who, like Cosimo, had had an artist's training, ought to be the last person to deny that any eye so trained did not see a hundred beauties where eyes uneducated saw one only. And that of course meant chaste beauties. Such admiration was an exercise in analysis, not in amorousness.... No, it was far more likely that Amory was getting at him. She was smiling, a melancholy and indifferent little smile, at the asbestos log. She had no right to smile like that. It made him feel beastly. It made him so that he didn't know what to say....

But she continued to smile, and when Cosimo did at last speak he hated himself for stammering.

"But—but—but—oh, come, Amory, this *is* absurd! You're—you're tired! Me and Britomart! Oh, c-c-come!—"

And then it occurred to him that this was a ridiculous answer, and that the proper answer to have made would have been simply to laugh. He did laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! By Jove, for the moment you almost took me in! You really did get a rise out of me that time! Congratulations.—And I admit it is rather cool of Walter to pounce on the first name that occurs to him and make use of it in that way. Deuced cool when you come to think of it. It seems to me—"

But again that quite calm and unrepenting look silenced him. There was a loftiness and serenity about it that reminded him of the Amory of four or five years before. And she spoke almost with a note of wonder at him in her tone.

"My dear Cosimo," she said very patiently, "what is the matter? You look at me as if I had accused you of something. Nothing was further from my thoughts. I suppose, when you examine it, it's a matter for congratulation, not accusation at all. As Walter said, I don't want to fly at anybody's eyes. We foresaw this, and provided for it, you know."

At this cool taking for granted of a preposterous thing Cosimo's stammer became a splutter. —"But—but—but—," he broke out: but Amory held up her hand.

"I raise no objection. I've no right to. What earthly right have I, when I concurred before ever we were married?"

"Concurred!... My dear girl, concurred in what? Really this is the most ridiculous situation I was ever in!"

Amory raised her brows.—"Oh?... I don't see anything ridiculous about it. It received my sanction when Britomart stopped in the house, and I haven't changed my mind. As I say, we foresaw it, and provided for it."

"It!" Cosimo could only pipe—one little note, high and thin as that of a piccolo. Amory continued.

"I'm not asking a single question about it. I'm not even curious. I didn't become your property when we married, and you're not mine. Our souls are our own, both of us. I think we were very wise to foresee it quite at the beginning.—And don't think I'm jealous. Perfectly truly, I wish you every happiness. Britomart's a very pretty girl, and nobody can say she's always making a display of her cleverness, like some of them. I respect your privacy, and want you to do the best you can with your life."

The piccolo note changed to that of a bassoon.—"Amory—listen to me."

"No. I'd *very* much rather not hear anything about it. As Walter said, *Life is Love*, and I only mentioned this at all to-night because there is one quite small practical detail that doesn't seem to me entirely satisfactory."

She understood Cosimo to ask what that was.

"This: You ought to be fair to her. I know you'll forgive my mentioning anything so vulgar, but it is—about money. She can't be expected to think of such things herself just now,"—there were whole honeymoons in the reasonable little nod Amory gave,—"and so *I* mention it. It's my place to do so. For us all just to dip our hands into a common purse doesn't seem to me very satisfactory. She's rights too that I shouldn't dream of disputing. And don't think I'm assuming more than there actually is. I only mean that I don't see why, in certain events, you shouldn't, et cetera; that's all I mean. You see?... But I admit that for everybody's sake I should like things put on a proper footing without loss of time."

Cosimo had begun to wander up and down among the saddlebag chairs. His slender fingers rested aimlessly on the backs of them from time to time. Amory thought that he was about to try the remaining notes within the compass of his voice, but instead he suddenly straightened himself. He appeared to have come to a resolution. He strode towards the door.

"Where are you going?" Amory asked.

"I'm going to fetch Britomart," he replied shortly. "This is preposterous."

But again he hesitated, as perhaps Amory surmised he might. His offer, if it meant anything, ought to have meant that his conscience was so clear that Amory might catechize Britomart to her heart's content; but there *had* been those hair-stroking and hand-pattings, and—and—and Britomart, as Amory had said, was "not always making a display of her cleverness." She might, indeed, let fall something even more disconcerting than the rest—

Cosimo was trying a bluff.

In a word, between fetching Britomart and not fetching her, Amory had her husband by the short hairs.

She mused.—"Just a moment," she said.

And then she rose from the footstool, put one hand on the edge of the mantelpiece, and with the other drew up her skirt an inch or two and stretched out her slipper to the log.

"It really isn't necessary to fetch Britomart," she said after a moment, looking up. "Fetch her if

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you prefer it, of course, but first I want to say something else—something quite different.”

That it was something quite different seemed to be a deep relief to Cosimo. He returned from the door again.

“What’s that?” he said.

“It’s different,” Amory said slowly, “but related. Let me think a moment how to put it.... You were speaking a few minutes ago of selling out from the Eden and the Suffrage Shop. If I understand you, things aren’t going altogether well.”

“They aren’t,” said Cosimo, almost grimly.

“And then,” Amory continued, “there’s Mr. Prang. Neither you nor Strong seem very satisfied about him.”

“It’s Strong who isn’t satisfied. I’ve no complaints to make about Prang.”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about that too, and I’ve had an idea. I’m not sure that after all Strong mayn’t be right. I admit Prang states a case as well as it could be stated; the question is whether it’s quite the case we *want* stated. His case is ours to a large extent, but perhaps not altogether. And as matters stand we’re in his hands about India, simply because he knows more about it than we do. You see what I mean?”

“Not quite,” said Cosimo.

“No? Well, let me tell you what I’ve been thinking....”

Those people who are nobodys, and have not had the enormous advantage of being taken by the hand by the somebodys, are under a misconception about daring and original ideas. The ideals seem original and daring to them because the processes behind them are hidden. The inferior mind does not realize of itself that every sudden and miraculous blooming is already an old story to somebody.

But Cosimo occupied a sort of intermediary position between the sources of inspiration and the flat levels of popular understanding. Remember, he was in certain ways one of the public; but at the same time he was the author of the “*Life and Work*.” He took his Amory, so to speak, nascent. Therefore, when she gave utterance to a splendour, he credited himself with just that measure of participation in it that causes us humbler ones, when we see the airman’s spiral, to fancy our own hands upon the controls, or, when we read a great book, to sun ourselves in the flattering delusion that we do not merely read, but, in some mysterious sense, participate in the writing of it also.

And so the words which Amory spoke now—words which would have caused you or me to give a gasp of admiration—affected him less extraordinarily.

“Why don’t you go to India and see for yourself?” she said.

Nevertheless, Cosimo was not altogether unaffected. Even to his accustomed ear it was rather stupendous, and, if he hadn’t been again uneasily wondering whether he dared risk having Britomart down when Amory should return to the former subject again, might have been more stupendous still. He resumed his walk along the saddlebag chairs, and, when at last he did speak, did not mar a high occasion with too much vulgar demonstrativeness.

“That’s an idea,” he said simply.

“You see, Mr. Chamberlain went to South Africa,” Amory replied, as simply.

“Yes,” said Cosimo thoughtfully.... “It’s certainly an idea.”

“And you know how people have been getting at the ‘Novum’ lately, and even suggesting that Prang was merely a pen-name for Wilkinson himself.”

“Yes, yes.”

“Well, if you went, for six months, say, or even three, nobody’d be able to say after that that you didn’t know all about it.”

“No,” Cosimo replied.

“The stupid people go. Why not the people with eyes and minds?”

“Exactly,” said Cosimo, resuming his walk.

Then, as if he had been a mere you or a simple me, the beauty of the idea did begin to work a little in him. He walked for a space longer, and then, turning, said almost with joy, “I say, Amory—would you *like* to go?”

But Amory did not look up from the slippered foot she had again begun to warm.—“Oh, I shouldn’t go,” she said absently.

“You mean me to go by myself?” said Cosimo, the joy vanishing again.

Then it was that Amory returned to the temporarily relinquished subject again.

“Well ...”, she said, with a return of the quiet and wan but brave smile, “... I’ve nothing to do with that. I shouldn’t set detectives to watch you. I was speaking for the moment purely from the point of view of the ‘Novum’s’ policy.—But I see what you mean.”

But Cosimo didn’t mean that at all. He interposed eagerly, anxiously.

“You *do* jump to conclusions!”—he began.

“My *dear* Cosimo,” she put up her hand, “I’m doing nothing of the kind. As I said, the other isn’t my affair. Oh, I do wish you’d believe that I was perfectly calm about it! As Emerson said, soul ought to speak from the top of Olympus or something, and, except that I want you to be happy, it’s a matter of indifference to me who you go with. Do try to see that, Cosimo. Let’s try to behave like civilized beings. We agreed long ago that sex was only a matter of accident. Don’t let’s make it so hatefully pivotal. After all, what practical difference would it make?”

But this was too much for Cosimo. He must have Britomart down and take his chance, that was all. At the worst, he did not see how Amory could be so unreasonable that a hand-pat or a hair-stroke or two could not be put before her in the proper light.

Unfortunately, the trouble was, not that she made a fuss, but that she made so little fuss....

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Again he moved towards the door.

But Miss Belchamber herself, as it happened, saved him the trouble of fetching her. Their hands were at the door at the same moment, his inside, hers outside. She entered. She was wrapped in the large black-and-gold Chinese dressing-gown Cosimo had given her for a Christmas present, and there were pantofles on her bare feet, and her hair hung down her back in two enormous yellow plaits. She was eating a large piece of cake.

"I've left the hot water tap running," she announced. "I hadn't gone to bed. Does anybody else want a bath? I like lots of hot baths. I came down for a piece of cake."

She crossed to the sofa, crammed the last piece of cake into her mouth, dusted the crumbs from her fingers, tucked the dressing-gown close under her, and with her fingers began softly to perform the motions of *pétrissage* upon herself in the region of the *erectors spinae*. As she did so she again spoke, placidly and syllabically.

"I made a mistake," she said. "Father's forty-six. Next June. And I shall go to Walter's new Lecture. He's in the guard's van. I mean the van-guard. And Prince Ead-mond's is in the van-guard too. Especially Miss Miles. She says the Saturn-alia is a time of great li-cen-tiousness and dancing. Are they going to start it soon?"

Cosimo was nervous again. He cleared his throat.—"Britomart—," he began; but Miss Belchamber went on.

"I hope they are. Walter says it would be a very good thing. I shall dance 'Rufty Tufty.' And 'The Black Nag.' I love 'The Black Nag.' That's why I'm having a hot bath. Hot baths open the pores, or sweat-ducts. Then you close them again with a cold sponge. I always close them again with a cold sponge."

Cosimo cleared his throat again and had another try.—"Listen, Britomart—we were talking about you—"

Miss Belchamber looked complacently at her crossed Parian-marble ankles. Then she raised one of them, and her fingers explored the common tendon of the soleus and gastrocnemius.

"The soleus," she said, "acts when the knee-joint is flexed. In 'Rufty Tufty' it acts. Both of them, of course. And the manage-ment of the breath is very important. It would be a very good thing if every-body opened their windows and took a hun-dred deep breaths before the Saturn-alia begins. I shall, and I shall make Corin and Bonniebell. Or won't they be able to go if it's very late? If it's after their bedtime I could bring them away early and then go back. I am so looking forward to it."

Cosimo made a third attempt.—"Britomart—", he said gravely.

"What?" said Miss Belchamber.

"I want to tell you about a rather important discussion we've been having—"

"Then shall I go and turn the tap off? The water will run cold. Then the sweat-ducts would have to be closed before they are opened, and that's wrong."

But this time Amory had moved towards the door. Cosimo, and not she, had wanted Miss Belchamber down, and now that he had got her he might amuse her. She thought he looked extremely foolish, but that was his lookout; she was going to bed. It seemed an entirely satisfactory moment in which to do so. She had managed better than she had hoped. The question of the fund had been satisfactorily raised, and it was obvious that the "Novum" would gain by having somebody on the spot, somebody perhaps less biassed than Mr. Prang, to advise upon its Indian policy. At the door she turned her nasturtium-coloured head.

"You might think over what I've been saying," she said. "We can talk of it again in a day or two. Especially my second suggestion, that about the 'Novum.' That seems to me very well worth considering. Good night."

And she passed out, leaving Cosimo plucking his lip irresolutely, and Miss Britomart Belchamber deeply interested in the common tendon of the other soleus and gastrocnemius.

