

GLORIA
MUNDI



HAROLD FREDERIC



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GLORIA MUNDI

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BY

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“The Damnation of Theron Ware,” “March Hares,” etc.



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TO MY FRIEND

THE HON. ALTON B. PARKER

CHIEF JUDGE OF THE COURT

OF APPEALS, N. Y.

PART I



CHAPTER I

The meeting of the man and the woman—it is to this that every story in the world goes back for its beginning.

At noon on a day late in September the express train from Paris rested, panting and impatient, on its brief halt in the station at Rouen. The platform was covered with groups of passengers, pushing their way into or out of the throng about the victualer's table. Through the press passed waiters, bearing above their heads trays with cups of tea and plates of food. People were climbing the high steps to the carriages, or beckoning to others from the open windows of compartments. Four minutes of the allotted five had passed. The warning cries of the guards had begun, and there was even to be heard the ominous preliminary tooting of a horn.

At the front of the section of first-class carriages a young woman leaned through the broad window-frame of a coupé, and held a

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difficult conversation with one of the waiters. She had sandwiches in one hand, some loose coin in the other. Her task was to get at the meaning of a man who spoke of sous while she was thinking in centimes, and she smiled a little in amused vexation with herself at the embarrassment.

“Deux sandwich: combien si vous plait, monsieur?” she repeated, with an appealing stress of courtesy. More slowly she constructed a second sentence: “Est un franc assez?” She proffered the silver coin to help out her inquiry, and the waiter, nodding, put up his hand for it.

On the instant, as the noise of slamming doors and the chorus of “Au coupé, s’il-v’-plait!” grew peremptory, one in authority pushed the waiter aside and pulled open the coupé door upon which she had been leaning. “Permettez moi, madame!” he said curtly.

Close at his back was a young man, with wraps upon his arm and a traveling bag in his hand, who was flushed and breathing hard with the excitement of hurry, and who drew a long sigh of relief as he put his foot on the bottom step of the coupé.

The young woman had grasped the door and was striving stoutly to drag it to her. “Mais non, monsieur!” she shouted, her voice quivering with vehemence. “Cette

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compartement est tout reserveé—engageé! J'ai donné sank franc soisante, en Paris, pour moi seulement! Je proteste!”

Sharp blasts from a horn at the rear of the train broke in upon her earnest if uncertain remarks. The official held up one warning hand, while with the other he wrenched the door wide open. He said something of which the girl comprehended only its arbitrary harshness of spirit. Brusquely thrusting a ticket into the young man's hand, he pushed him up the steps into the compartment, and closed the door upon him with a clang. Arms were waving outside; the tin horn screamed; a throb of reawakened energy thrilled backward through the train.

“I assure you—I am so sorry,” the young man began, still standing by the door. His voice was gentle and deprecatory. His words were English, but the tone was of some other language.

“But I have taken the whole compartment—I paid for it all!” she burst out at him, her voice shaking with indignation. “It is an outrage!”

“I am afraid you are mistaken,” he started to speak again; “you obtained only one seat—I have a ticket for another. If there had been time, I beg you to believe—”

The train was moving, and a swift plunge

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into utter darkness abruptly broke off his speech. After a few moments it became possible to discern vague outlines in the black compartment. The girl had huddled herself on the end cushion at the right. The young man took his seat in the corner to the left, and for three incredibly protracted minutes the tunnel reared its uncanny barrier of bogus night between them. The dim suggestion of light which remained to them revealed constrained and motionless figures drawn rigidly away from each other, and pale averted countenances staring fixedly into the gloom.

All at once they were blinking in a flood of sunshine, and drawing welcome breaths of the new, sweet air which swept through from window to window. The young man's gaze, decorously turned to his left, was of a sudden struck with the panorama as by a blow. He uttered a little cry of delight to himself, and bent forward with eagerness to grasp as much as he might of what was offered. The broad, hill-rimmed basin of the Seine; the gray towers and shining spires of the ancient town; the blue films of smoke drifting through the autumn haze; the tall black chimneys, the narrow, high poplars, the splashes of vivid color with which the mighty moving picture painted itself—all

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held him, rapt and trembling, with his face out of the window.

Summarily the darkness descended upon them again. He drew back, settled himself in his seat and recalled the circumstance that he was not alone. It occurred to him to pull up the window, and then instinctively he turned to see if she had taken the same precaution on her side. Thus when the short second tunnel unexpectedly ended, he found himself regarding his companion with wide-eyed and surprised intentness.

There were two vacant seats between them, and across this space she returned his scrutiny for a moment; then with a fine show of calm she looked away, out through the broad, rounded panes which constituted the front of the compartment.

To the eye of the young man, she was above all things English. Her garments, her figure, the pose of her head, the consciously competent repose of her profile, the very angle at which the correct gray hat, with its fawn-colored ribbon, crossed the line of the brow above—these spoke loudly to him of the islander. From this fact alone would be inferred a towering personal pride, and an implacable resentment toward those who, no matter how innocently and accidentally, offered injury to that pride. He knew the

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English well, and it hardly needed this partial view of her face to tell him that she was very angry.

Another young man, under these conditions, might have more frankly asked himself whether the face was a beautiful one. He was conscious that the query had taken shape in his mind, but he gave it no attention. It was the character of the face, instead, which had powerfully impressed him. He recalled with curious minuteness the details of his first glimpse of it—the commanding light in the gray eyes, the tightened curves of the lip, the mantling red on the high, smooth cheek. Was it a pretty face? No—the question would not propound itself. Prettiness had nothing to do with the matter. The personality which looked through the face—that was what affected him.

The compartment seemed filled in some subtle way with the effect of this personality. He looked out of his window again. A beautiful deep valley lay below him now, with densely wooded hills beyond. The delicate tints of the waning season enriched the tracery of foliage close at hand; still the tall chimneys, mixed with poplars, marked the course of the enslaved river, but the factories themselves were kindly hidden here by dark growths of thicket in the shadowed depths.

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It was surpassingly beautiful, but its contemplation left him restless. He moved about on his seat, partially lowered the window, put it up again and at last turned his head.

“I am afraid that all the charming landscape is on this side,” he made bold to say. “I will change places with pleasure, if—if you would be so kind.”

“No, thank you,” was her spontaneous and decisive reply. Upon reflection she added in a more deliberate tone: “I should be obliged if you would take the view that conversation is not necessary.”

Some latent strain of temerity amazed the young man by rising to the surface of his mind, under the provocation of this rebuff, and shaping his purpose for him.

“It is only fair to myself, first, however,” he with surprise heard himself declaring, “that I should finish my explanation. You can satisfy yourself readily at Dieppe that your ticket is for only one seat. It is very easy to make errors of that kind when one does not—that is to say, is not—well, *entirely* familiar with the language of the country. As to my own part, you will remember that I came only at the last moment. I took my coupé seat a half hour before, because I also wished to be alone, and then I went out to

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see Jeanne d'Arc's tower again, and I was nearly too late. If there had been time, I would have found a seat elsewhere—but you yourself saw—”

“Really, I think no more need be said,” broke in his companion. She looked him frankly, coldly in the face as she spoke, and her words seemed in his ears to have metallic edges. “It is plain enough that there was a mistake. As you have suggested, my French is very faulty indeed, and no doubt the misunderstanding is entirely my own. So, since it is unavoidable, there surely need be no more words about it.”

She opened a book at this, put her feet out to the stool in front and ostentatiously disposed herself for deep abstraction in literature.

The young man in turn got out some pamphlets and papers from the pockets of his great-coat, and pretended to divide his attention between these and the scenery outside. In truth, he did not for a moment get the face of this girl out of his thoughts. More than ever now, since she had looked him fully in the eye, it was not a face to be pictured in the brain as other faces of women had been. The luminous substance of the individuality behind the face shone out at him from the pages he stared at, and from the

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passing vistas of lowland meadows, streams and mill-towns that met his gaze through the window.

He knew so little of women that his mind was quite devoid of materials for any comparative analysis of the effect she produced upon him. He evolved for himself, indeed, the conviction that really this was the first woman, in the genuine and higher meaning of the word, that he had ever met. The recognition of this brought with it an excitement as novel to him as the fact itself. Before ever he had seen her, clinging to the coupé door with her gloved hands and so bravely doing hopeless and tongue-tied battle with the guard, there had been things which had made this the greatest day of his life. He was in truth finishing the last stage of a journey into the unknown, the strange possibilities of which had for a week kept his nerves on the rack. The curtain of only one more night hung now between him and the revealed lineaments of destiny. To be alone with his perturbed thoughts, on this culminating day of anxious hopes and dreads, had been his controlling idea at Rouen. It was for this that he had bought the coupé seat, upon the rumor of the station that solitude was thus to be commanded. And now how extraordinary was the chance!

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There had stepped into this eventful day, as from the clouds, a stranger whose mysterious appeal to his imagination seemed more remarkable than all else combined.