### PART III

#### I

#### LITMUS

**I**T was on an afternoon in May, and the window of Dorothy's flat overlooking the pond was wide open. Ruffles of wind chased one another from moment to moment across the water, and the swans, guarding their cygnets, policed the farther bank, where dogs ran barking. The two elder Bits played in the narrow strip of garden below; again the frieze of the room was a soft net of rippling light; and the brightness of the sun—or so Ruth Mossop declared—had put the fire out.

Ruth was alone in the flat. As she passed between the pond-room and the kitchen, re-lighting the fire, "sweeping in," and preparing tea, she sang cheerfully to herself, "*A few more years shall roll, a few more sorrows come.*" Ruth considered that the sorrows would probably come by means of the youngest Bit. He ought (she said) to have been a little girl. Then, in after years, he might have been a bit of comfort to his mother. Boys, in Ruth's experience, were rarely that.

As she put the cakes for tea into the oven of the stove there came a milk-call from below. Ruth leaned out of the lift-window, and there ensued a conversation with the white-jacketed milk-boy.

"Saw your guv'nor last night," the boy grinned.

"Where's that cream I ordered, and that quart of nursery milk? You can't mind your business

for thinking of picture palaces."

"Keep your 'air on; coming up now.—I say, they put 'is 'ead under a steam-'ammer. I said it was a dummy, but Gwen said it wasn't. *Was it 'im?*"

"You mind your own interference, young man, and leave others to mind theirs; you ought to have something better to do with your threepences than collecting cigarette cards and taking girls to the pictures."

"It was in '*Bullseye Bill: A Drarmer of Love an' 'Ate*'—'Scoundrel, 'ow dare you speak those words to a pure wife an' mother on the very threshold of the 'Ouse of—'"

"That's enough, young man—we don't want language Taken in Vain here—and you can tell 'em at your place we're leaving soon."

"But *was* that 'im in the long whiskers at the end, when the powder magazine blew up?"

But Ruth, taking her cans, shut down the window and returned to the kitchen.

"Then O, my Lord, prepare——" she crooned as she gave a peep into the oven and then clanged the door to again, "My soul for that blest day——"

They were leaving soon. Already the sub-letting of the flat was in an agent's hands, and soon Stan would be braving the perils of his career no longer. Dorothy had unfolded her idea to her aunt, and Lady Tasker had raised no objection, provided Dorothy could raise the money by bringing Aunt Eliza into line.

"It's as good as Maypoles and Village Players anyway," she had said, "and I'm getting too old to run about as I have done.—By the way, is it true that Cosimo Pratt's gone to India?"

Dorothy had replied that it was true.

"Hm! What for? To dance round another Maypole?"

"I don't know, auntie. I've seen very little of them."

"Has she gone?"

"No."

"No more babies yet, I suppose?"

"No."

"Well ... you'd better see your Aunt Eliza. She's got all the money that's left.—But I don't see how you're going to get any very much out of Tony and Tim."

"Oh, I'll see they don't impose on me as they've been imposing on you!... So I may move that billiard-table, and alter the gun-room?"

"Yes, if you pay for it."

"Thanks—you are a dear!..."

By what arts Dorothy had contrived to lay Aunt Eliza under contribution doesn't matter very much here. Among themselves the Lennards and Taskers might quarrel, but they presented an unbroken front to the world—and Dorothy, for Aunt Eliza's special benefit, managed to make the world in some degree a party to her project. That is to say, that a paragraph had appeared in certain newspapers, announcing that an experiment of considerable interest, etc., the expenses of which were already guaranteed, and so forth, was about to be tried in the County of Shropshire, where "The Brear," the residence of the late Sir Noel Tasker, was already in course of alteration. And so on, in Dorothy's opinion, neither too much nor too little for her design.... It had been a public committance of the family, and it had worked the oracle with Aunt Eliza. Rather than have a public squabble about it, she had come in with her thousand, the work was now well advanced, and the venerable sinner who had recited the poems printed by Cosimo Pratt's Village Press was in charge of the job. Dorothy, hurriedly weaning the youngest Bit, had run down to Ludlow for the express purpose of announcing to him that it *was* a job, and not an aesthetic jollification.

Moreover, at that time she had half a hundred other matters to attend to; for Stan, escaping from powder-magazines as the last inch of fuse sputtered, and fervently hoping that the man had made no mistake about the length of stroke of the Nasmyth hammer under which he put his devoted head, could give her little help. Besides her own approaching *déménagement*, she had much of the care of that of her aunt. As Stan's earnings were barely sufficient for the current expenses of the household, she still had to turn to odds and ends of her old advertisement work. She had—Quis custodiet?—the nurse to look after, and the tradesmen, and letters, and callers, and Ruth. In short, a simple inversion of her aunt's dictum about the Pratts—"Too much money and not enough to do"—would have fitted Dorothy's case to a nicety.

Therefore, as another burden more or less would make little difference to one already so burdened, Dorothy had added still further to her cares. Ever since that day when Lady Tasker had come bare-headed out of her house and had spoken to Amory Pratt outside the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dorothy had had her sometime friend constantly on her mind. She had spoken of her to her aunt, who had again shown herself deplorably illiberal and incisive.

"I don't pretend to understand the modern young woman," she had remarked carelessly. "Half of 'em seem to upset their bodies with too much study, and the other half to play hockey till they're little better than fools. I suppose it's all right, and that somebody knows what they're about.... I often wonder what they'd have done, though, if it hadn't been for Sappho and Madame Curie.... By the way," she had gone irrelevantly on without a break, "does she *want* any more children besides those twins?" ...

Nevertheless, Dorothy had had Amory so much on her mind that twice since Cosimo's departure for India she had been up to The Witan in search of her. After all, if anybody was to blame for anything it was Cosimo. But on neither occasion had Amory been at home. Dorothy had left messages, to which she had received no reply; and so she had gone a third time—had gone, as it happened, on that very afternoon when Ruth sang "A few more years shall roll" as she made

the hot cakes for tea. This time she had persuaded Katie Deedes to come with her—for Katie had left the Eden, was out of a job, and for the time being had afternoon hours to spare.

But again they had failed to find Amory, and Dorothy and Katie took a turn round the Heath before returning to the flat for tea. As they walked along the hawthorn hedge that runs towards Parliament Hill and South Hill Park they talked. Kites were flying on the Hill; the Highgate Woods and the white spire showed like a pale pastel in the Spring sunshine; and from the prows of a score of prams growing babies leaned out like the figure-heads of ships.

"That's where Billie was born," said Dorothy, nodding towards the backs of the houses that make the loop of South Hill Park.

Katie only said "Oh?" She too had caught the uneasiness about Amory. And what Katie thought was very soon communicated.

"You see, Dot," she broke suddenly out, "you've no idea of what a—what a funny lot they are really.... No, I haven't told you—I haven't told you *half*! It's everything they do. Why, the nurse practised for months and months at a school where they washed a celluloid baby—I'm not joking—she did—a life-sized one—they did it in class, and dressed it, and put it to sleep—as if *that* would be any good at all with a real one!... And really—I'm not prudish, as you know, Dot—but the way they used to sit about, in a dressing-gown or a nightgown or anything—I don't mean when there was a *big* crowd there, of course, but just a few of them—Walter, and Mr. Brimby, and Edgar Strong—and all of them going quite red in the face with pure-mindedness! At any rate, I never did *think* that was quite the thing!"

She spoke with great satisfaction of the point of the New Law she had not broken. It seemed to make up for those she had.

"And those casts and paintings and things about—it's all right being an artist, of course, but if I ever got married, *I* shouldn't like casts and paintings of me about for everybody to see like that!—"

"Oh, just look at that hawthorn!" Dorothy interrupted.

"Yes, lovely.—And Walter talking about Dionysus, and what Lycurgus thought would be a very good way of preventing jealousy, and a lot more about Greeks and Romans and Patagonians and Esquimaux! Do you know, Dot, I don't believe they know anything at all about it—not *really* know, I mean! I don't see how they can! One man might know a little bit about a part of it, and another man a little bit about another part—and that would be rather a lot, seeing how long ago it all is—but Walter knows it *all*! At any rate nobody can contradict him. But what does it matter to us today, Dorothy? What *does* it matter?... Of course I don't mean they're wicked. But—but—in some ways I can't help thinking it would be better to *be* wicked as long as you didn't say anything about it—!"

"Oh, I don't think they're wicked," said Dorothy placidly. But the 'vert went eagerly on.

"That's just it!" she expounded. "Walter says 'wicked's' only a relative term. If you face the truth boldly, all the time, lots of things wouldn't be wicked at all, he says. And I believe he's really awfully devoted to Laura—in his way—though he does talk about these things with Britomart Belchamber sitting there in her nightgown. But it's always the *same bit* of truth they face boldly. They never think of going in for astronomy—or crystal-what-is-it—crystallography—or something chilly—and face that boldly—"

Dorothy laughed.—"You absurd girl!"

"—but no. It's always whether people wear clothes because they're modest or whether they're modest because they wear clothes, or something like that.—And Walter begins it—and then Laura chimes in, and then Cosimo, and then Amory, and then Dickie—and when they've said it all on Monday they say it again on Tuesday, and Wednesday, and every day—and I don't know what they've decided even yet—"

"Well, here we are," Dorothy said as she reached her own door. "Let's have some tea.... Mr. Miller hasn't been in yet, has he, Ruth?"

"No, m'm."

"Well, we'll have tea now, and you can make some fresh when he comes. And keep some cakes hot."

Mr. Miller's visit that afternoon had to do with a care so trifling that Dorothy merely took it in her stride. She had not found—she knew that she would never find—the "Idee" that Mr. Miller wanted; but if no Ideas except real ones were ever called Ideas we should be in a very bad way in this world. She knew that there is always a middling chance that if you state a pseudo-Idee solemnly enough, and trick it out with circumstance enough, and set people talking enough about it, it will prove just as serviceable as the genuine article; and she was equally familiar, as we have seen, with that beautiful and compensating Law by which quick and original minds are refused money when they are producing of their best but overwhelmed with it when their brains have become as dry as baked sponges. She had given Mr. Miller quite good Ideas in the past; she had no objection to being paid over again for them now; and if they really had been new ones they would have been of no use to Mr. Miller for at least ten years to come. That is why the art of advertisement is so comparatively advanced. Any other art would have taken twenty years.

Therefore, as she remembered the exceeding flimsiness of the one poor Idee she had, she had resolved that Mr. Miller's eyes should be diverted as much as possible from the central lack, and kept to the bright irrelevancies with which she would adorn it. The Idee was that of the Litmus Layette ... but here we may as well skip a few of Katie's artless betrayals of her former friends, and come to the moment when Mr. Miller, with his Edward the Sixth shoulders, appeared, bowed, was introduced to Katie, bowed again, sat down, and was regaled with hot cakes and conversation.—He had risen and bowed again, by the way, when Dorothy, for certain reasons of policy, had mentioned Katie's relationship to the great Sir Joseph Deedes, and Katie had told of a

stand-up fight she had had with her uncle's Marshal about admittance to his lordship's private room.

"Well, now, that's something I've learned to-day," Mr. Miller magnanimously admitted, sitting down again. "So your English Judges have Marshals! I was under the impression that that was a military title, like Marshal Macmann and Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood. Well now.... And how might Judge Deedes' Marshal be dressed, Miss Deedes?"

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"Not 'Judge' Deedes," said Katie smiling. "That's a County Court Judge." And she explained. Mr. Miller opened his eyes wide.

"Is that so-o-o? Well now, if that isn't interesting! That's noos. He's a Honourable with a 'u' in it, and a Sir, and you call him his Lordship, and he's Mister Justice Deedes! Ain't that English!... Now let me see if I'm on the track of it. 'Your Worship'—that's a Magistrate. 'Your Honour'—that's the other sort of Judge. And 'My Lord'—that's Miss Deedes' uncle. And an English Judge has a Marshal.... Do you recollect our Marshals, Mrs. Stan?—"

Building (as it now appeared) even better than he knew, Mr. Miller had, in the past, granted the rank of Marshal to Messrs. Hallowell and Smiths' shopwalkers.

Dorothy's reason for thus flagrantly introducing Sir Joseph's name was this:—

Katie had left the Eden, and she herself was presently off to Ludlow. Thus there was the possible reversion of a job of sorts going a-begging. Katie might as well have it as anybody else. Dorothy had strictly enjoined upon her impulsive friend that on no account was she to contradict or disclaim anything she, Dorothy, might choose to say on her behalf to Mr. Miller; and she intended that the credit, such as it was, of the last Idee she even intended to propose to Mr. Miller—the Litmus Layette—should be Katie's start. Once started she would have to look after herself.

So when Mr. Miller passed from the subject of Hallowell and Smiths' Marshals to that of his long-hoped-for Idee, Dorothy was ready for him. Avoiding the weak spot, she enlarged on the tradition—very different from a mere superstition—that, in Layettes, blue stood always for a boy and pink for a girl.

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"You see," she said, "this is England when all's said, and we're *frightfully* conservative. Don't condemn it just because it wouldn't go in New York.... You've heard of the Willyhams, of course?" she broke off suddenly to ask.

"I can't say I have, Mrs. Stan. But I'm sitting here. Tell me. They're a Fam'ly, I presoom?"

"Yes. Upshire's their title. Now that title's descended in the female line ever since Charles the First. Ever since then the Willyham Layettes have been pink as a matter of course. And now, not a month ago, there was a boy, and they had to rush off and get blue at the very last moment.... Let me see, your children are little girls, aren't they?" she again interrupted herself to say.

"Three little goils, Mrs. Stan, with black-and-white check frocks and large black bows in their hair."

"Well, and mine are boys. Blue for me and pink for you. But we'll come to that in a moment.—The thing that really strikes me as extraordinary is that in all these ages, with all the countless babies that have been born, we don't know *yet* which it's going to be!... And I don't think we ever shall. Now just think what that means—not just to a Royal House, with a whole succession depending on it, and crowns and dynasties and things—but to *every* woman! You see the *tremendous* interest they take in it at once!—But I don't know whether a man can ever understand that—"

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She paused.

"Go on, Mrs. Stan—I want the feminine point of voo," said Mr. Miller.—"The man ain't broken Post Toasties yet that has more reverence for motherhood than what I have—"

"I know," said Dorothy bashfully. "But it isn't the same—being a father. It's—it's different. It's not the same. I doubt whether *any* man knows what it means to us as we wait and wonder—and wait and wonder—day after day—day after day—"

Here she dropped her eyes. Here also Mr. Miller dropped his head.

"It isn't the same—being a father—it's different," Dorothy was heard to murmur.

Mr. Miller breathed something about the holiest spot on oath.

"So you see," Dorothy resumed presently, hoping that Mr. Miller did not see. "It's the nearest subject of all to us. The very first question we ask one another is, 'Do you hope it's a little boy or a little girl?' And as it's impossible to tell, it's impossible for us to make our preparations. Lady Upshire doesn't know one bit more about it than the poorest woman in the streets. And this is an age that boasts of its Science!"

"Well," said Mr. Miller, giving it consideration, "that's ver-ry true. I ain't a knocker; I don't want to get knocking our men of science; but it's a fact they can't tell. I recollect Mrs. Miller saying to me—"

"Yes—look at it from Mrs. Miller's point of view—"

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"I remember Mrs. Miller using the ver-ry woids you've just used, Mrs. Stan. (I hope this don't jolt Miss Deedes too much; it's ver-ry interesting). And that's one sure thing, that it ain't a cinch for Mrs. Bradley Martin any more than what it is for any poor lady stenographer at so many dallars per. But—if you'll pardon me putting the question in that form—where's the *point*, Mrs. Stan? What's the reel praposition?"

This being precisely what Dorothy was rather carefully avoiding, again she smiled bashfully and dropped her head, as if once more calling on those profound reserves of Mr. Miller's veneration for motherhood. These even profounder reserves, of Mr. Miller's veneration for dallars, were too much to the point altogether.

"I was afraid you wouldn't understand," she sighed.

"But," said Mr. Miller earnestly, "give me something to get a hold of, Mrs. Stan. I ain't calling the psychological proposition down any; a business man has to be psychologist all the time; but he wants it straight. Straight psychology. The feminine point of view, but practical. It ain't for Harvard. It's for Hollowell and Smith's."

"Well," said Dorothy, "it's Miss Deedes' idea really—and it would never have occurred to her if it hadn't been for Lady Upshire—would it, Katie?"

"No," said Katie.

"Very well. Suppose Lady Upshire had had the Litmus Layette. All she would have had to do would have been to take the ribbons out—the work of a moment—the pink ribbons—dip them in the preparation—and there they'd have been, ready for immediate use. And blue ones would be dipped in the other solution and of course they'd have turned pink.... You see, you can't alter the baby, but you can alter the ribbons. And it isn't only ribbons. A woolly jacket—or a pram-rug—or socks—or anything—I think it's an exceedingly clever Idea of Miss Deedes!—"

Mr. Miller gave it attention. Then he looked up.

"Would it work?" he asked.

"Well," said Dorothy ... "it works in chemistry. But that's not the principal thing. It's its value as an advertisement that's the real thing. Think of the window-dressing!—Blue and pink, changing before people's very eyes!—Just think how—I mean, it interests *every* woman! They'd stand in front of the window, and think—but you're a man. Mrs. Miller would understand.... Anyhow, you would get crowds of people, and that's what you want—crowds of people—that's its advertisement-value.—And then when you got them inside it would be like having the hooks at one end of the shop and the eyes at the other—a hook's no good without an eye, so they have to walk past half a mile of counters, and you sell them all sort of things on the way. I think there's a great deal in it!"

"It's a Stunt," Mr. Miller conceded, as if in spite of himself he must admit thus much. "It's so itainly a Stunt. But I'm not sure it's a reel Idee."

"That," said Dorothy with conviction, "would depend entirely in your own belief in it. If you did it as thoroughly as you've done lots of other things—"

"It's so itainly a Stunt, Miss Deedes," Mr. Miller mused....

He was frowningly meditating on the mystic differences between a Stunt and an Idee, and was perhaps wondering how the former would demean itself if he took the risk of promoting it to the dignity of the latter, when the bell was heard to ring. A moment later Ruth opened the door.

"Lady Tasker," she said.

Lady Tasker entered a little agitatedly, with an early edition of the "Globe" crumpled in her hand.

## II

### BY THE WAY

LADY TASKER never missed the "Globe's" *By the Way* column, and there was a curious, mocking, unpleasant By-the-Way-ishness about the announcement she made as she entered. There is a special psychological effect, in the Harvard and not in the Hollowell and Smith's sense, when you come unexpectedly in print upon news that affects yourself. The multiplicity of newspapers notwithstanding, revelation still hits the ear less harshly than it does the eye; telling is still private and intimate, type a trumpeting to all the world at once. Dorothy looked at the pink page Lady Tasker had thrust into her hand as if it also, like the Litmus Layette, had turned blue before her eyes.

"Not Sir Benjamin who used to come and see father!" she said, dazed.

Lady Tasker had had time, on her way to the flat, to recover a little.

"There's only one Sir Benjamin Collins that I know of," she answered curtly.

"But—but—it *can't* be!—"

Of course there was no reason in the world why it couldn't. Quite on the contrary, there was that best of all reasons why it could—it had happened. Three bullet-wounds are three undeniable reasons. It was the third, the brief account said, that had proved fatal.

"They say the finest view in Asia's Bombay from the stern of a steamer," said Lady Tasker, with no expression whatever. "I think your friend Mr. Cosimo Pratt will be seeing it before very long."

But Dorothy was white. *Their* Sir Benjamin!... Why, as a little girl she had called him "Uncle Ben!" He had not been an uncle really, of course, but she had called him that. She could remember the smell of his cigars, and the long silences as he had played chess with her father, and his hands with the coppery hair on them, and his laugh, and the way the markhor at the Zoo had sniffed at his old patoo-coat, just as cats now sniffed at her own set of civet furs. And she had married him one day in the nursery, when she had been about ten, and he had taken her to the Pantomime that afternoon for a Honeymoon—and then, when she had really married Stan, he had given her the very rugs that were on her bedroom floor at this moment.

And, if this pink paper was to be believed, an Invisible Man had shot at him three times, and at the third shot had killed him.

She had not heard her aunt's words about Cosimo. She had been standing with her hand in Mr. Miller's, having put it there when he had risen to take himself off and forgotten to withdraw it again. Then Mr. Miller had gone, and Dorothy had stood looking stupidly at her aunt.

"What did you say?" she said. "You said something about Cosimo Pratt."

"Don't you go, Katie; I want to talk to you presently.—Sit down, Dot.—Get her a drink of water."

Dorothy sat heavily down and put out one hand for the paper again.—"What did you say?" she asked once more.

"Never mind just now. Put your head back and close your eyes for a minute."...

That was the rather unpleasant, By-the-Way part of it. For of course it was altogether By-the-Way when you looked at the matter broadly. Amory could have explained this with pellucid clearness. The murder of a Governor?... Of course, if you happened to have known that Governor, and to have married him in a child's game when you were ten and he forty, and to have gone on writing letters to him telling him all the news about your babies, and to have had letters back from him signed "Uncle Ben"—well, nobody would think it unnatural of you to be a little shocked at the news of his assassination; but Amory could easily have shown that that shock, when you grew a little calmer and came to think clearly about it, would be only a sort of extension of your own egotism. Governors didn't really matter one bit more because you were fond of them. Everybody had somebody fond of them. Why, then, make a disproportionate fuss about a single (and probably corrupt) official, when thousands suffered gigantic wrongs? The desirable thing was to look at these things broad-mindedly, and not selfishly. It was selfish, selfish and egotistical, to expect the whole March of Progress to stop because you happened to be fond of somebody (who probably hadn't been one bit better than he ought to have been). These pompous people of the official classes were always bragging about their readiness to lay down their lives for their country; very well; they had no right to grumble when they were taken at their word. Ruskin had expressed much the same thought rather finely when he had said that a soldier wasn't paid for killing, but for being killed. Some people seemed to want it both ways—to go on drawing their money while they were alive, and then to have an outcry raised when they got shot. In strict justice they ought to have been, not merely shot, but blown from the mouths of guns; but of course neither Amory nor anybody else wanted to go quite so far as that.... Nevertheless, perspective was needed—perspective, and vision of such scope that you had a clear mental picture, not of misguided individuals, who must die some time or other and might as well do so in the discharge of what it pleased them to call their "duty," but of millions of our gentle and dark-skinned brothers, waiting in rows with baskets on their heads (and making simply ripping friezes) while the Banks paid in pennies, and then holding lots of righteous and picturesque Meetings, all about Tyrant England and throwing off the Yoke. Amory would have conceded that she had never had an Uncle Ben; but if she had had fifty Uncle Bens she would still have hoped to keep some small sense of proportion about these things.

But that again only showed anybody who was anybody how hopelessly behind the noble movements of her time Dorothy was. The sense of proportion never entered her head. She gave a little shiver, even though the day was warm, and then that insufferable old aunt of hers, who might be a "Lady" but had no more tact than to interfere with people's liberty in the street, praised her gently when she came round a bit, and said she was taking it very bravely, when the truth was that she really ought to have condemned her for her absurd weakness and lack of the sense of relative values. No, there would have been no doubt at all about it in Amory's mind: that it was these people, who talked so egregiously about "firm rule," who were the real sentimentalists, and the others of the New Imperialism, with their real grasp of the true and humane principles of government, who were the downright practical folk....

All this fuss about a single Governor, of whom Mr. Prang himself had said (and there was no gentler soul living than Mr. Prang) that his extortions had been a byword and his obstinacy proof positive of his innate weakness!—

But Amory was not in the pond-room that day, and so Dorothy's sickly display of emotion went unchecked. The nurse herded the Bits together, but they were not admitted for their usual tea-time romp. Indeed, Dorothy said presently, "Do you mind if I leave you for a few minutes with Katie, auntie?" She went into her bedroom and did not return. Of all his "nieces" she had been his favourite; her foot caught in one of his Kabuli mats as she entered the bedroom. She lay down on her bed. She longed for Stan to come and put his arms about her.

He came in before Lady Tasker had finished her prolonged questioning of Katie. Aunt Grace told him where Dorothy was. Then she and Katie left together.