He worked this out, painstakingly, with little sidelong glances from time to time toward where she sat buried in her book, to check the progression of his reasoning. When he reached the conclusion that she was really playing this predominant part in the drama of the day, its suggestion of hysterical folly rather frightened him. He looked with earnestness out of the window, and even began to count the chimneys of the landscape as an overture to returning sanity. Then he looked less furtively at her and said to himself with labored plausibility that she was but an ordinary traveling Englishwoman, scarcely to be differentiated from the Cook's-tourist type that he knew so well; she had not even a governess' knowledge of French, and there had been nothing in her words and tone with him to indicate either mental distinction or kindliness of temper. Why should he bestow so much as another thought upon her? He squared his slender shoulders, and turned with resolution to his book.

A minute later the impossibility of the situation had mastered every fiber of his brain. He put down the volume, feeling

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himself to be a fool for doing so, yet suffering himself with an unheard-of gladness.

“If I anger you, I shall be much pained,” he said, with a set face turned not quite toward her, and a voice that he kept from breaking by constant effort, “but I am going to England for the first time, and there are some things that I am very anxious to ask about.”

She seemed to reflect a little before she lifted her head. Now again he was privileged to look squarely into her face, and he added swiftly to his store a new impression of her. The ruling characteristic of the countenance was a certain calm and serious reasonableness. The forehead was broad and comely; the glance of the eyes was at once alert and steady. The other features were content to support this controlling upper part of the face; they made a graceful and fitting frame for the mind which revealed itself in the eyes and brow—and sought to do no more. Studying her afresh in this moment of her silence, he recalled the face of a young Piedmontese bishop who had come once to his school. It had the same episcopal serenity, the same wistful pride in youth's conquest of the things immortal, the same suggestion of intellectuality in its clear pallor.

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"I should dislike to seem rude," she said, slowly. "What is it that you want to ask?"

What was it indeed? He searched confusedly about in his mind for some one question entitled to precedence among the thousand to which answers would come in good time. He found nothing better than a query as to the connection between New Haven and Brighton.

"In this little book," he explained, "there is a time for New Haven and for London, but I cannot find a mention of Brighton, yet I am expected there this evening, or perhaps, early to-morrow morning."

"I am sure I cannot tell you," she answered. "However, the places are not far apart. I should say there would certainly be trains."

She lifted the book again as she spoke, and adjusted her shoulders to the cushions. He made haste to prevent the interview from lapsing.

"I have never seen England," he urged dolefully, "and yet I am all English in my blood—and in my feelings, too."

A flicker of ironical perception played for an instant in her eye and at the corner of her lip. "I have heard that a certain class of Americans adopt that pose," she remarked. "I dare say it is all right."

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He did not grasp her meaning all at once, though the willingness to give umbrage conveyed in her tone was clear enough. He looked doubtfully at her, before he spoke again. "Oh," he began, with hesitation—"yes, I see—you thought I was American. I am not in the least—I am all English. And it affects me very much—this thought that in a few hours now I am to see the real England. I am so excited about it, in fact," he added with a deprecatory little laugh, "that I couldn't bear it not to talk."

She nodded comprehendingly. "I thought that your accent must be American—since it certainly isn't English."

"Oh, I have too facile an ear," he answered readily, as if the subject were by no means new to him. "I pick up every accent that I hear. I have been much with English people, but even more with Americans and Australians. I always talk like the last family I have been in—until I enter another. I am by profession a private tutor—principally in languages—and so I know my failings in this matter very well."

She smiled at some passing retrospect. "You must have had an especially complete sense of my shortcomings as a linguist, too. I have often wondered what effect my French would produce upon an actual pro-

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fessor, but I should never have had the courage to experiment, if I had known."

He waved his hand—a pale hand with veined, thin, nervous fingers, which she looked at in its foreign gesture. "Too much importance is attached to languages," he declared. "It is the cheapest and most trivial of acquirements, if it stands alone, or if it is not put to high uses. Parents have so often angered me over this: they do not care what is in their children's minds and hearts, but only for the polish and form of what is on their tongues. I have a different feeling about education."

She nodded again, and laid the book aside. "You are coming to a country where everything will shock you, then," she said. "I would rather do scullery work, or break stones by the roadside, than be a school-teacher in England."

"Oh, it's the same everywhere," he urged. "I would not think that the English were worse than the others. They are different, that is all. Besides, I do not think I shall be a teacher in England. Of course, I speak in the dark; for a few hours yet everything is uncertain. But as the old American senator at Monte Carlo used to say, 'I feel it in my bones' that I will not have to teach any more."

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The expression of her face seemed somehow not to invite autobiography at the moment. "The prospect of not having to work any more for one's living," she mused at him—"how curiously fascinating it always is! We know perfectly well that it is good for us to work, and that we should be woe-fully unhappy if we did not work, and yet we are forever charming our imagination with a vision of complete idleness."

"I would not be idle!" the young man broke forth, enthusiastically. He leaned forward in his seat, and spoke with eager hands as well as words against the noise that filled the swaying carriage. "I have that same feeling—the longing to escape from the dull and foolish tasks I have to do—but I never say to myself that I would be idle. There are such a host of things to do in the world that are worth doing! But the men who have the time and the money, who are in the position to do these things—how is it, I ask myself, that they never think of doing them? It is the greatest of marvels to me. Then sometimes I wonder, if the chance and the power came to me, whether I also would sit down, and fold my hands, and do nothing. It is hard to say; who can be sure what is in him till he has been tested? Yet I like to think that I would

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prove the exception. It is only natural," he concluded, smilingly, "that one should try to think as well as possible of oneself."

The young lady surveyed his nervous, mobile face with thoughtful impassivity. "You seem to think, one way or another, a good deal about yourself," she remarked.

He bowed to her, with a certain exaggeration in his show of quite sincere humility which, she said to herself, had not been learned from his English-speaking connections.

"What you say is very true," he admitted with candor. "It is my fault—my failing. I know it only too well."

"*My* fault is bad manners," she replied, disarmed by his self-abasement. "I had no business to say it at all."

"Oh, no," he urged. "It is delightful to me that you did say it. I could not begin to tell you how good your words sounded in my ears. Honest and wise criticism is what I have not heard before in years. You do not get it in the South; there is flattery for you, and sneering, and praise as much too high as blame is too cruel—but no candid, quiet judgments. Oh, I loved to hear you say that! It was like my brother—my older brother Salvator. He is in America now.

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He is the only one who always said the truth to me. And I am glad, too, because—because it makes you seem like a friend to me, and I have been so agitated this whole week, so anxious and upset, and all without a soul to talk to, or advise with—and the pressure on me has been so great—”

He let the wandering sentence lose itself in the clamor of the train, and put the rest of his meaning into the glance with which he clung to hers. The appeal for sympathetic kindness of treatment glowed in his eyes and shone upon his eager face.

She took time for her answer, and when she spoke it was hardly in direct reply. “Your business in England,” she said, as unconcernedly as might be—“it is that, I take it, which causes so much anxiety. Fortunately it is soon to be settled—to-morrow, I think you said.”

“I wish I might tell you about it,” he responded with frank fervency. “I wish it—you cannot imagine how much!”

The look with which she received his words recalled to him her earlier manner. “I’m afraid—” she began, in a measured voice, and then stopped. Intuition helped him to read in her face the coming of a softer mood. Finally she smiled a little. “Really, this is all very quaint,” she said, and the

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smile crept into her voice. "But the train is slowing down—there is no time now."

They were indeed moving through the street of a town, at a pace which had been insensibly lowered while they talked. The irregular outlines of docks and boat-slips, overhanging greenish water, revealed themselves between dingy houses covered with signs and posters. At the barriers crossing the streets were clustered groups of philosophic observers, headed by the inevitable young soldier with his hands in the pockets of his red trousers, and flanked by those brown old women in white caps who seem always to be unoccupied, yet mysteriously do everything that is done.

"This is Dieppe, then?" he asked, with a collecting hand put out for his wraps.

The train had halted, and doors were being opened for tickets.

"We sit still, here, and go on to the wharf," she explained.

"And then to the boat!" he cried. "How long is it?—the voyage on the boat, I mean. Three hours and over! Excellent!"

She laughed outright as she rose, and got together her books and papers.

"I thought you were a Frenchman when I first saw you," she confided to him over her shoulder. "But no Frenchman at Dieppe

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ever yet shouted 'Excellent!' with his face turned toward the New Haven steamers."

The mirth in her tone was so welcome to him that he laughed in turn, without any clear idea of her words. He gathered her handbag up along with his own, and when she demurred he offered her gay defiance.

"It is the terrible boldness of a timid person," he prattled, as he helped her down the steps, "but you must perceive that in the face of it you are quite helpless. Since I was born, I have never really had my own way before. But now I begin to believe in my star. After all, one is not an Englishman for nothing."