The newspapers showed an excellent sense of proportion about the incident. In the earlier evening editions the death of Sir Benjamin was nicely balanced by the 4.30 winners; and then a popular actor's amusing replies in the witness-box naturally overshadowed everything else. And, to anticipate a little, on the following day the "Times" showed itself to be, as usual, hopelessly in the wrong. Indeed there were those who considered that this journal made a deplorable exhibition of itself. For it had no more modesty nor restraint than to use the harsh word "murder," without any "alleged" about it, which was, of course, a flagrant prejudging of the case. Nobody denied that at a first glance appearances *were* a little against the gentle and dusky brother, who had been seized with the revolver still in his hand; but that was no reason why a bloated capitalist rag should thus undermine the principles of elementary justice. It ought to have made it all the more circumspect.... But anybody who was anybody knew exactly what was at the bottom of it all. The "Times" was seeking a weapon against the Government. The staff was no doubt secretly glad that it had happened, and was gloating, and already calculating its effect on an impending by-election.... Besides, there was the whole ethical question of capital punishment. It would not bring Sir Benjamin back to life to try this man, find him guilty, and do him barbarously to death in the name of the Law. That would only be two dead instead of one. The proper way would be to hold an inquiry, with the dusky instrument of justice (whose faith in his mission must have been very great since he had taken such risks for it) not presiding, perhaps,

but certainly called as an important witness to testify to the Wrongness of the Conditions.... Besides, an assassination is a sort of half-negligible outbreak, regrettable certainly, for which excuse can sometimes be found: but this other would be deliberate, calculated, measured, and in flat violation of the most cardinal of all the principles on which a great Empire should be based—the principle of Mercy stiffened with exactly the right modicum of Justice....

And besides....

And besides....

And besides....

And when all is said, India is a long way off.

The publication of the news produced a curious sort of atmosphere at The Witan that afternoon. Everybody seemed desirous of showing everybody else that they were unconcerned, and yet an observer might have fancied that they overdid it ever such a little. At about the time when Lady Tasker left Dorothy with Stan, Mr. Wilkinson drove up in a cab to the green door in the privet hedge and asked for Amory. He was told that she had given word that she did not want to see anybody. But in the studio he found Mr. Brimby and Dickie Lemesurier, and the three were presently joined by Laura and Walter Wyron. A quorum of five callers never hesitated to make themselves at home at The Witan. They lighted the asbestos log, Walter found Cosimo's cigarettes, and Dickie said she was sure Amory wouldn't mind if she rang for tea. When they had made themselves quite comfortable, they began to chat about a number of things, not the murder.

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"Seen Strong?" Mr. Brimby asked Mr. Wilkinson.

Mr. Wilkinson was at his most morose and truculent.

"No," he said. "I called at the office, but he was out. Doesn't put in very much time there, it seems to me. Perhaps he's at the Party's Meeting."

"How is it you aren't there, by the way?"

Mr. Wilkinson made a little sound of contempt.

"Bah! All talk. Day in and day out, talk, talk, talk. I want action. The leadership's all wrong. Want a man. I keep my seat because if I cleared out they'd be no better than a lot of tame Liberal cats, but I've no use for 'em——"

It was whispered that the members of the Party had no use for Mr. Wilkinson, and very little for one another; but it doesn't do to give ear to everything that is whispered.

Then Mr. Brimby appeared suddenly to recollect something.

"Ah yes!... Action. Speaking of action, I suppose you've seen this Indian affair in to-night's papers?"

Mr. Wilkinson was still fuming.

"That Governor? Yes, I saw it.... But it's too far away. Thousands of miles too far away. We want something nearer home. A paper that calls a spade a spade for one thing.... Anybody heard from Pratt this week?"

They discussed Cosimo's latest letter, and then Mr. Brimby said, "By the way—how will this affect him?"

"How will what affect him?"

"This news, to-night. Collins."

"Oh!... Why should it affect him at all? Don't see why it should. The 'Pall Mall' has a filthy article on it to-night. That paper's getting as bad as the 'Times.'"

Here Walter Wyron intervened.—"By the way, who *is* this man Collins? Just pass me 'Who's Who,' Laura."

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They looked Sir Benjamin up in "Who's Who," and then somebody suggested that their party wasn't complete without Edgar Strong. "I'll telephone him," said Walter; "perhaps he'll be back by this."—The telephone was in the hall, and Walter went out. Dickie told Laura how well Walter was looking. Laura replied, Yes, he was very well indeed; except for a slight cold, which anybody was lucky to escape in May, he had never been better; which was wonderful, considering the work he got through.—Then Walter returned. Strong had not yet come in, but his typist had said he'd be back soon.—"Didn't know it ran to a typist," Walter remarked, helping himself to more tea.

"It doesn't," Mr. Wilkinson grunted.

"Girl's voice, anyway.... I say, I wonder how old Prang's getting on!"

"I wonder!"

"He's gone back, hasn't he?" Dickie asked.

"Oh, a couple of months ago. Didn't Strong give him the push, Wilkie?"

"Don't suppose Strong ever did anything so vigorous," Mr. Wilkinson growled. "The only strong thing about Strong's his name. He's simply ruined that paper."

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"I agree that it was at its best when Prang was doing the Indian notes."

"Oh, Prang knew what he wanted. Prang's all right in his way. But I tell you India's too far away. We want something at our own doors, and somebody made an example of that somebody knows. Now if Pratt had only been guided by me——"

"Hallo, here's Britomart Belchamber.—Why doesn't Amory come down, Brit? She's in, isn't she?"

"What?" said Miss Belchamber.

"Isn't Amory coming down?"

"She's gone out," said Miss Belchamber, adjusting her hair. "A min-ute ago," she added.

Walter Wyron said something about "Cool—with guests——," but Amory's going out was no reason why they should not finish tea in comfort. No doubt Amory would be back presently.

Laura confided to Britomart that she hoped so, for the truth was that her kitchen range had gone wrong, and a man had said he was coming to look at it, but he hadn't turned up—these people never turned up when they said they would—and so she had thought it would be nice if they came and kept Amory company at supper....

"We've got some new cheese-bis-cuits," said Miss Belchamber ruminatively. "I like them. They make bone. I like to have bone made. The muscles can't act unless you have bone. That's why these bis-cuits are so good. Good-bye."

And Miss Belchamber, with a friendly general smile, went off to open her sweat-ducts by means of a hot bath and to close them again afterwards with a cold sponge.

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Amory had not gone out this time to press amidst strange people and to look into strange and frightening eyes, various in colour as the pebbles of a beach, and tipped with arrow-heads of white as they turned. Almost for the first time in her life she wanted to be alone—quite alone, with her eyes on nobody and nobody's eyes on her. She did not reflect on this. She did not reflect on anything. She only knew that The Witan seemed to stifle her, and that when she had seen Mr. Wilkinson alight from his cab—and Mr. Brimby and Dickie come—and the Wyrons—with all the others no doubt following presently—it had come sharply upon her that these wearisomely familiar people used up all the air. The Witan without them was bad enough; The Witan with them had become insupportable.

It was not the assassination of Sir Benjamin that had disturbed her. Since Cosimo's departure she had glanced at Indian news only a shade less perfunctorily than before, and she had turned from this particular announcement to the account of New Greek Society's production with hardly a change of boredom. No: it was everything in her life—everything. She felt used up. She thought that if anybody had spoken to her just then she could only have given the incoherent and petulant "Don't!" of a child who is interrupted at a game that none but he understands. She hated herself, yet hated more to be dragged out of herself; and as she made for the loneliest part of the Heath she wished that night would fall.

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She had to all intents and purposes packed Cosimo off to India in order to have him out of the way. His presence had become as wearisome as that of the Wyrons and the rest of them. And that was as much as she had hitherto told herself. She had taken no resolution about Edgar Strong. But drifting is accelerated when an obstacle is removed, and her heart had frequently beaten rapidly at the thought that, merely by removing Cosimo, she had started a process that would presently bring her up against Edgar Strong. She had pleased and teased and frightened herself with the thought of what was to happen then. So many courses would be open to her. She might actually take the mad plunge from which she had hitherto shrunk. She might do the very opposite—stare at him, should he propose it, and inform him that, some thousands of miles notwithstanding, she was still Cosimo's wife. She might pathetically urge on him that, now more than ever, she needed a friend and not a lover—or else that, now more than ever, she needed a lover and not a friend. She might say that nothing could be done until Cosimo came back—or that when Cosimo came back would be too late to do anything. Or she might....

Or she might....

Or she might....

Yet when all was said, Edgar and the "Novum's" offices were perilously near....

For it was not what she might do, but what he might do, that set her heart beating most rapidly of all. Her dangerous dreaming always ended in that. Here was no question of that trumpery subterfuge of the Wyrons. It struck her with extraordinary force and newness that she was what was called "a married woman." It was a familiar phrase; it was as familiar as those other phrases, "No, just living together," "Well, as long as there are no children," "Love *is* Law"—familiar as the air. Left to herself, the phrases might have remained both her dissipation and her safeguard.... But he? Would phrases content him? After she had tempted him as she knew she had tempted him? After that stern repression of himself in favour of his duty? Or would he ask her again what she thought he was made of?... It was always the man who was expected to take the decisive step. The woman simply—offered—and, if she was clever, did it in such a way that she could always deny it after the fact. If Edgar should *not* stretch out his hand—well, in that case there would be no more to be said. But if he should?...

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A little sound came from her closed lips.

Cosimo had been away for nearly three months, and had not yet said anything about returning; and Amory had smiled when, after many eager protestings that there was no reason (Love being Law) why he should go alone, he had after all funk'd taking his splendid turnip of a Britomart with him. Of course: when it had come to the point, he had lacked the courage. Amory could not help thinking that that lack was just a shade more contemptible than his philanderings. Courage!... Images of Cleopatra and the carpet rose in her mind again.... But the images were faint now. She had evoked them too often. Her available mental material had become stale. She needed a fresh impulse—a new experience—

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But—she always got back to the same point—suppose Edgar should take her, not at her word, nor against her word, but with words, for once, left suddenly and entirely out of the question?...

Again the thumping heart—

It was almost worth the misery and loneliness for the sake of that painful and delicious thrill.

She was sitting on a bench under the palings of Ken Wood, watching a saffron sunset. A Prince Eadmond's girl in a little green Florentine cap passed. She reminded Amory of Britomart Belchamber, and Amory rose and took the root-grown path to the Spaniards Road and the West Heath. She intended to take a walk as far as Golders Green Park; but, as it happened, she did not get so far. A newsboy, without any sense of proportion whatever, was crying cheerfully, "Murder



of a Guv'nor—Special!" This struck Amory. She thought she had read it once before that afternoon, but she bought another paper and turned to the paragraph. Yes, it was the same—and yet it was somehow different. It seemed—she could not tell why—a shade more important than it had done. Perhaps the newsboy's voice had made it sound more important: things did seem to come more personally home when they were spoken than when they were merely read. She hoped it was not very important; it might be well to make sure. She was not very far from home; her Timon-guests would still be there; somebody would be able to tell her all about it....

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She walked back to The Witan again, and, still hatted and dressed, pushed at the studio door.

Nobody had left. Indeed, two more had come—young Mr. Raffinger of the McGrath, and a friend of his, a young woman from the Lambeth School of Art, who had Russianized her painting-blouse by putting a leather belt round it, and who told Amory she had wanted to meet her for such a long time, because she had done some designs for Suffrage Christmas Cards, and hoped Amory wouldn't mind her fearful cheek, but hoped she would look at them, and say exactly what she thought about them, and perhaps give her a tip or two, and, if it wasn't asking too much, introduce her to the Manumission League, or to anybody else who might buy them.... Young Raffinger interrupted the flow of gush and apologetics.

"Oh, don't bother her just yet, Eileen. Let her read her cable first."

Amory turned quickly.—"What do you say? What cable?" she asked.

"There's a cable for you."

It lay on the uncleared tea-table, and everybody seemed to know all about the outside of it at all events. As it was not in the usual place for letters, perhaps it had been passed from hand to hand. Quite unaffectedly, they stood round in a ring while Amory opened it, with all their eyes on her. They most frightfully wanted to know what was in it, but of course it would have been rude to ask outright. So they merely watched, expectantly.

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Then, as Amory stood looking at the piece of paper, Walter was almost rude. But in the circumstances everybody forgave him.

"Well?" he said; and then with ready tact he retrieved the solecism. "Hope it's good news, Amory?"

For all that there was just that touch of *schadenfreude* in his tone that promised that he for one would do his best to bear up if it wasn't.

Amory was a little pale. It was the best of news, and yet she was a little pale. Perhaps she was faint because she had not had any tea.

"Cosimo's coming home," she said.

There was a moment's silence, and then the congratulations broke out.

"Oh, good!"

"Shall be glad to see the old boy!"

"Finished his work, I suppose?"

"Or perhaps it's something to do with this Collins business?"

It was Mr. Brimby who had made this last remark. Amory turned to him slowly.

"What is this Collins business?" she asked.

Mr. Brimby dropped his sorrowing head.

"Ah, poor fellow," he murmured. "I'm afraid he went to work on the wrong principles. A *little* more conciliation ... but it's difficult to blame anybody in these cases. The System's at fault. Let us not be harsh. I quite agree with Wilkinson that the 'Pall Mall' to-night is very harsh."

"Cowardly," said Mr. Wilkinson grimly. "Rubbing it in because they have some sort of a show of a case. They're always mum enough on the other side."

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Amory lifted her head.

"But you say this might have something to do with Cosimo's coming back. Tell me at once what's happened.—And put that telegram down, Walter. It's mine."

They had never heard Amory speak like this before. It was rather cool of her, in her own house, and quite contrary to the beautiful Chinese rule of politeness. And somehow her tone seemed, all at once, to dissipate a certain number of pretences that for the last hour or more they had been laboriously seeking to keep up. That, at any rate, was a relief. For a minute nobody seemed to want to answer Amory; then Mr. Wilkinson took it upon himself to do so—characteristically.

"Nothing's happened," he said, "—nothing that we haven't all been talking about for a year and more. What the devil—let's be plain for once. To look at you, anybody'd think you hadn't meant it! By God, if *I'd* had that paper of yours!... I told you at the beginning what Strong was—neither wanted to do things nor let 'em alone; but *I'd* have shown you! *I'd* have had a dozen Prangs! But he didn't want one—and he didn't want to sack him—afraid all the time something 'ld happen, but daren't stop—doing too well out of it for that ... and now that it's happened, what's all the to-do about? You're always calling it War, aren't you? And it *is* War, isn't it? Or only Brimby's sort of War—like everything else about Brimby?—"

Here somebody tried to interpose, but Mr. Wilkinson raised his voice almost to a shout.

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"Isn't it? Isn't it?... Lookee here! A little fellow came here one Sunday, a little collier, and he said 'Wilkie knows!' And by Jimminy, Wilkie does know! I tell you it's everybody for himself in this world, and I'm out for anything that's going! (Yes, let's have a bit o' straight talk for a change!) War? Of course it's War! What do we all mean about street barricades and rifles if it isn't War? It's War when they fetch the soldiers out, isn't it? Or is that a bit more Brimby? And you can't have War without killing somebody, can you? I tell you we want it at home, not in India! I've stood at the dock gates waiting to be taken on, and I know—no fear! To hell with your shillyshallying! If Collins gets in the way, Collins must get out o' the way. We can't stop for Collins. I wish it had been here! I can just see myself jumping off a bridge with a director in my

arms—the fat hogs! If I'd had that paper! There'd have been police round this house long ago, and then the fun would have started!... Me and Prang's the only two of all the bunch that *does* know what we want! And Prang's got his all right—my turn next—and I shan't ask Brimby to help me—”

Through a sort of singing in her ears Amory heard the rising cries of dissent that interrupted Mr. Wilkinson—“Oh no—hang it—Wilkinson's going too far!” But the noise conveyed little to her. Stupidly she was staring at the blue and yellow jets of the asbestos log, and weakly thinking what a silly imitation the thing was. She couldn't imagine however Cosimo had come to buy it. And then she heard Mr. Wilkinson repeating some phrase he had used before: “There'd have been police round this house and then the fun would have begun!” Police round The Witan, she thought? Why? It seemed very absurd to talk like that. Mr. Brimby was telling Mr. Wilkinson how absurd it was. But Mr. Brimby himself was rather absurd when you came to think of it....

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Then there came another shouted outburst.—“Another Mutiny? Well, what about it? It *is* War, isn't it? Or is it only Brimby's sort of War?—”

Then Amory felt herself grow suddenly cold and resolved. Cosimo was coming back. Whether he had made India too hot to hold him, as now appeared just possible, she no longer cared, for at last she knew what she intended to do. Her guests were wrangling once more; let them wrangle; she was going to leave this house that Mr. Wilkinson apparently wanted to surround with police as a preliminary to the “fun.” Edgar might still be at the office; if he was not, she would sleep at some hotel and find him in the morning. Then she would take her leap. She had hesitated far too long. She would not go and look at the twins for fear lest she should hesitate again....

Just such a sense of rest came over her as a swimmer feels who, having long struggled against a choppy stream, suddenly abandons himself to it and lets it bear him whither it will.

Unnoticed in the heat of the dispute, she crossed to the studio door. She thought she heard Laura call, “Can I come and help, Amory?” No doubt Laura thought she was going to see about supper. But she no longer intended to stay even for supper in this house of wrangles and envy and crowds and whispering and crookedness.

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Her cheque-book and some gold were in her dressing-table drawer upstairs. She got them. Then she descended again, opened the front door, closed it softly behind her again, passed through the door in the privet hedge, and walked out on to the dark Heath.

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### III

#### DE TROP

THOSE who knew Edgar Strong the best knew that the problem of how to make the best of both worlds pressed with a peculiar hardship on him. The smaller rebel must have the whole of infinity for his soul to range in—and, for all the practical concern that man has with it, infinity may be defined as the condition in which the word of the weakest is as good as that of the wisest. Give him scope enough and Mr. Brimby cannot be challenged. There is no knowledge of which he says that it is too wonderful for him, that it is high and he cannot attain unto it.

But Edgar Strong knew a little more than Mr. Brimby. He bore his share of just such a common responsibility as is not too great for you or for me to understand. Between himself and Mr. Prang had been a long and slow and grim struggle, without a word about it having been said on either side; and it had not been altogether Edgar Strong's fault that in the end Mr. Prang had been one too many for him.

For, consistently with his keeping his three hundred a year (more than two-thirds of which by one means and another he had contrived to save), he did not see that he could have done much more than he had done. Things would have been far worse had he allowed Mr. Wilkinson to oust him. And now he knew that this was the “Novum's” finish. Whispers had reached him that behind important walls important questions were being asked, and a ponderous and slow-moving Department had approached another Body about certain finportations (Sir Joseph Deedes, Katie's uncle, knew all about these things). And this and that and the other were going on behind the scenes; and these deep mutterings meant, if they meant anything at all, that it was time Edgar Strong was packing up.

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Fruit-farming was the line he fancied; oranges in Florida; and it would not take long to book passages—passages for two—

He had heard the news in the early afternoon, and had straightway sent off an express messenger to the person for whom the second passage was destined. Within an hour this person had run up the stairs, without having met anybody on a landing whom it had been necessary to ask whether Mr. So-and-So, the poster artist, had a studio in the building. Edgar Strong's occupation as she had entered had made words superfluous. He had been carrying armfuls of papers into the little room behind the office and thrusting them without examination on the fire. The girl had exchanged a few rapid sentences with him, had bolted out again, hailed a taxi, sought a Bank, done some business there on the stroke of four, and had driven thence to a shipping office. Edgar Strong, in Charing Cross Road, had continued to feed his fire. The whole place smelt of burning paper. A mountain of ashes choked the grate and spread out as far as the bed and the iron washstand in the corner.

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The girl returned. From under the bed she pulled out a couple of bags. Into these she began to thrust her companion's clothes. Into a third and smaller bag she crammed her own dressing-gown and slippers, a comb and a couple of whalebone brushes, and other things. She had

brought word that the boat sailed the day after to-morrow....

"There's the telephone—just answer it, will you?" Strong said, casting another bundle on the fire....

"Wyron," said the girl, returning.

"Never mind those boots; they're done; and you might get me a safety-razor; shall want it on the ship.... By the way—I think we'd better get married."

The girl laughed.—"All right," she said as she crammed a nightdress-case into the little bag....

Amory walked quickly down the East Heath. As she walked she could not help wondering what there had been to make such a fuss about. Indeed she had been making quite a bugbear of the thing she was now doing quite easily. What, after all, would it matter? Would a single one of the people she passed so hurriedly think her case in the least degree special? Had they not, each one of them, their own private and probably very similar affairs? Was there one of them of whom it could be said with certainty that he or she was not, at that very moment, bound on the same errand? She looked at the women. There was nothing to betray them, but it was quite as likely as not. Nor could they tell by looking at her. For that matter, the most resolute would hide it the most. And a person's life was his own. Nobody would give him another one when he had starved and denied the one he had. There might not be another one. Some people said that there was, and some that there wasn't. Meetings were held about that too, but so far they hadn't seemed to advance matters very much....

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Nor was it the urge of passion that was now driving her forward at such a rate. She could not help thinking that she had been rather silly in her dreams about carpets and Nubians and those things. If Edgar was passionate, very well—she would deny him nothing; but in that case she would feel ever so slightly superior to Edgar. She rather wished that that was not so; she hoped that after all it might not be so; on the whole she would have preferred to be a little his inferior. She had not been inferior to Cosimo. They, she and Cosimo, had talked a good deal about equality, of course, but, after all, equality was a balance too nice for the present stressful stage of the struggle between man and woman; a theoretical equality if you liked, but in practice the thing became a slight temporary feminine preponderance, which would, no doubt, settle down in time. Virtually she had been Cosimo's master. She did not want to be Edgar's. Rather than be that he might—her tired sensibilities gave a brief flutter—he might even be a little cruel to her if he wished....

A Tottenham Court Road bus was just starting from the bottom of Pond Street. She ran to catch it. It moved forward again, with Amory sitting inside it, between a man in a white muffler and opera-hat and a flower-woman returning home with her empty baskets.

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Many, many times Amory Pratt, abusing her fancy, had rehearsed the scene to which she was now so smoothly and rapidly approaching; but she rehearsed nothing now. It would suffice for her just to appear before Edgar; no words would be necessary; he would instantly understand. Of course (she reflected) he might have left the office when she got there; it was even reasonably probable that he would have left; it was not a press-night; twenty to one he would have left. But her thoughts went forward again exactly as if she had not just told herself this.... He would be there. She would go up to him and stand before him. As likely as not not a word would pass between them. She felt that she had used too many words in her life. She and her set had discussed subjects simply out of existence. Often, by the time they had finished talking, not one of them had known what they had been talking about. It had been sheer dissipation. Men, she had heard, took drinks like that, and by and by were unable to stand, and then made hideous exhibitions of themselves. Nobody could say exactly at what point they, the men, became incapable, nor the point at which the others, Amory and her set, became word-sodden; in the one case the police (she had heard) made them walk a chalk-line; but there was no chalk-line for the others. Their paths were crooked as scribble....

But she was going straight at last—as straight as a pair of tram-lines could take her—and so far was she from wishing that the tram would go more slowly, that she would have hastened it had she been able.

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The "Mother Shipton"—the Cobden Statue—Hampstead Road—the "Adam and Eve." At this last stopping-place she descended, crossed the road, and boarded a bus. She remembered that once before, when she had visited the office in a taxi, the cab had seemed to go at a terrifying speed; now the bus seemed to crawl. A fear took her that every stop might cause her to miss him by just a minute. She tapped with her foot. She looked almost angrily at those who got in or out. That flower-woman: why couldn't she have got out at the proper stopping-place, instead of upsetting everything with her baskets hardly a hundred yards further on?... Off again; she hoped to goodness that was the last delay. She had been stupid not to take a taxi after all.

She descended opposite the "Horse Shoe," not three minutes' walk from the "Novum's" offices. Then again she called herself stupid for not having sat where she was, since the bus would go straight past the door. But she could be there as soon as the bus if she walked quickly.—

The bus overtook her and beat her by twenty yards.

The bookseller's shutters were down, and in the window of the electric-fittings shop could be dimly seen a ventilating fan, a desk-lamp, and a switch-board or two. Amory turned in under the arch that led to the yard behind. Her eyes had gone up to the third floor almost before she had issued from the narrow alley—

Ah!... So she was not too late. There was a light.