"Oh, it is comparatively easy to be an Englishman in Dieppe," she made answer.

CHAPTER II

The sky was dappled azure overhead, the water calm and fresh-hued below. When the ship's company had disposed itself, and the vessel was making way outside, there were numerous long gaps of unpeopled space on the windy side, and to one of these the young couple tacitly bent their steps. They leaned against the rail, standing close together, with their faces lifted to the strong sweet breeze.

Viewed thus side by side, it could be seen that of the two the young man was just perceptibly the taller, but his extreme fragility excused his companion's conception of him as a small man. On his head he had pulled tight for the voyage a little turban of a cap, which accentuated the foreign note of his features and expression. He was dark of skin and hair, with deep-brown eyes both larger and softer than is common with his sex, even in the South. The face, high and regular in shape, had in repose the careworn effect of maturer years than the boyish figure indicated. In the animation of discussion

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this face took on, for the most part, the rather somber brilliancy of a strenuous earnestness. Now, as it confronted the stiff Channel wind, it was illumined by the unaccustomed light of a frivolous mood. The ends of his slight mustache were lifted in a continuous smile.

“It is my gayest day for many, many years,” he told her, after a little pause in the talk. They had become great friends in this last half-hour. In the reaction from the questionable restraint of the coupé to the broad, sunlit freedom of the steamer’s deck, the girl had revealed in generous measure a side of her temperament for which he had been unprepared. She had a humorous talent, and, once she had gained a clew to his perceptive capacities in this direction, it had pleased her to make him laugh by droll accounts of her experiences and observations in Paris. She had been there for a fortnight’s holiday, quite by herself, she told him, and there was something in her tone which rendered it impossible for him to ask himself if this was at all unusual among English young ladies. His knowledge of Paris was also that of a stranger, and he followed her whimsical narrative of blunders and odd mistakes with a zest heightened by a recollection of his own.

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“When have I laughed so much before?” he cried now. A long sigh, as of surprised relief, followed his words. “Well—I had looked forward to coming in a different spirit to England. With some hopes and a good courage—yes. But with a merry heart—how could I have foretold that? It was my good angel who put that coupé ticket into my head, and so brought me to you. Ah, how angry you were! I see you now, pulling at that door.”

“Ah, well,” she said in extenuation, “how could I know? I never dreamed that the whole coupé was not mine—and when I saw that odious guard opening the door, to force in some wretched little Continental creature—I mean, that was my momentary thought—and naturally I—”

An involuntary sidelong glance of his eyes upward toward the crown of her hat, passed mute comment on her unfinished remark. She bit her lip in self-reproof at sight of the dusky flush on his cheek.

“It is the only un-English thing about me,” he said, with a pathetically proud attempt at a smile. “My father was a tall, big man, and so is my brother Salvator.”

A new consciousness of the susceptibility of this young man to slights and wounds spread in the girl’s mind. It was so cruelly

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easy to prick his thin skin! But it was correspondingly easy to soothe and charm him—and that was the better part. His character and temperament mapped themselves out before her mind's eye. She read him as at once innocent and complicated. He could be full of confidence in a stranger, like herself, but his doubts about his own values were distressing. The uncased antennæ of his self-consciousness were extended in all directions, as if to solicit injury. She had caught in his brown eyes the suggestion of an analogy to a friendless spaniel—the capacity for infinite gratitude united with conviction that only kicks were to be expected. It was more helpful to liken him to a woman. In the gentle and timid soul of a convent-bred maiden he nourished the stormy ambitions of a leader of men. It was a nun who boldly dreamed of commanding on the field of battle.

“I had a feeling,” she said to him, so softly that the tone was almost tender, “that you must be like your mother.”

She rightly judged him to be her elder, but for the moment her mood was absorbingly maternal. “Let us sit down here,” she added, moving toward the bench facing the rail. “You were going to tell me—about her, was it?”

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He spread his rugs over their knees as they sat together in the fresh wind.

“No, it was not so much of her,” he said. “I have much to think about her—not much to put into words. She died five years ago—nearly six now—and I was so much at school that I saw very little of her in the latter years. Salvator was with her always, though, to the end, although he was not her own son. We are half-brothers, but no one could have been fonder than he was of my mother, or a better son to her. After she died, he still kept me in school, and this was curious too, because he hated all my teachers bitterly. Salvator is fierce against the church, yet he kept me where I had been put years before, with the Christian Brothers at the Bon Rencontre, in Toulon. When at last I left them, Salvator took me with him for a period—he is an expert and a dealer in gems—and then I became a private tutor. Four years or so of that—and now I am here.” He added, as upon an afterthought: “You must not think that I failed to love my mother. She was sweet and good, and very tender to me, and I used to weep a great deal after I left her, but it was not my fortune to be so much with her as Salvator was. I think of her, but there is not much to say.”

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The repetition of this formula suggested no comment to his companion, and he went on.

“The real memory of my childhood is my father, although I saw him only once. Salvator says I saw him oftener, but if so all the recollections jumble themselves together in my mind, to make a single impression. I was five years old; it was in the early summer, in 1875. My father had been fighting against the Prussians when I was born. By the time I was old enough to know people, he was away in Spain with Don Carlos. He died there, of wounds and fever, at Seo de Urgel, in August of that same year, 1875. But first he came to see us—it would have been in June, I think—and we were living at Cannes. He had some secret Carlist business, Salvator says. I knew nothing of that. I know only that I saw him, and understood very well who he was, and fixed him in my mind so that I should never, never forget him. How strange a thing it is about children! I have only the dimmest general idea of how my mother looked when I was that age; I cannot remember her at all in the odd clothes which her pictures show she wore then, though I saw them constantly. Yet my father comes once and I carry his image till Judgment Day.”

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“Poor mothers!” sighed the girl, under her breath. “No, it was nothing. Go on.”

“I knew that he was a soldier, and that wherever there were wars he went to have his share of fighting. I suppose it was this which gripped my imagination, even as a baby. I could read when I was five, and Salvator had told me about our father’s battles. He had been in the Mutiny in India, and he was in Sicily against Garibaldi, and he was with the Austrians four years before I was born, and in the French Foreign Legion afterward. I think I knew all this when I saw him—and if I did not, then I feel that I could have learned it from just looking at him. He was like a statue of War. Ah, how I remember him—the tall, strong, straight, dark, hardfaced, silent man!”

“And you loved *him!*” commented his companion, with significance.

He shook his head smilingly. The analysis in retrospect of his own childish emotions had a pleasant interest for him. “No; there was no question of love, at all. For example, he liked Salvator—who was then a big boy of fifteen—and he took him off to Spain with him when he left. I cannot remember that he so much as put his hand on my head, or paid the slightest attention to me. He looked at me in a grave way if I put

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myself in front of his eyes, just as he looked at other things, but he would not turn his eyes to follow me if I moved aside. Do you know that to my fancy that was superb? I was not in the least jealous of Salvator. I only said to myself that when I was his age, I also would march to fight in my father's battles. And I was proud that he did not bend to me, or put himself out to please me, this huge, cold-eyed, lion-like father of mine. If he had ever kissed me I should have been ashamed—for us both. But nothing was farther from his thoughts. He went away, and at the door he spoke for the first time in my hearing of me. He twisted his thumb toward me, where I stood in the shelter of my mother's skirts. Mind, he's an Englishman! he said—and turned on his heel. I have the words in my ears still. 'Mind, he's an Englishman!'

"There *is* England!" she cried.

They stood up, and his eager eye, following the guidance of her finger, found the faint, broken, thin line of white on the distant water's edge. Above it, as if they were a part of it, hung in a figured curtain soft clouds which were taking on a rosy tint from the declining sun. He gazed at the remote prospect in silence, but with a quickened breath.

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“It is the first time that *I* have seen it like this—coming toward it, I mean, from somewhere else,” she remarked at last. “I had never been outside England before.”

He did not seem to hear her. With another lingering, clinging gaze at the white speck, he shook himself a little, and turned. “And now I want to tell you about this new, wonderful thing—about why I am this minute within sight of England. You will say it is very strange.”

They moved to their bench again, and he spread the wraps once more, but this time they did not sit quite so close together. It was as if the mere sight of that pale, respectable slip of land on the horizon had in some subtle way affected their relation to each other.

“A week ago,” he began afresh, “at Nice, a messenger from the *Crédit Lyonnais* brought me a note saying they wished to see me at the bank. They had, it seems, searched for me in several towns along the Riviera, because I had been moving about. It was demanded that I should prove my identity by witnesses, and when that was done I was given a sum of money, and a sealed letter addressed to me, bearing simply my name, Mr. Christian Tower—nothing more. I hurried outside and read its con-

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tents. I was requested to get together all my papers—”

He stopped short, arrested by a sharp, half-stifled exclamation from her lips. She had continued looking at him after his mention of his name—at first absent-mindedly, as if something in his talk had sent her thoughts unconsciously astray; then with lifted head, and brows bent together in evident concentration upon some new phase of what he had been saying. Now she interrupted him with visible excitement.

“You say Christian Tower!” She pushed the words at him hurriedly. “What was your father’s name?”

“He was always known as Captain Tower, but I have read it in my papers—his first name was Ambrose.”

She had risen to her feet, in evident agitation, and now strode across to the rail. As he essayed to follow her, she turned, and forced the shadow of a smile into her lips; her eyes remained frightened. “It is all right,” she said with a gasping attempt at reassurance. “I was queer for just an instant; it’s all right. Go on, please. You were to get together your papers—”

“And bring them to Brighton,” he said, much disconcerted. “That is all. But won’t you sit down?”

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“I think I would rather stand,” she answered. Her composure was returning, and with it the power to view altogether, and in their proper relation to one another, the several elements of the situation his words had revealed to her. Upon examination, it was curiosity that she felt rather than personal concern—an astonished and most exigent curiosity. But even before this, it grew apparent to her as she thought, came her honorable duty to this young man who had confided in her.

“I think I ought to tell you,” she began, beckoning him nearer where she stood; “yes, you should be told that in all human probability I know the story. It is impossible that I should be mistaken—two such names never got together by accident. And I can assure you that the whole thing is even more extraordinary and astounding than you can possibly imagine. There are people in England who will curl up like leaves thrown on the fire when they see you. But for the moment”—she paused, with a perplexed face and hesitating voice—“go on; tell me a little more. It isn’t clear to me—how much you know. Don’t be afraid; I will be entirely frank with you, when you have finished.”

He patted the rail nervously with his hand,

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and stared at her in pained bewilderment and impatience. "How much do I know?" he faltered vaguely. "Very little; almost nothing. There was no explanation in the letter. The bankers said nothing, save that they were to give me a thousand francs. But one does not get a thousand francs merely because the wind has changed. There must be a reason for it; and what reason is possible except that there is some inheritance for me? So I argued it out—to myself. I have thought of nothing else, awake or asleep, for the whole week."

He halted, with anxious appeal in his eyes, and his hands outspread to beseech enlightenment from her. She nodded to show that she understood. "In a minute or two, when I have got it into shape in my mind," she said soothingly. "But meantime go on. I want you to talk. What have you done during the week?"

Christian threw his hands outward. "Done?" he asked plaintively. "Murdered time some way or the other. I was free to move an hour after I had read the letter. The money was more than I had ever had before. It was intolerable to me—the thought of not being in motion. In the 'Indicateur' I got the times of trains, and I formed my plan. Avignon I had never seen, and then Le

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Puy—there was a wonderful description of it in a magazine I had read—and then to Paris, and next to Rouen. It was at Rouen that I slept last night. It was my first night's good sleep—I had tired myself out so completely. Always walking with the map in my mind, going from one church to another, talking to the Suisse, bending back my head to examine capitals and arches, forcing myself to take an interest in what I saw every little minute—so I have come somehow through the week. But now here is rich England within plain sight, and here are you, my new friend—and all my life I have been so poor and without friends!”

He tightened his hand upon the rail, and abruptly turned his face away. She saw the shine of tears in his eyes.

“Come and sit down again,” she said, with a sisterly hand on his arm. “I know how to tell it to you now.”

“But you truly know nothing about the Towers—or Torrs—your father's family?” she continued, when they were once again seated. “It sounds incredible! I can hardly realize how you could have lived all these years and not—but how old are you?”

“Twenty-six.”

“—And not got some inkling of who—of who your father was?”

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“My mother never told me. Perhaps she did not know altogether, herself. I cannot say as to that. And if Salvator knew—that I cannot tell, either. He is a curious man, my brother Salvator. He talks so you would think you saw him inside out—but he keeps many things to himself none the less.”

“Yes—that brother of yours,” she said abstractedly. “I have been thinking about him. But it can’t be that he has any importance in the game, else the Jews would have sent for him instead of you. They waste no time,—they make no errors.”

“The Jews!” he murmured at her, with no comprehension in his eyes.

She smiled. “I have been arranging it in my mind. The thing was like a black fog to me when you first spoke. I had to search about for a light before I could make a start. But when I stumbled across the thought, ‘It is the Jews’ work,’ then it was not very hard to make out the rest. I could almost tell you who it is that is to meet you at Brighton. It is Mr. Soman. Is it not?”

He assented with an impulsive movement of head and hands. The gaze that he fixed upon her sparkled with excitement.

“He is Lord Julius’ man of business,” she explained to his further mystification. “No doubt he has had one of those green eyes of

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his on you ever since you were a fortnight old. It frightens one to think of it—the merciless and unerring precision of their system. Is there anything they *don't* know?"

"I am afraid of Jews myself," he faltered, striving to connect himself with what he dimly perceived of her mood. "But what have they against me? What can they do to me? I owe nothing; they can't make me responsible for what other people, strangers to me, have done, can they? And why should they give me a thousand francs? It is I," he finished hopelessly, "I who am in the black fog. Tell me, I beg you, what is it that they want with me?"

She put a reassuring hand upon his arm, and the steady, genial light in her calm eyes brought him instantaneous solace. "You have not the slightest cause for fear," she told him, gently. "Quite the contrary. They are not going to hurt you. So far from it, they have taken you up; they will wrap you in cotton-wool and nurse you as if you were the Koh-i-noor diamond. You may rest easy, my dear sir; you may close your eyes, and fold your hands, and lean back against Israel as heavily as you like. It is all right so far as you are concerned. But the others"—she paused, and looked seaward with lifted brows and a mouth

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twisted to express sardonic comment upon some amazing new outlook—"eye-ee! the others!"

"Still you do not tell me!" For the first time she caught in his voice the hint of a virile, and even an imperious note. Behind the half-petulant entreaty of the tired boy, there was a man's spirit of dictation. She deferred to it unconsciously.

"The Lord Julius that I spoke of is—let me see—he is your great-uncle—your grandfather's younger brother."

"But if *he* is a Jew—" began Christian, in an awed whisper.

"No—no; he is nothing of the sort. That is to say, he is not Jewish in blood. But he married a great heiress of the race—whole millions sterling came to him from the huge fortune of the Aronsons in Holland—and he likes Jewish people—of the right sort. He is an old man now, and his son, Emanuel, has immense influence over him. You should see them sitting together like two love-birds on a perch. They idolize each other, and they both worship Emanuel's wife. If they weren't the two best men in the world, and if she weren't the most remarkable woman anywhere, they would utterly spoil her."

"He—this lord—is my great-uncle,"

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Christian recalled her to his subject. "He and his son are good men."

"They are the ones I referred to as the Jews. That is how they are spoken of in the family—to distinguish them from the senior branch—the sons and grandsons of your grandfather. Fix that distinction in you mind. There is the elder group, who have titles and miles of mortgaged estates, no money to speak of and still less brains—"

"That is the group that I belong to?" He offered the interruption with a little twinkle in his eyes. It was patent that his self-possession had returned. Even this limited and tentative measure of identification with the most desirable and deep-rooted realities in that wonderful island that he could see coming nearer to meet him, had sufficed to quell the restless flutter of his nerves.

She nodded with a responsive gleam of sportiveness on her face. "Yes, your place in it is a very curious one. But first get this clear in your mind—that the younger group, whom they speak of as the Jews, have money beyond counting, and have morals and intelligence moreover. Between these two groups no love is lost. In fact, they hate each other. The difference is the Christians go about cursing the Jews, whereas the Jews

wisely shrug their shoulders and say nothing. No one suspected that they would *do* anything, either—but—oh, this is going to be an awful business!”

He held himself down to a fine semblance of dignified calm. “Tell me more,” he bade her, with an effect of temperate curiosity.

“Now comes tragedy,” she went on, and the hint of sprightliness disappeared from her face and tone. “It is really one of the most terrible stories that could be told. There is a very aged man—he must be nearly ninety—lying at death’s door in his great seat in Shropshire. He is at death’s door, I said, but he has the strength and will of a giant, and though he is half paralyzed, half blind, half everything, still he has his weight against the door, and no one knows how long he can hold it closed. It is your grandfather that I am speaking of. His name also is Christian.”

The young man nodded gravely. “My father would have fought death that way too, if they had not shot him to pieces, and heaped fever on top of that,” he commented.

The girl bit her lip and flushed awkwardly for an instant. “Let me go on,” she said then, and hurried forward. “This old man had three sons—not counting the priest,

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Lord David, who doesn't come into the thing. The first of these sons, also Christian, had three sons, and he and they were all alive six months ago. They are all dead now, two drowned in their yacht, one lost in the 'Castle Drummond,' one killed in Matabeleland. Lord David, the priest, the next brother, died last year—childless of course. There remained in England two sons of another brother who died some years ago, Lord Edward, and this horrible mowing down of human lives left them apparently nearest to the very aged man, your grandfather. Do you follow all that?"