Through the ground-floor cavern in which the sandwich-boards were stacked she had for the first time to slacken her pace; the floor was uneven, and the place was crowded with dim shadows. A man smoking a pipe over an evening paper turned as she entered, but, seeing her

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make straight for the stairs, he did not ask her her business. The winding wooden staircase was black as a flue. On the first landing she paused for a moment; the man with the pipe had, after all, challenged her, "Who is it you want, Miss?" he called from below.... But he did not follow her. A vague light from the landing window showed her the second flight of wedge-shaped wooden steps. She mounted them, and gained the corridor hung with the specimens of the poster-artist's work. Ahead along the passage a narrow shaft of light crossed the floor. She gave one more look behind, for fear the man below had, after all, followed her; she was determined, but that did not mean that she necessarily wished to be seen....

Her life was her own, to do what she liked with. Nobody would give her another one....

And Edgar might be cruel if he wished....

For one instant longer she hesitated. Then she pushed softly at the door from which the beam of light came.

The quietness of her approach was wasted after all. There was nobody in the office. The floor was untidy with scattered leaves of paper, and Edgar had carelessly left every drawer of his desk open; but that only meant that he could not be very far away. Probably he was in the waiting-room. She approached the door of it.

But, as she did so, some slight unfamiliarity about the place struck her. The first room of the three, or waiting-room, she knew, from having once or twice pushed at the first door of the passage and having had to pass through that ante-room. Of the third room she knew nothing save that it was used as a sort of general lumber-room. But the rooms seemed somehow to have got changed about. It was from this third room, and not from the waiting-room, that a bright light came, and the smell of charred paper. The door was partly open. Amory advanced to it.

As she did so somebody spoke.

For so slight a cause, the start that Amory gave was rather heartrending. She stopped dead. Her face had turned so chalky a white that the freckles upon it, which ordinarily scarcely showed, looked almost unwholesome.

In her mind she had given Edgar Strong leave to be cruel to her, but not with this cruelty. The cruelty we choose is always another cruelty. Once a man, who miraculously survived a flogging, said that by comparison with the anguish of the second stroke that of the first was almost a sweetness; and after the third, and fourth, men, they say, have laughed. It happened so to Amory. The voices she heard were not loud; so much the worse, when a few ordinary, grunted, half expressions could so pierce her.

"—months ago, but I wasn't ready. I stayed on here for nobody's convenience but my own, I can tell you." It was Edgar who said this. Then a woman's voice—

"I don't think this waistcoat's worth taking; I've patched and patched it—"

"Oh, chuck it under the bed. And I say—we've had nothing to eat. Make the cocoa, will you?"

"Just a minute till I finish this bag.—What'll Pratt say when he comes back?"

"As I shan't be here to hear him, it's hardly worth while guessing."

"Will Wilkinson take it over?"

"The 'Novum'?... I don't think there'll be any more 'Novum.' I suppose these London Indians will be holding a meeting. I don't like 'em, but let's be fair to them: most of 'em are all right. They've got to dissociate themselves from this Collins business somehow. But I expect some lunatic will go and move an amendment.... Well, it won't matter to us. We shall be well down the Channel by that time."

Then the girl gave a low laugh.—"I *do* think you might buy me a trousseau, Ned—the way it's turned out—"

The man's voice grunted.

"I thought that would be the next. Give you something and you all want something else immediately.... Can't afford it, my dear. I've only pulled between three and four hundred out of this show, living here, paying myself space-rates and all the lot; and we shall want all that."

Again the low voice—very soft and low.

"But you'll be a little sorry to leave here, won't you—m'mmm?—" (This was the second stroke, by comparison with which the first had been sweet).

Strong spoke brusquely.—"Look here, old girl—we've heaps of things to do to-night—lots of time before us—don't let's have any nonsense—"

"No-o-o?"—

Amory, besides hearing, might have seen; but she did not. Something had brought into her head her own words to Walter Wyron of an hour or two before, when Walter had picked up the cable announcing Cosimo's return: "Put that down, Walter; it's mine." This other, that was taking place in that inner room, was theirs. It would have been perfectly easy to strike them dumb by appearing, just for one moment, in the doorway of this—lumber-room; but she preferred not to do it. If she had, she felt that it would have been the remains of a woman they would have seen. There is not much catch in striking anybody dumb when the process involves their seeing—that. Much better to steal out quietly....

Noiselessly she turned her back to the half-open door. She tiptoed out into the corridor again. For a dozen yards she continued to tiptoe—in order to spare them; and then she found herself at the head of the steep stairs. She descended. She had not made a single sound. Down below the man was still reading the paper, and again he looked round. At another time Amory might have questioned him; but again she did not. There was nothing to learn. She knew.

It was the first thing she had ever really known.

Bowed with the strangeness of knowledge, she walked slowly out into Charing Cross Road.

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SHE continued to walk slowly; the slowness was as remarkable as her haste had been. She had intended, had she missed Edgar, to go to an hotel; but home was hotel enough, hotel home. Home—home to a house without privacy—home to children of whom she was not much more than technically the mother—home to an asbestos log and to the absence of a husband that was at least as desirable as his presence: nothing else remained.

For her lack seemed total—so total as hardly to be a lack. She desired no one thing, and a desire for everything is an abuse of the term “desire.” So she walked slowly, stopping now and then to look at a flagstone as if it had been a remarkable object. And as she walked she wondered how she had come to be as she was.

She could not see where her life had gone wrong. She did not remember any one point at which she had taken a false and crucial step. For example, she did not think this gray and harmonious totality of despondency had come of her marrying Cosimo. They were neither outstandingly suited nor unsuited to one another, and a thousand marriages precisely similar were made every day and turned out well enough. No; it could not be that she had expected too much of marriage. She had not courted disappointment that way.... (But stay: had the trouble come of her not expecting largely enough? Of her not having assumed enough? Of her not having said to life, “Such and such I intend to have, and you shall provide it?” Would she have fared better then?).... And if Cosimo had brought her no wonder, neither had her babes. People were in the habit of saying astonishing things about the miracle of the babe at the breast, but Amory could only say that she had never experienced these things. She had wondered that she should not, when so many others apparently did, but the fact remained, that bearing had been an anguish and nursing an inconvenience. And so at the twins she had stopped.

Would it have been better had she not stopped? Would she have been happier with many children? Without children at all? Or unmarried? Or ought her painting to have been husband, home and children to her?...

It was a little late in the day to ask these questions now—

And yet there had been no reason for asking them earlier—

It had needed that, her first point of knowledge, to bring it home into her heart....

But do not suppose that she was in any pain. As a spinally-anaesthetized subject may have a quite poignant interest in the lopping off of one of his own limbs, and may even wonder that he feels no local pain, so she assisted at her own dismemberment. Home, husband, babes, her art— one after another she now seemed to see them go—or rather, seemed to see that they had long since gone. She saw this going, in retrospect. It was as if, though only degree by degree had the pleasant things of life ticked away from her, the escapement was now removed from her memory, allowing all with a buzz to run down to a dead stop. She could almost hear that buzz, almost see that soft rim of whizzing teeth....

Now all was stillness—stillness without pain. She knew now what Edgar Strong had been doing. She knew that he had been making use of her, pocketing Cosimo’s money, using the “Novum’s” office as his lodging, had had his bed there, his slippers in the fender, his kettle, his cocoa, his plates, his cups, his.... And she knew now that Edgar Strong was only one of those who had clustered like leeches about Cosimo.... She forgot how much Cosimo had said that from first to last it had all cost. She thought twenty thousand pounds. Twenty thousand pounds, all vanished between that first Ludlow experiment and that last piece of amateur sociology, three revolver shots in a man’s back! As a price it was stiffish. She did not quite know what the provider of the money had had out of it all. At any rate she herself had this curious stilly state of painless but rather sickening knowledge. And knowledge, they say, is above rubies. So perhaps it was cheap after all....

But where had she gone wrong? Had she simply been born wrong? Would it have made any difference whatever she had done? Or had all this been appointed for her or ever her mother had conceived her?

She asked herself this as she passed Whitefield’s Tabernacle; still walking slowly, she was well up Hampstead Road and still no answer had occurred to her. But somewhere near the gold-beater’s arm on the right-hand side of the road a thought did strike her. She thought that she would not go home after all. This was not because to go home now would be inglorious; it was no attempt to keep up appearances; it was merely that she would have preferred anything to this horrible numbness. Pain would be better. It is at any rate a condition of pain that you must be alive to feel it, and she did not feel quite alive. This might be a dream from which she would presently awake, or a waking from which she would by and by drop off to sleep again. In either case it was more than she could bear for much longer, and, did she go home, she would have to bear it throughout the night—for days—until Cosimo came back—after that—

But where else to go, if not to The Witan? To Laura’s? To Dickie’s? That would be the same thing as going home: little enough change from spinal anaesthesia in that! They could not help. Of all her old associates, there was hardly one but might—that was to say if anything extraordinary ever happened to them, like suddenly getting to know something—there was hardly one of them but might experience precisely this same hopeless perfection of wrongness, and fail to discover any one point at which it had all begun. It was rather to be hoped (Amory thought) that they never would get to know anything. They were happier as they were, in a self-contained and harmonious ignorance. Knowledge attained too late was rather dreadful; people ought to begin to get it fairly early or not at all. They ought to begin at about the age of Corin and

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A month ago the last person she would have gone to with a trouble would have been Dorothy Tasker. They had not a single view in common. Moreover, it would have been humiliating. But now that actually became, in a curious, reflex sort of way, a reason for going. She did not know that she actually wished to be humiliated; she did not think about it; but she had been looking at herself, and at people exactly like herself, for a long, long, long time, and, when you have looked at yourself too much you can sometimes actually find out something new about yourself by looking for a change at somebody else as little like you as can possibly be found. Amory had tried a good many things, but she had never tried this. It might be worth trying. She hesitated for one moment longer. This was when she feared that Dorothy might offer her, not the change from numbness to pain, but a sympathy and consolation that, something deep down within her told her, would not help her.... A little more quickly, but not much, she walked up Malden Road. She turned into Fleet Road, and reached the tram-terminus below Hampstead Heath Station. Thence to Dorothy's was a bare five minutes. What she should say when she got to Dorothy's she did not trouble to think.

And at first it looked as if she would not be allowed to say anything at all to her, for when she rang the bell of the hall-floor flat Stan himself opened the door, looked at her with no great favour, and told her that Dorothy was not to be seen. From that Amory gathered that Dorothy was at least within. [603]

Now when your need of a thing is very great, you are not to be put off by a young man who admits that his wife is at home, but tells you that she has some trifling affair—is in her dressing-gown perhaps, or has not made her hair tidy—that makes your call slightly inconvenient. Therefore Amory, in her need, did what the young man would no doubt have called “an infernally cheeky thing.” She repeated her request once more, and then, seeing another refusal coming, waited for no further reply, but pushed past Stan and made direct for Dorothy's bedroom. Why she should have supposed that Dorothy would be in her bedroom she could not have told. She might equally well have been in the dining-room, or in the pond-room. But along the passage to the bedroom Amory walked, while Stan stared in stupefaction after her.

Dorothy was there. She had not gone to bed, but, early as it was, appeared to have been preparing to do so. Amory knew that because, though in Britomart Belchamber's case a dressing-gown and plaited hair might merely have meant that she wanted to listen to Walter Wyron's talk in looseness and comfort, or else that a plaster cast was to be taken, they certainly did not mean that in Dorothy's. And she supposed that differences of that kind were more or less what she had come to see.

Dorothy was gazing into the fire before which the youngest Bit had had his bath. Close to her own chair was drawn the chair that had evidently been lately occupied by Stan. The infant Bit's cot was in a corner of the room. At first Dorothy did not look up from the fire. Probably she supposed the person who was looking at her from the doorway to be Stan. [604]

But as that person neither spoke nor advanced, she turned her head. The next moment a curious little sound had come from her lips. You see, in the first place, she had expected nobody less, and in the second place, she wholeheartedly shared many of her worldly old aunt's prejudices, among which was the monstrous one that established a connexion between recently-bibbed politicians in this country and revolver shots in another. And there was no doubt whatever that her presentable but brainless young husband had fostered this fallacious conviction. He might even have gone so far as to say that Amory herself was not altogether irresponsible....

And that, too, in a sense, was what Amory had come for.