"I think I do," said Christian. "If I don't I will pick it up afterward. In mercy's name, do not stop!"

"The Jews, saying nothing, had lost sight of nothing. There was still another brother who had lived abroad for many years, who died abroad twenty years ago. You are getting to the climax now. The Jews must have kept an eye on this wandering cousin of theirs; it is evident they knew he left a son capable of inheriting, and that they did not let this son escape from view. Because Lord Ambrose Torr was older than Lord Edward, his brother, it happens now that the son of that Ambrose—"

The young man abruptly rose, and moved

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along to the rail. He had signified by a rapid backward gesture of the hand his momentary craving for solitude; he stretched this hand now slowly, as if unconsciously, toward the sunset glow on sky and sea, in the heart of which lay imbedded a thick line of cream-colored cliffs, scalloped under a close covering of soft olive-hued verdure. The profile of his uplifted face, as he gazed thus before him into the light, seemed to the eyes of the girl transfigured.

He stood thus, rapt and motionless, for minutes, until her mind had time to formulate the suspicion that this was all intolerable play-acting, and to dismiss it again as unworthy. Then he returned all at once to her side, apparently with a shamefaced kind of perception of her thoughts. He was flushed and uneasy, and shuffled his hands in and out of the pockets of his great-coat. He did not seat himself, but stood looking down at her.

“What is my grandfather?” he asked, with a husky, difficult voice.

“The Duke of Glastonbury.”

“I do not understand,” he began, hesitatingly; “it is not clear to me about my father. Why should he—”

She rose in turn, with swift decision, as if she had been alertly watching for the ques-

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tion. "That is what you must not ask me," she said, hurriedly. "I think I will move about a little. The wind is colder here. I am getting chilled."

They strolled about together, conducting a fitful conversation, but as often gazing in silence at the bulk of the headlands they were approaching, gray and massive now in the evening light. She answered freely enough the queries he put, but between these he lapsed into an abstraction which she respected. More than once he spoke of the extraordinary confusion into which her story had thrown his thoughts, and she philosophically replied that she could well understand it.

An hour later they had passed the fatuous inspection of the customs people, and confronted the imminence of leave-taking. Constraint enveloped them as in a mantle.

It occurred suddenly to him to say: "How strange! You possess the most extraordinary knowledge of me and my—my people, and yet the thought just comes to me—I have not so much as asked your name."

She smiled at him with a new light in her eyes, half kind, half ironically roguish. "If I may confess it, there have been times today when I was annoyed with you for being so persistently and indefatigably interested

in yourself—for never dreaming of wondering, speculating, inquiring something about me. But that was very weak of me—I see it now—and very wise of you, because—what does it matter about a nobody like me?—but next week the whole world will be bearing witness that you are the most interesting young man in England.”

He gave a swift glance down the train toward the guards noisily shutting the doors. “No, it is too bad,” he said, nervously. “You will always be my first friend in England—my very deeply prized friend everywhere. I know you only to-day—but that day is more to me than all the rest of my life—and it is full of you. They are closing the doors—but you will tell me? The notion of not seeing you again is ridiculous. You are in London—yes?—then how do you think I could come to London without first of all, before everything else, wanting to call upon you?”

“Oh, I daresay we shall meet again,” she answered, as perforce he stepped into the compartment. Her smile had a puzzling quality in it—something compounded, it seemed to him, of both fear and fun. “In a remote kind of way I am mixed up with the story myself.”

There was no time for any hope of further

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explanation. He put his head out of the window, and shook hands again. "Remember!" he called out fervently. "You are my first friend in England. Whenever—whatever I can do—"

"Even to the half of your kingdom!" she laughed at him, as the movement of the carriage drew him past her.

The tone of these last words, which he bore away with him, had been gay—almost jovial. But the girl, when she had watched him pass out of sight, turned and walked slowly off in the direction of her own train with a white and troubled face.

CHAPTER III

Many builders in their day have put a hand to the making of Caermere Hall. Though there were wide differences of race and language among them and though the long chain of time which binds them together has generations and even centuries for its links, they seem to have had thus much in common: they were all at feud with the sunlight.

On the very pick of summer days, when the densest thickets of Clune Forest are alive to the core with moving green reflections of the outer radiance, and hints of the glory up above pierce their way to the bottom of the narrowest ravine through which the black Devor churns and frets, somehow Caermere remains wrapped in its ancient shadows.

The first men, in some forgotten time, laid its foundations with no thought save of the pass at the foot to be defended. Later artificers reared thick walls upon these foundations, pushed out towered curtains, sank wells, lifted the keep, cut slits of corner windows or crowned the fabric with new

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turrets for watchmen, each after the need or fashion of his age, but all with minds single to the idea of blocking the path that Caermere overhung. In due time came the breath of the king's peace, blowing equably over the vexed marches, albeit loaded with the scent of gunpowder, and my lords slowly put aside their iron harness for silken jackets, and unslung the hurses in their gateways. Men of skill set now about the task of expanding the turfed spaces within the inclosure, of spreading terraces and forming gardens, of turning stone chambers into dames' apartments, and sullen guard-rooms into banquet-halls. Their grandsons, in turn, pulled down even more than they erected; where the mightiest walls had shouldered their huge bulk, these men of Elizabeth and James left thin façades of brickwork, and beams of oak set in a trivial plaster casing. The old barbican was not broad enough to span their new roadway, stretching to the valley below over the track of the former military path, and they blew it up; the pleasure-ground, which they extended by moving far backward the wall of the tilting yard, was bare of aspect to their eye, and they planted it with yews and, later, with cedars from the Lebanon.

Through all these changes, Caermere

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remained upon its three sides shadowed by great hills, and the thought of making wide windows in the walls on the open fourth side came to no one. When at last, in the earlier Georgian time, the venerable piles of bastioned masonry here were replaced by a feebly polite front of lath and stucco, windows were indeed cut to the very floor, in the French style, but meanwhile the trees had grown into a high screen against the sky, and it was not in the Torr blood to level timber.

When a house and family have lived together for a thousand years, it is but reasonable that they should have come to an understanding with each other. Was Caermere dark because the mood of the Torrs, its makers and masters, had from the dawn of things been saturnine? Or did the Torrs owe their historic gloom and dourness of temperament to the influence of this somber cradle of their race? There is record of the query having been put, in a spirit of banter, by a gentleman who rode over Clune bridge in the train of King John. Of convincing answer there is none to this latest day. The Torrs are a dark folk, and Caermere is a dark house. They belong to one another and that is all.

Thus, on the first morning of October, a

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gray and overcast morning even on the hill-tops, and though it was past the half-hour towards nine, there was barely light enough to see one's way about by in the big breakfast-room.

A tall young man in rough, light-brown clothes stood at one of the windows, drumming idly on the glass and staring at the black cedars beyond the lawn. At intervals he whistled under his breath, in a sulky fashion, some primitive snatches of an unknown tune. Once or twice he yawned, and then struck a vicious ring from the panes with his hard nails, in protesting comment upon his boredom.

About the large fireplace behind him were dishes huddled for heat, and their metallic gleam in the flicker of the flames was repeated farther away in the points of red on the plate and glass of the long breakfast table spread in the center of the room. From time to time a white-faced youngster in livery entered the room, performed some mysterious service at the hearth or the table in the dim twilight and went out again.

The man at the window paid no heed to the goings and comings of the servant, but when the door opened presently and another tweed-clad figure entered, his ear told him

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the difference on the instant, and he half turned his head.

“In God’s name, what are you all doing?” he growled angrily. “I said eight—you heard me!—sharp eight!”

“What *does* it matter?” protested the newcomer, stooping at the fire-place to lift the covers from the dishes in a languid inspection of their contents. He yawned as he spoke. “If you won’t let fellows go to bed till four, how the devil do you expect them to be down at eight?”

“Oh, is that you, Pirie?” said the man at the window. “I thought it was my brother.”

The other stood for a moment, with his back to the fire. Then he lounged to the window, stretching his arms as he moved. He also was tall, but with a scattering of gray in his hair.

“Beastly black morning,” he commented in drowsy tones, after a prolonged observation of the prospect. “Might as well stopped in bed.”

“Well, go back then!” snapped the other. “I didn’t make the rotten weather, did I?”

This was wanton ill-temper. The elder man also began drumming with his nails on the window. “Turn it up, Eddy,” he remonstrated, smoothly enough, but with a latent snarl in his tone. “I don’t like it.”

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The younger man moved his head, as if he would have looked his companion in the face. Then he stared away again, out of the window.

“Beaters been waitin’ half an hour already,” he grumbled, sulkily. “What’s the good of makin’ a time if you don’t keep it?”

“I didn’t make any time,” responded Major Pirie with curtness. Upon reflection, he added: “What does it matter about the beaters?”

There seemed no answer to this, and for several minutes nothing was said. Finally the younger man thought of something. “I say,” he began, and after an instant’s pause went on: “It’d suit me better not to be called ‘Eddy’ among the men, d’ye see? That fellow Burlington began it last night—he got it from you—and I don’t like it. When we’re alone, of course, that’s different.”

Major Pirie laughed—a dry, brief, harsh laugh—and swung around on his heels. “Your man didn’t get those sausages I asked for, after all,” he remarked, going back to the dishes at the fender.

“Probably couldn’t,” said Mr. Edward, “or else,” he added, “wouldn’t. I never saw such a houseful of brutes and duffers.

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I'm keen to shunt the lot of 'em, and they know it, the beggars. You'd think they'd try to suck up to me, but they don't, they haven't got brains enough."

The major had brought a plate from the table, and was filling it from under the covers on the hearth. "Shall I ring for the tea?" he asked.

Mr. Edward moved across to the chimney corner and pulled the cord himself. "Do you know what that old ass, Barlow—the butler, you know—had the face to say to me yesterday? 'I'—God, you couldn't believe it! 'I 'ope, sir,' he says, 'you'll think better of shootin' on the First, for His Grace'll hear the guns in the covers, and it won't do His Grace no good.' Fancy the beggar's cheek!"

"Well, do you know, Torr," said Major Pirie, slowly, speaking with his mouth full but contriving to give a significantly nice emphasis to the name, "I was thinkin' much the same myself. For that matter, several of the fellows were mentionin' it. It doesn't look quite the thing, you know."

The entrance of the servant created an interval of silence, during which Mr. Edward in his turn rummaged among the dishes before the fire.

"It's Gus, is it?" he demanded, from where he knelt on one knee, plate in hand.

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“He thought it would be funny to queer my game, eh?”

“Your brother hasn’t said a word, so far’s I know,” replied the major, pouring his tea. “It was merely some of the fellows, talkin’.”

“God Almighty!” cried Mr. Edward, springing to his feet. “Here’s a precious outfit of pals for you! You come down here, so help me—”

“Don’t say ‘you’; say ‘they,’ if you’ve got to say anything,” interposed the major, quietly.

“Well, they, then,” the other went on, in loud heat. “They come down here, and take my mounts, by God; they drink my wine, they win my money, they drain me dry—and then they go behind my back and whisper to one another that I’m an outsider. And you too, Pirie,” he continued, with defiance and deprecation mingled in his tone, “you admit yourself that you talked with them.”

“My dear Torr,” replied the major, “it’s a mistake for you to turn out so early. You’ve tried to quarrel before breakfast every day I’ve been here. It’s the worst morning temper I ever heard of in my life. You ought to have tea and eggs and things brought to you in your room, and not show

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yourself for at least two hours afterward—you really ought. It isn't fair to your friends."

The door opened and still another tall man came in. He nodded to Pirie as he passed him, with a tolerant "Well, major," and went straight to the dishes by the fire.

"Pirie's got it into his head we oughtn't to shoot to-day, Gus," said Mr. Edward.

The other rose with a dish in his hands.

"It *is* dark," he assented, glancing toward the window. "Afraid of pottin' a beater, major?"

"No—it's about the duke," explained Edward. "It seems some of the fellows funk the thing—they think he'll hear the guns—they want to go to church instead, or something of that sort."

Augustine Torr, M.P., looked at his brother inquiringly. The tie of blood between them was obvious enough. They were both slender as well as tall; their small round heads merging indistinguishably behind into flat, broad necks, seemed identical in contour; they had the same light coarse hair, the same florid skins, even the same little yellow mustaches. The differences were harder to seek. Edward, though he had borne Her Majesty's commission for some years, was not so well set up about the

shoulders as his younger and civilian brother. Augustine, on the other hand, despite his confident carriage of himself, produced the effect of being Edward's inferior in simple force of character. It was at once to his credit and his disparagement that he had the more amiable nature of the two.

"How do you mean—the duke?" he asked. "Is there a change?"

Edward put out his closed lips a little, and shook his head. Major Pirie sprinkled salt on his muffin while he explained.

"All there is of it is this," he said. "There was just an idea that with the—with your grandfather—dyin' in the house—it might look a little better to give the first the go-by. Nobody'd have a word to say against shootin' to-morrow."

"Well, but what the hell"—Augustine groped his way with hesitancy—"I don't understand—we've been shootin' partridges for a month, and how are pheasants any different? And as for the duke—why, of course one's sorry and all that—but he's been dyin' since June, and the birds have some rights—or rather, I should say—what I mean is—"

"That's what I said," put in Edward, to cover the collapse of his brother's argument.

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Major Pirie frowned a little. "Partridges are another matter," he said testily.

"Damned if I know what you're driving at," avowed Augustine. He paused with fork in air at his own words. "Drivin' at," he repeated painstakingly. "Drivin' at pheasants, eh? Not bad, you know. Pass the mustard, Pirie."

"God!" said the major, with gloom. "You know well enough what I mean. To work through fields miles off—that's one thing. To shoot the covers here under the duke's nose, with the beaters messin' about—that's quite another. However that's your affair, not mine."

"But don't you see," urged Augustine, "what difference does a day make? There'll be just as much racket to-morrow as to-day. It isn't reasonable, you know."

"It was merely what you might call a sentiment," said the major, in the half apologetic tone of a man admitting defeat. He looked the least sentimental of warriors as he went on with his breakfast—a long-faced, weather-beaten, dull-eyed man of the late forties.

Four other men who came in now at brief intervals, with few or no words of salutation to the company, and who lounged about helping themselves to what caught their

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fancy in the breakfast, were equally removed from the suspicion of adding a sentimental element to the atmosphere. They made little talk of any kind, and no mention whatever of that absurd qualm about the First which had been reported to have germinated among them.

Edward had reached the stage of filling his pipe. Walking to the mantel for a light, it occurred to him to ring the bell first. "Her ladyship breakfastin' in her room?" he asked the youngster who answered the summons.

"Her ladyship's woman has just gone up with it, sir," he replied.

"*That's* all right," said Edward, and forthwith struck the match. "Send in Davis and Morton to me, and ask Barlow for those Brazilian cigars of mine—the small huntin' ones. What wheels were those I heard on the gravel? If it's the traps we shan't want them to-day. We're walkin' across."

"I will make inquiries, sir," said the domestic, and went out.

The room had brightened perceptibly, and Captain Edward was in a better temper. He moved over to the sideboard and filled a pocket-flask from one of the decanters in the old-fashioned case. As an afterthought, he also filled a small glass, and gulped its contents neat. "We're off in ten minutes

now," he called out to the men about the table, some of whom had already lit their pipes. "What do you fellows want to take with you? My tip is this rum."

"Hardly cold enough for rum, is it?" asked one, drifting languidly toward the sideboard. Most of the others had risen to their feet.

A slender, sad-faced, gentlemanly-looking old man in evening clothes had entered the room, and stood now at Captain Edward's elbow and touched it with his hand. "I—beg—your—pardon—sir," he said, in the conventional phrase.

Edward, listening to what a companion was saying, turned absent-mindedly to the butler. Then he happened to remember something. "Damn you, Barlow, you get duller every day!" he snapped. "You know perfectly well what cigars I take out of doors!"

"I—beg—your—pardon—sir," repeated the elderly person. He spoke in a confidential murmur. "I thought you would like to know, sir—Lord Julius has come."

The young man looked at him, silently revolving the intelligence, a puzzled frown between his pale brows. A furtive something in the butler's composed expression struck him. "What of it?" he demanded,

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angrily. "What are you whispering for? He's old enough to take care of himself, isn't he?"

The butler thrust out his dry underlip a trifle. "I thought you would like to know, sir," he reiterated.

"Well, you're wrong. I don't like to know!" The man's tone—an indefinable, lurking suggestiveness in his face and eyes and voice—vexed Mr. Edward exceedingly. It annoyed him still more to note that his companions had tacitly turned their backs, and were affecting great preoccupation in something else.

He kept a wrathful eye on Barlow, as the latter bowed, turned, moved to the door and opened it. Of course, a man musn't slang servants, his irritated thought ran, but the covert impertinence in this old menial's manner was something no longer to be borne. The impulse to call the elderly fool back and send him packing on the instant, tingled hotly in the young man's blood. He even opened his lips to speak, but reflection checked his tongue. It would be bad form, for one thing; for another, perhaps he was not quite in the position to dismiss his grandfather's servants. He would speak to Well-don, the estate steward, instead—a sensible and civil man, by the way, who seemed to

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know which side his bread was buttered on. At the merest hint from the heir, Welldon would give Barlow the sack, and that would teach the rest a lesson. But all this would keep until Lord Julius had gone. Being an aged duffer himself, he would probably side with Barlow—and there was no point in offending Lord Julius. Very much to the contrary, indeed.