The eyes of the two women met, Amory's at the door, Dorothy's startled ones looking over her shoulder; blue ones and shallow brook-brown ones; and then Dorothy half rose.

But whatever the first expression of her face had been, it hardly lasted for a quarter of an instant. Alarm instantly took its place. She had begun to get up as a person gets up who would ask another person what he is doing there. Now it was as if, though she did not yet know what it was, there was something to be done, something practical and with the hands, without a moment's delay. [605]

“What's the matter?” she cried. “Cried” is written, but her exclamation actually gained in emphasis from the fact that, not to wake the Bit, she voiced it in a whisper.

For a moment Amory wondered why she should speak like that. Then it occurred to her that the face of a person under spinal anaesthesia might in itself be a reason. She had forgotten her face.

“May I come in?” she asked.

She took Dorothy's “Shut the door—and speak low, please—what do you want?” as an intimation that she might. Amory entered. But she was not asked to sit down. The man who runs with a fire-call, or fetches a doctor in the night, is not asked to sit down, and some urgency of that kind appeared to be Dorothy's conception of Amory's visit.

“What do you want?” she demanded again.

Amory herself felt foolish at her own reply. It was so futile, so piteous, so true. She stood as helpless as a Bit before Dorothy.

“I—I don't know,” she said.

“What's the matter? What are you looking like that for? Has anything happened to Cosimo?”

“No. No. No. He's coming home. No. Nothing's happened.”

“Can I be of use to you?” She was prepared to be that.

“No—yes—I don't know—”

Dorothy's eyes had hardened a little.—“Do you want something—and if you don't—*had* you to come—to-night?” [606]

Amory spoke quite quickly and eagerly.

"Oh yes—to-night—it had to be to-night—I had to come to-night—"

Dorothy's eyes grew harder still.

"Then I think I know what you mean.... I don't think we'll talk about it. There's really nothing to be said.—So—"

Amory was vaguely puzzled. Of Dorothy's relation to Sir Benjamin she knew nothing. Dorothy appeared to be waiting for her to go. That would mean back to The Witan. But she had come here expressly to avoid going back to The Witan. Again she spoke foolishly.

"Cosimo's coming back," she said.

"My aunt thought he might be," said Dorothy in an even voice.

"And I was going away—but I'm not now—"

"Oh?"

"May I sit down?"

She did so, with her doubled fists thrust between her knees and her head a little bowed. Then her eyes wandered sideways slowly round the room. Dorothy's blouse was thrown on the wide bed; from under the bed the baby Bit's bath peeped; and on the blouse lay Dorothy's hairbrushes.

Amory was thinking of another bed, a bed she had never seen, with portmanteaus on it, and a patched old waistcoat cast underneath it, and a girl busily packing at it, a girl whose voice she had heard pouting "You might buy me a trousseau—"

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Dorothy also had sat down, but only on the edge of her chair. And she thought it would be best to speak a little more plainly.

"If you'll come to-morrow I shall know better what to say to you," she said. "You see, you've taken me by surprise. I didn't think you'd come, and I don't know now what you've come for. It isn't a thing to talk about, certainly not to-day. I should have liked to-day to myself. But if you feel that you must—will you come in again to-morrow?"

But Amory hardly seemed to hear. Her eyes were noting the appointments of the bedroom again. The time had been when she would at once have denounced the room as overcrowded and unhygienic. A cot, and a bed with two pillows ... in some respects her own plan was to be preferred. But this again was the kind of thing she had come to see, and she admitted that these things were more or less governed by what people could afford. From the kicked and scratched condition of the front of the chest of drawers she imagined that Dorothy's children must romp all over the flat. A parti-coloured ball lay under the cot where the baby slept. There was a rubber bath-doll near it. The two older boys would be sleeping in the next room.

She spoke again.—"I was going away," she said, dully, "with somebody."

Once more Dorothy merely said "Oh?"

Then it occurred to Amory that perhaps Dorothy did not quite understand.

"I mean with—with somebody not my husband."

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She had half expected that Dorothy would be shocked, or at least surprised; but she seemed to take it quite coolly. Dorothy, as a matter of fact, was not surprised in the very least. She too guessed at the futility of looking for a starting-point of things that grow by inevitable and infinitesimal degrees. It was rather sad, but not at all astonishing. On Amory's own premises, there was simply no reason why she shouldn't. So again she merely said "Oh?" and added after a moment, "But you're not?"

"No."

"How's that? Has what we've heard to-day made you change your mind?"

Again Amory was slightly puzzled; and at Dorothy's questions she had, moreover, a sudden little hesitation. *Was* it after all necessary that Dorothy should know everything? Would it not be sufficient, without going into details, to let Dorothy suppose she had changed her mind? It came to the same thing in the end.... Besides, Edgar Strong had not refused her that night. He had not even known of her presence in the office. Of the rest she would make a clean breast, but it was no good bothering Dorothy with that other.... She was still plunged into a sort of stupor, but these reflections stirred ever so slightly under the surface of it....

Then what "what we've heard to-day" struck her. She repeated the words.

"What we've heard to-day?"

"Oh, if you haven't heard.... I only mean about the murder of my uncle," said Dorothy coldly.

This was far more than Amory could take in. She reflected for a moment. Then, "What do you say, Dorothy?" she asked slowly.

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"At least he wasn't my uncle really. I liked him better than any of my uncles."

"Do you mean Sir Benjamin Collins?"

It was as if Amory had not imagined that Sir Benjamin could by any possibility have been anybody's uncle.

"I called him uncle," said Dorothy, in a voice that she tried to keep steady. "Before I could say the word—I called him—." But she decided not to risk the baby-word she had used—"Unnoo"—

It seemed to Amory a remarkable little coincidence.

"I—I didn't know," she said stupidly.

"No."

"You—you mean you—knew him?—"

"Oh ... oh yes."

Amory said again that she hadn't known....

"Then why," Dorothy would have liked to cry aloud, "*have* you come, if it isn't to make matters worse by talking about it? That wouldn't have surprised me very much! I should have been quite prepared for you to apologize! It's the kind of thing you would do. I don't think very much of you,

you see".... But again that worse than frightened look on her visitor's face struck her sharply, and again a remark of her aunt's returned to her: "They puzzle their brains till their bodies suffer, and overwork their bodies till they're little better than fools." Suddenly she gave her sometime friend more careful attention.

"Amory—," she said all at once.

Amory had her fists between her knees again.—"What?" she said without looking up.

"You just said something about—going away. I want to ask you something. You haven't...?"

The meaning was quite plain.

As if she had been galvanized, Amory looked sharply up.—"How dare——", she began.

But it was only a flash in the pan. Dorothy was looking into her eyes.

"You're telling me the truth?" She hated to ask the question.

"Yes," Amory mumbled, dropping her head again.

"Has Cosimo been unkind to you?"

"No."

"Nor neglected you?"

"No."

"Has—has anybody been unkind to you?" She could not speak of "somebody" by name.

Here Amory hesitated, and finally lied. It was rather a good sign that she did so. It meant returning animation....

"No," she said.

"Then what *has* happened?"

"Nothing. That's what I asked myself. That's just it. Nothing. Nothing at all's happened."

Dorothy spoke in a low voice, as if to herself.—"I know," she murmured....

And, on the chance that she really did know, Amory clutched at the sleeve of Dorothy's dressing-gown almost excitedly.

"Yes, that's what I mean ... you do know?" she asked in a quick whisper.

"Yes—no—I'm not sure——"

"But you *do* know that—nothing happening, nothing at all, and everything happening—everything? That's what I mean—that's what I want to know—that's why I came——"

"Don't speak so loudly. Put your hands to the fire; they're like ice. Wait; I'll get you a shawl; you're shivering.... Now I want you to tell me some things...."

And, first wrapping her up and putting Stan's pillow behind her back, she began to question her.

What, again, was the purport of her questions? What of those of her aunt? What of those of a good many others in an age that is producing, and for some mysterious reason or other counts it a sign of progress to produce, innumerable Amorys—so many that, stretch out your hand where you will, and you will touch one?

All is guessing: but it will pass on the time if we hold a Meeting about it now. Everybody is agreed that the way to arrive at the best conclusions is to hold a Meeting, and this will be only one more Meeting added to the cloud of Meetings in which the "Novum" went up and out—the Meeting which, as Edgar Strong had prophesied, the loyal London Indians held (in the Imperial Institute) in order to dissociate themselves from the Collins affair (as Edgar Strong had also prophesied, Mr. Wilkinson moved an amendment, "That this Meeting declines to dissociate itself, etc. etc.")—the numerous secondary Meetings that arose out of that Meeting—the Meetings of the "Novum's" creditors (for Edgar Strong in his haste to be off had omitted to pay all the bills)—the Meetings at which (Cosimo Pratt having withdrawn his support) the Eden and the Suffrage Shop had to be reconstructed—the Meetings convened to talk about this, that and the other—as many of them as you like.

Let us too, then, hold a nice, jolly Meeting, in order to find out what was the matter with Amory—a Meeting with Mr. Brimby in the Chair, to tell us that there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and that no party has a monopoly of Truth, and that the words that ought always to be on our lips as we hurl ourselves into the thickest and hottest of the fray, whatever it may be, are "To know all is to forgive all."

But let us keep our Meeting as quiet as we can, for we shall have no end of a crowd of Meeting-lovers there if we don't. The Wyrans will of course have to be admitted, and Mr. Wilkinson, and Dickie Lemesurier, and a few of the oldest students of the McGrath; but we do not particularly want the others—those who feel that in a better and brighter world they would have been students of the McGrath, but, as matters stand, are merely young clerks who can draw a little, young salesmen who can write a little, young auctioneers with an instinct for the best in sculpture, young foremen who yearn to express themselves in music, young governesses (or a few of them) who have heard of the enormous sums of money to be made by playwriting, New Imperialists, amateur regenerators, social prophets after working-hours, and, in a word, all the people who have just heard that it is not true that Satan is yet bound up for his promised stretch of a thousand years. A terrible number of them will get in whether we wish it or not; but let the rest be our own little party; and you shall sit next to Britomart Belchamber, and I will stand by to open the windows in case we feel the need of a little fresh air.

So Mr. Brimby will open the proceedings. He will say the things above-mentioned, and presently, with emotion and his sense of the world's sorrow gaining on him, will come to the case of their dear friend Amory Pratt. Here, he will say, is a young woman, one of themselves, who does not know what is the matter with her—who does not know what has become of her joy—who cannot understand (if Mr. Brimby may be allowed to express himself a little poetically) why the

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bloom of her life has turned to an early rime. And so (Mr. Brimby will continue), knowing that if two heads are better than one, two hundred heads must be just one hundred times better still, their friend has submitted her case to the Meeting. He will beg them to approach that case sympathetically. Let the extremists of the one part (if there be any) balance the extremists of the other, leaving as an ideal and beautiful middle nullity those words he had used before, but did not apologize for using again—to know all is to forgive all. And with these few remarks (if we are lucky), Mr. Brimby will say no more, but will call upon their friend Mr. Walter Wyron to state his view of their friend's case.

Then Walter will get up, with his hands in the pockets of his knickers, and it will not be his fault if he does not get off an epigram or two of the "Love is Law" kind. But you will not fail to notice that Walter is not his ordinary jaunty self. The withdrawal of Cosimo's support is going to hit him rather hard, and glances will be exchanged, and one or two will whisper behind their hands, "Isn't Walter beginning to live a little on his reputation?" Still, Walter will contribute his quatum. We shall hear that, in his opinion, the Cause of Synthetic Protoplasm is making such vast strides to-day that we must revise every one of our estimates in the light of the most recent knowledge, having done which we shall probably find that what is really the matter with Amory is that, by comparison with the mechanical appliances of Loeb and Delage—appliances which he will take leave to call the Womb of the Workshop—their friend Amory is over-vitalized.