Mr. Edward's meditations, unwontedly facile in their movements for him, had reached this point, when his mind reverted to the fact that he was still regarding the back of Barlow, who, instead of going out, stood holding the door open, his lean figure poised in ceremonious expectancy. Even as the surprised Edward continued looking, the butler made a staid obeisance.

A stalwart, erect, burly old gentleman came in, and halted just over the threshold to look about him. He had the carriage, dress and general aspect of a prosperous and opinionated farmer. The suggestion of acres and crops was peculiarly marked in the broad, low soft hat on his head, and in the great white beard which spread fan-wise over his ample breast. He had the face of one who had spent a life in commanding others, and had learned meanwhile to master himself—a frank, high-featured, ruddy face,

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with a conspicuously prominent and well-curved nose, and steady, confident eyes. He folded his hands over his stick and, holding his head well back, glanced about the room at his ease. It was a glance from which the various eyes that it encountered somehow turned away.

“How-do, Eddy? How-do, Gus?” the newcomer said impassively to the two young men who, with palpable constraint, came up to greet him. He shook hands with each, but seemed more interested in viewing the company at large. His appearance had produced a visible effect of numbness upon the group of guests, but he seemed not to mind this.

“Quite a party!” he observed. His voice was full and robust, and not unamiable. “All military?”

Edward nodded. “All but Gus, here. Glad to introduce 'em, if you like,” he murmured, with a kind of sullen deference.

“Presently, presently,” said Lord Julius, with an effect of heartiness at which Edward lifted his head.

“Drive over from Clune this morning?” the young man asked. “Then you'll want breakfast. Ring the bell, Gus. We're just starting for the Mere copse. Glad to have you make an eighth gun, if you'll come to

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us after you've eaten. You still shoot, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I still shoot," said the other.

Edward had a sense of embarrassment at his great-uncle's immobility in the doorway. "Well, we'll get along to the gun-room now," he said to the others. Then to Lord Julius he remarked with an air of making conversation, "I always say to the fellows that I ask nothing better in this world than to be as fit as you are when I'm your age. Let's see, seventy-six, isn't it?"

The elder man nodded. "I'm sure that's a modest enough ambition," he observed. His steady gray eyes dallied with the young man's countenance for a moment. "I'm relieved to learn that you want nothing more than that."

Edward looked up swiftly, and braved an instant's piercing scrutiny of the other's face. Then he laughed, uneasily. "Oh, I want a few other things, too."

Lord Julius lowered his voice. "I would put among your wants a trifling matter of good taste, Eddy," he said, not unkindly.

Captain Edward flushed. "If I could see that it really made any difference between the First and the Second," he answered with dogged civility, "I wouldn't shoot until to-

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morrow. If you're keen about it now, I'll—"

"Oh, damn your First and Second," broke in the old man, keeping his voice down below the hearing of the others, but letting impatience glow in his eyes; "you had no business bringing these men here at all. No—I see that you don't understand me. You needn't explain. It's entirely a question of feeling."

"I'm sorry you take that view of it, sir," said Edward, gloomily. "You know that I'm willing enough to meet your views—if only—if only because I'm going to need your help."

Lord Julius gave a snort of contemptuous laughter, and nodded to himself with lifted brows. "Really something in the way of consideration is due to such frankness as that," he said, with a pretense of reverie. "Send your friends out of the room, Eddy," he went on, more gently—"make what excuse you like—or take them out and come back to me—that's better. I did intend to have no secrets from them, but I've relented. And yes—by the way—instead of coming here—you'll find me in the small morning room I will breakfast there. You've filled this room with smoke."

"Would you—would you mind my bringing Gus?" Edward asked, doubtfully.

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The other thought for an instant. "Oh, yes, Gus may come," he said, and with that left the room.

"Rum old beggar, isn't he?" said Augustine to the company, with the sense that something had to be said.

"Gad! he seemed to think he was in a synagogue!" laughed Captain Burlington. "Kept his hat on, you know," he explained in the next breath to the surprised and attentive faces about him.

"But he isn't a Jew," said one of the others with gravity. "He married one, but that doesn't make him one, you know."

"It was a joke! Can't you see a joke?" protested Burlington.

"Well, I don't think much of it," growled Edward, sourly. "Come along to the gun-room."

* * * * *

"What's up?" asked Mr. Augustine, in an anxious murmur, a few minutes later, as the two brothers walked along the wide central hallway toward the appointed place.

"Can't think for the life of me," replied Edward. "Unless Craven babbled about the baccarat when he got up to town. He's rather that sort, you know. He kicked about the stakes at the time."

"Yes—after he'd been hit," said Augus-

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tine. "But if it's only that, you'll be an ass to let the old man rot you about it. Just stand up to him, and let him see you feel your position."

"That's all right," rejoined Edward, dubiously, "but what's the position without money? If anybody could have foreseen what was going to happen—damn it all, I could have married as much as I needed. But as it is, I've got Cora on my back, and the kid, and—my God! fancy doing the duke on four thou. a year net! Welldon tells me it can't be screwed a bit above that. Well, then, how can I afford to cheek Julius? When you come to that he isn't half a bad sort, you know. He stood my marriage awfully well. Gad, you know, we couldn't have lived if he hadn't drawn a check."

"Let us hope he'll draw another," said Augustine. "It's bad enough to be a pauper duke, but it's a balley sight worse to be his brother."

"What rot!" said Edward. "My kid's a girl, and you're free to marry."

They had come to the door of the morning room. It stood ajar, and Edward pushed it open. Before the fireplace was visible the expected bulk and vast beard of Lord Julius, but the eyes of the brothers intuitively wandered to the window beyond, against which

was outlined the figure of a much smaller man.

"Secretary," whispered the quicker-minded Augustine out of the corner of his mouth as they advanced. The thought brought them a tempered kind of comfort. The same instinct which had prompted Edward to crave his brother's support led them both to welcome the presence of a fourth party.

They looked again toward the stranger, and Lord Julius, as he caught their returning glance, smiled and nodded significantly. "Come here, Christian!" he said, and the brothers saw now that it was a slender young man with a dark, fine face and foreign-looking eyes who moved toward them.

Lord Julius put a hand on the young man's shoulder. "Christian," he said, and gave his full voice a new note of gravity, "these are your two cousins, Mr. Edward Torr, a captain in the Hussars until recently, and Mr. Augustine Torr, a member of Parliament. Your coming will make some difference in their affairs, but I know that you will be good to them."

The brothers had shaken hands with the new-comer automatically, while their minds were in the first stage of wonderment as to

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what the words being spoken about him meant. Now that silence fell, they stared slowly at him, at their great-uncle, at each other.

“How—cousin?” Edward managed to ask. He spoke as if his tongue filled his mouth.

“The son of your uncle, Lord Ambrose Torr,” the old man made quiet, carefully distinct answer.

Another period of silence ensued, until Christian turned abruptly. “It is very painful to me,” he said hurriedly to the old man, and walked to the window.

“It is painful to everybody,” said Lord Julius.

“Not so damned particularly painful to you, sir, I should say,” put in Edward, looking his great-uncle in the face. The young man had slowly pulled himself together, and one could see the muscles of his neck being stiffened to keep his chin well in the air. His blue eyes had the effect of summoning all their resources of pride to gaze with dignity into the muzzle of a machine-gun.

Augustine was less secure in the control of his nerves. He stood a little behind his brother, and the elbow which he braced against him for support trembled. His eyes wandered about the room, and he moistened

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his lips with his tongue several times before he contrived to whisper something into Edward's ear. The latter received the suggestion, whatever it was, with an impatient shake of the head.

"You scarcely do me justice," said Lord Julius, quietly, "but that's not worth mentioning at the moment. I must say you are taking it very well—much better than I expected."

Edward squared his shoulders still more. "I wouldn't say that we're takin' it at all," he replied, with studied deliberation. "You offer it, d'ye see—but it doesn't follow that we take it. You come and bring this young fellow—this young gentleman, and you tell me that he is Ambrose's son. What good is that to me? Maybe he is, maybe he isn't. Ambrose may have had twenty sons, for all I know. I should be sorry to be one of them—but they're not to blame for that. I don't mind being civil to them—if they come to me in the right spirit—" He stopped abruptly, and listened with a frown to more whispering from Augustine.

"You don't seem to understand, Eddy—" began Lord Julius.

"Oh, perfectly!" broke in the young man. "I had an uncle who had to leave England before I was born. His name couldn't even

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be mentioned in the family—but I know all about him. God knows I've had him flung in my face often enough."

"Don't let us go into that," urged Lord Julius, softly, and with a sidelong nod toward the window. "It's needless cruelty to other people—and surely we can discuss this like gentlemen. You are really behaving splendidly, Eddy."

"God! he thought we were cads!" cried Edward, in husky indignation.