Then Mr. Wilkinson will spring to his feet. And Mr. Wilkinson also will be more than a little sore about Cosimo's cowardly backsliding. He will say first of all that their Chairman, as usual, is talking out of his hat, and that anybody with a grain of sense knew that to know all was to have a contempt for all; and then he will point out that all the trouble had come of shillyshallying with the wrong policy. Under Strong's direction of the "Novum," he will say, Amory had been hitting the air to no purpose; whereas had he, Mr. Wilkinson, been allowed a chance, they would have had the proletariat armed with rifles by this, and Pratt's wife would have been a *tricoteuse*, doing a bit of knitting conspiratorially and domestically useful at one and the same time—would have worn a Phrygian cap, and carried a pike, and sung "A la Lanterne," and put a bit of fire into the men! That's what she ought to have done, and have had a bit of a run for her money, instead of shillyshallying about with that idiot Strong—

And then a maiden speech will be given us. Mr. Raffinger, of the McGrath, will get timidly but resolutely up, and we shall all applaud him when he says that the bad old *régime* at the McGrath was at the bottom of all the mischief. The stupid old Professors of the past had tried to drill instruction into the students instead of allowing each one to do exactly as he pleased and so to find his own soul. Amory had been crushed under the cruel old Juggernaut of discipline. But that, happily, was a thing of the past at the McGrath. Now they went on the more enlightened principles laid down by Séguin, who cured a child of destructiveness by giving it a piece of priceless Venetian glass to play with, and when he broke it gave it another unique piece, and then another, and another after that, and another, until by degrees the child learned, *and would never have to unlearn* (that was the important thing!) that it was very naughty to break valuable Venetian glass. (A "hear hear" from Mr. Brimby, which will probably prove so disconcerting to young Mr. Raffinger that he will sit down as suddenly as if Mr. Wilkinson had discharged two bullets at him).

And then Laura Wyron will speak, saying tremulously that she can't understand why Amory isn't happy when she has those two lovely babies; but she is not happy, and never will be again, because she has turned her back on her art; and Britomart Belchamber (who will be hoisted to her feet because she has lived in the same house with Amory, and may have something interesting and intimate to say) will doubt whether Amory has always quite closed the sweat-ducts with a cold sponge; and then the crowd will rush in—the governess playwrights will say what they think, the clerk sculptors what they think, and everybody else what he or she thinks—and presently they will have strayed a little from the business in hand, and will be discussing Cubism, or Matriarchy, or Toe-posts, or the Revival of the Ballad, or Rufty Tufty, quite beyond Mr. Brimby's power to hale them back to the proper subject. And so the Meeting will have to be adjourned, and we shall all go again to-morrow night, when Mr. Wilkinson will be in the Chair, and there ought to be some fun—

But Edgar Strong will not be there, because he will be on the water, and Cosimo will not be there, because he will be anxiously counting what money remains to him, and Mr. Prang will not be there, because he will be under arrest in Bombay. But, except for these absences, it will be a perfectly ripping Meeting—

But none of these things were Dorothy's business. Instead, by the time she had finished her questioning of Amory, there was no thought at all in her breast, save only the pitiful desire to help. She saw before her an old young woman, more drained and disillusioned and with less to look forward to at thirty-odd than her aunt had at seventy. Her very presence in Dorothy's house that night was a confession of it. It was the last house she would willingly have gone to, and yet there she was, begging Dorothy to tell her what had happened to her. And there was nothing for Dorothy to say in reply....

She knew that Stan, in the dining-room, was waiting to come to bed, but he must wait; Dorothy had the fire to mend, and Amory's cold hands to chafe, and to get her something hot to drink, and a dozen other things to do that had never had a beginning either, yet there they were, mere helpful habit and nothing more. Presently she set a cup of hot soup to Amory's lips.

"Drink this," she said, "and when you're rested my husband will take you home."

But that did not happen either. Amory spoke very tiredly.

"I should like—I don't want to trouble you—anywhere would do—but I don't want to go home to-night—"

Dorothy made a swift and doubting mental calculation. Where could she put her?—

"I'm simply done up," muttered Amory closing her eyes.

"I'm afraid we could only give you a shakedown in the dining-room—"

"Yes—that would do—"

Dorothy went out to give Stan his orders. Stan swore. "Rather cool, one of *that* crew coming here, to-night of all nights!" But Dorothy was peremptory.

"It isn't cool at all. You don't know anything about it. You'll find blankets in the chest in your dressing-room, and mind you don't wake Noel. Then get some cushions—I'll air a pillow case—and then you must go up there and tell them where she is—they'll be anxious—"

"Shall I bring those twins of hers back with me while I'm about it?" Stan asked satirically. "May as well put the lot up." [618]

When he heard Dorothy's reply he thought that his wife really had gone mad.

"I've arranged that," she said. "We shall be putting the twins up for a time at Ludlow by and by while she and her husband go away somewhere for a change. It's the least we can do. Don't stand gaping there, Stan—"

"Hm! May I ask what's up?"

"You may if you like, but I shan't tell you."

"Hm!... Well—it's a dog's life—but I suppose it's no good my saying anything—"

"Not a bit."

So Amory was put to bed, most unhygienically, in Dorothy's dining-room; but in the middle of the night she woke, quite unable to remember where she was. There was a narrow opening between the drawn curtains; through it a glimmer of light shone on the Venetian blinds from the street-lamp outside; and without any other light Amory got out of her improvised couch. She felt her way along the wall to a switch, and then suddenly flooded the room with light.

Blinking, she looked around. She herself wore one of Dorothy's nightgowns. On Stan's armchair, near his pipe-rack, was her hat, and her clothing lay in a heap where she had stepped out of it. Dorothy's slippers lay by the fender, and Dorothy had been too occupied to remember to remove the photograph of Uncle Ben from the mantelpiece. It seemed to be watching Amory as she stood, only half awake, in her borrowed nightgown. [619]

It was odd, the way things came about—

If you had asked Amory at six o'clock the evening before where she intended to spend the night, she would not have replied "In Dorothy Tasker's flat—"

But she felt frightfully listless, and the improvised bed was very warm—

She switched off the light and crept back. [620]

## TAILPIECE

**A** LONG the terrace of the late Sir Noel Tasker's house—"The Brear," Ludlow—there rushed a troop of ten or twelve urchins. They were dressed anyhow, in variously-coloured jerseys, shirts, jackets and blazers, and the legs of half of them were bare, and brown as sand. Their ages varied from five to fifteen, and it is hardly necessary to say that as they ran they shouted. A retriever, two Irish terriers, an Airedale and a Sealyham tore barking after them. It was a July evening, amber and windless, and the shouting and barking diminished as the horde turned the corner of the long low white house and disappeared into the beech plantation. Their tutor was enjoying a well-earned pipe in the coach-house.

From the tall drawing-room window there stepped on to the terrace a group of older people. The sound of wheels slowly ascending the drive could be heard. Lady Tasker came out first; she was followed by Cosimo and Amory and Dorothy and Stan. A little pile of labelled bags stood under the rose-grown verandah; the larger boxes had already gone on to the station by cart.

Stan took a whistle from his pocket and blew two shrill blasts; then he drew out his watch. The sounds of shouting drew near again.

"I give 'em thirty seconds," Stan remarked.... "Twenty-five, twenty-six—leg it, Corin!—ah; twenty-eight!... Company—fall in!" [621]

The young Tims and the young Tonys, Corin and Bonniebell and the terriers, stood (dogs and all, save for their tails) stiff as ramrods. Stan replaced his watch. He had been fishing, and still wore his tweed peaked cap, with a spare cast or two wound round it.

"Company—'Shun! Stand a-a-at—ease! 'S you were! Stand a-a-at—ease! Stand easy.... Tony, fall out and see to the bags. Tim, hold the horse. Corin—Corin!—What do you keep in the trenches?"

"Silence," piped up Corin. He had a rag round one brown knee, his head was half buried in an old field-service cap, and he refused to be parted, day nor night, from the wooden gun he carried.

"Not so much noise then.—Who hauls down the flag to-night?"

"Billie."

"Billie stand by. The rest of you dismiss, but don't go far—'Evening, Richards—"

The trap drew up in front of the house. Tim held the horse's head, Tony stood among the bags. The leavetaking began.

Amory and Cosimo were going to Cumberland for the rest of the summer. They would have liked to go to Norway, but the money would no longer run to it. They seemed a little shy of one another. They had been at the Brear a fortnight, and had had the little room over the porch. The twins were remaining behind for the present. Dorothy had said they would be no trouble. This [622]

was entirely untrue. They were more trouble than all the rest put together. Corin, near the schoolroom window, was wrangling with an eight years old Woodgate now.

"They do, there! On Hampstead Heath! I've seen them, an' they've hats, an' waterbottles, an' broomsticks!"

"Pooh, broomsticks! My father has a big elephant-gun!"

"Well ... mine goes to great big Meetings, an' says 'Hear hear!'"

"My father's in India!"

"Well, so was mine!"

"I've seen them troop the Colour at the Horse Guards' Parade!"

"So've I!" Corin mendaciously averred.

The other boy opened his eyes wide and protruded his mouth. It is rarely that one boy does not know when another boy is lying.

"Oh, what a big one! *You'd* catch it if Uncle Stan heard you!"

"Well," Corin pouted, "—I will—or else I'll cry all night—hard—and I'll make Bonnie cry too!—"

"Well, an' so shall I, again, an' then I'll have seen it twice, an' you'll only have seen it once, an' if I see it every time you do you'll *never* have seen it as often as me!"

Then Stan's voice was heard.

"Corin, come here."

It was an atmosphere of insensate militarism, but the Pratts were content to leave their offspring to breathe it for the present. They had another matter to attend to—their own marital relations. It had at last occurred to them that you cannot rule others until you can govern yourself, and they were going to see what could be done about it. They had secured a cottage miles away from anywhere, at the head of a narrow-gauge railway, and it remained to be seen whether quiet and privacy and the resources they might find within themselves would avail them better than the opposites of these things had done. There was just the chance that they might—their only chance. The twins, if all went well, would join them by and by. In the meantime they must see red, and learn to do things with once telling.

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So Amory took the struggling Corin into her arms—he wanted to go to the armoury of wooden guns—and kissed him. Then he ran unconcernedly off. Dorothy saw the sad little lift of Amory's bosom, guessed the cause, and laughed.

"Shocking little ingrates!" she said. "Noel's joy when I go away is sometimes indecent.—But don't be afraid they'll be any trouble to us here. You see the rabble we have in any case."

"It's very good of you," Amory murmured awkwardly.

"Nothing of the sort. Stan loves to manage them—it keeps his hand in for managing me, he says.... Now, I don't want to hurry you, but you'd better be off if you're going to get as far as Liverpool to-night. Good-bye, dear——"

"Good-bye, Dorothy——"

"So long, Pratt—up with those bags, Tim——"

"Good-bye, Bonnie——"

"Corin! Corin!—(Hm! See if I don't have you in hand in another week or two, my boy!)—Come and say good-bye to your father."

"Good-bye, Lady Tasker——"

"All right?"

The wheels crunched; hands were waved; the rabble gave a shockingly undisciplined cheer; and young Arthur Woodgate, who had run along the terrace and stood holding the gate at the end open, saluted. Stan took out his watch again.

"Four minutes to sunset," he announced.

But there was no need to tell Billie to stand by to strike the flag that hung motionless above the gable where the old billiard-room and gun-room had been thrown together to make the schoolroom. The halyards were already in his hands.

"Here, Corin," Stan called, "you shall fire the gun to-night."

Corin gave a wild yell of joy. Well out of reach, there was an electric button on one of the rose-grown verandah posts. Stan lifted his newest recruit to it, who put a finger-tip on it and shut his eyes——

"BANG!" went the little brass carronade in the locked enclosure behind the woodshed——

And hand over hand Billie hauled the flag down.

But it would be run up again in the morning.

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THE END

Transcriber's note

Extra titles were removed. Errors in punctuation were corrected silently. Also the following changes were made, on page

72 "flash" changed to "flask" (opened the flask of Chianti)

182 "Hamilton" changed to "Hamilton" (she had suggested Mr. Hamilton Dix instead)

210 "Cest" changed to "C'est" (C'est ça!)

252 "than" changed to "that" (spring a thing like that on you)

311 “reprent” changed to “represent” (It should represent the Earthly Authority)  
527 “l’amour” changed to “l’amour” (Comment l’amour revient aux vieillards)  
538 “excepted” changed to “accepted” (broke one of their tacitly accepted rules)  
590 “woman” changed to “women” (She looked at the women. There was nothing to betray them).

Otherwise the original was preserved, including unusual or archaic words and expressions, and inconsistent spelling and hyphenation.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GRAY YOUTH: THE STORY OF A VERY MODERN COURTSHIP AND A VERY MODERN MARRIAGE \*\*\*

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