"No—no—no—no," murmured the older man, soothingly. "I only want you to grasp the thing as it is. You know me. You do not regard me as a foolish person who goes off half-cock. Well, I tell you that Christian here is the son of my nephew Ambrose, born in lawful wedlock, and that there is not a shadow of doubt about it. The proofs are all open to your inspection; there is not a flaw in them. And so I say to you, in all kindness—take it calmly and sensibly and like a gentleman. It is to your own interest to do so, as well. If you think, you will see that."

"That's what I've been telling him," said Augustine, strenuously, from behind his brother's shoulder.

A faint smile fluttered about the old man's eyelids. "It was the advice of a born states-

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man," he said, dryly. "You are the political hope of the family."

The stiffening had melted from Edward's neck and shoulders. He turned irresolutely now, and looked at the floor. "Of course I admit nothing; I reserve all my rights, till my lawyers have satisfied themselves," he said in a worn, depressed mutter.

"Why, naturally," responded Lord Julius, with relieved cordiality. "And now please me—do it all handsomely to the end—come and shake hands again with Christian, both of you."

The brothers stood for a hesitating instant, then turned toward the window and began a movement of reluctant assent.

To the surprise of all three, Christian forestalled their approach by wrenching open one half of the tall window, and putting a foot over the sill to the lawn outside.

"If you will excuse me," he said, in his nervous, high voice, "I am taking a little walk."

CHAPTER IV

Upon the garden side of Caermere is a very large conservatory, built nearly fifty years ago, at the close of the life of the last duchess. The poor lady left no other mark of her meek existence upon the buildings, and it was thought at the time that she would never have ventured upon even this, had it not been that every one was mad for the moment about the wonderful palace of glass reared in London for the First Exhibition.

In area and height, and in the spacious pretensions of its dome, the structure still suggests irresistibly the period of its inception. It is as ambitious as it is self-conscious; its shining respectability remains superior to all the wiles of climbers and creeping vines. The older servants cherish traditions of "Her Grace's glass," as it used to be called. She had the work begun on her fortieth birthday, and precisely a year later it happened that she was wheeled in from the big morning room, and left at her own desire to recline in solitude under the palms beneath the dome, and that when they went

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to her at last she was dead. The circumstance that Shakespeare is supposed also to have died on the anniversary of his birth, has somehow come to be an integral part of the story, as it is kept alive now in the humbler parts of the Caermere household, but the duchess had nothing else in common with the poet. The very face of her, in her maturer years, is but dimly remembered. The portrait in the library is of a young Lady Clarissa, with pale ringlets and a childishly sweet countenance, and clad in the formal quaintness of the last year of King George the Fourth. She became the duchess, but in turn the duchess seemed to become somebody else. That was the way with the brides brought home to Caermere. The pictures in the library show them all girlish, and innocently pretty, and for the most part fair-haired. Happily there is no painted record of what they were like when, still in middle life, they bade a last good-bye to the dark-skinned, big-shouldered sons they had borne, and perhaps made a little moan that no daughters were ever given to mothers at Caermere, and turned their sad faces to the wall.

The crystal house had memories of another and more recent mistress, the countess. She had come six years after the other went,

she had lived for twelve years—a silent, colorless, gently unhappy life—and then had faded away out of sight. It was this Lady Porlock who had caused the orchid houses to be built at the inner side of the conservatory, and it was in her time, too, that the gifted Cheltnam was fetched from her own father's house in Berkshire to be head gardener at Caermere. Her fame is indeed irrevocably linked with his, for the tea-rose of his breeding, bearing her maiden-name of the Hon. Florence Denson, is scarcely less well known than this hybrid sweet-briar the Countess of Porlock.

And now, in the third generation, still another lady had for some years enjoyed special property rights in this great glass apartment.

Lady Cressage came into the conservatory from the large morning room, with a large volume in her hand, and an irresolute look on her face. She glanced about at the several couches piled with cushions and furs, at an easy-chair beyond—and yawned slightly. Then she wandered over to a row of early chrysanthemums, and, putting the book under her arm, occupied herself with the destruction of a few tiny beginnings of buds in the lower foliage. In this she employed as pincers the delicately tinted

nails of a very shapely finger and thumb, and at the sign of some slight discoloration of these she stopped the work. From a glance at the nails, she went to a musing scrutiny of this whole right hand of hers, holding it up, and turning it from one composition of graceful curves to another. It had been called the most beautiful hand in England, but this morning its owner, upon a brief and rather listless inspection of its charms, yawned again. Finally she seated herself in the chair and, after a languid search for the place in her book, began to read

Half reclining thus, with the equable and shadowless light of the glass house about her, the young widow made a picture curiously different from any in the library within. All the dead and gone brides of the Torrs had been painted in bright attire; Lady Cressage wore a belted gown of black cloth, unrelieved save by a softened line of white at the throat and wrists. The others, without exception, had signified by elaborate hair-dressing not less than by dutifully vacuous facial expressions, their comprehension of the requirements of the place they had been called upon to fill; Lady Cressage's bistre hair was gathered in careless fashion to a loose knot at the back of the head, and in her exquisitely modeled face

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there was no hint whatever of docility or awed submission to any external claims. The profile of this countenance, outlined for the moment against a cluster of vividly purple pleroma blossoms, had the delicacy of a rare flower, but it conveyed also the impression of resolute and enduring force. If the dome above could have generated voices of its own, these would have murmured to one another that here at last was a woman whom Caermere could not break or even easily bend.

In the season of 1892, London had heard a good deal of this lady. She was unknown before, and of her belongings people to this day knew and cared very little. There was a General Kervick enumerated in the retired list, who had vegetated into promotion in some obscure corner of India, and now led an equally inconspicuous existence somewhere in the suburbs—or was it in West Kensington? He had never belonged to a service club, but an occasional man encountered him once in a while at the Oriental, where he was supposed by the waiters to have an exceptional knowledge of peppers and chutneys. The name of his wife had been vaguely associated with charitable committees, or subscription committees, and here and there some one remembered having

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heard that she was distantly related to somebody. The elder Kervicks never secured a much more definite place in London's regard—even after this remarkable daughter had risen like a planet to dim the fixed stars of the season.

The credit for having discovered and launched Miss Kervick came generally to be ascribed to Lady Selton, but perhaps this turned upon the fact that she lent her house in Park Lane for the culminating scene in the spectacular triumph of that young person. No doubt there were others who would have placed still bigger houses at the disposal of a bride whose wedding was, in many respects, the most interesting of the year, and some of these may have had as good a claim to the privilege as Lady Selton. As matters turned out, however, they were given no cause to repine. The marriage was not a success, and within one short year Lady Selton herself had grown a little shy about assuming responsibility for it. A year later she was quite prepared to repudiate all share in it, and after that people ceased to remember about it all, until the shock of the tragedy came to stir polite London into startled whisperings.

Hardly within the memory of living folk had a family been dealt such a swift suc-

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cession of deadly blows as these which were rained upon the Torrs in the first half of 1896.

The Earl of Porlock had been the heir of dukedom since most people could remember, and had got himself called to the House of Lords in his own right, apparently as a kind of protest against his father's unconscionable longevity, at least a dozen years before his own end came. It was not to be supposed that he desired a peerage for any other reason, since he had never chosen to seek a seat in the House of Commons, and indeed, save upon one occasion connected with ground game, made no use whatever of his legislative powers after they had been given to him. He cared nothing for politics, and read scarcely more in newspapers than in books. Up to middle life, he had displayed a certain tendency toward interest in fat stock and a limited number of allied agricultural topics, but the decline in farming values had turned him from this. In his earlier years, too, he had enjoyed being identified with the sporting set of his class in London, and about the racing circuit, but this association he also dropped out of as he grew older, partly because late nights bored him, partly because he could no longer afford to jeopardize any portion of his income. He

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came at last to think of his mastership of hounds as his principal tie to existence on land. He liked it all, from the sailing sweep over the highest barrier in an exceptionally rough country, to the smell of the kennels of an early morning across the frozen yards. This life with the horses and dogs, and with the people who belonged to the horses and dogs, offered fewer temptations to the evil temper in his blood than any other, and with growing years his dislike for the wear and tear of getting angry had become a controlling instinct. He continued to use bad language with an appropriate show of fervency, when occasion required, but he had got out of the way of scalding himself with rage inside. He even achieved a grim sort of jocularly toward the close. In the last year of his life a tenant-farmer, speaking to a toast, affirmed of him that "a truer sportsman, nor yet a more humorous and affable nobleman, has never taken the chair at a puppy-walk luncheon within my recollection," and this tribute to his geniality both pleased and impressed the earl. He was then in his sixty-second year, and he might have lived into a mellowed, and even jovial old age, under the influence of this praise, had there been no unwritten law ending the hunting season in the early spring.

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The earl cared very little for otters and rats, and almost nothing at all for salmon, so that when April came he usually went to his yacht, and practically lived aboard it until November. Sometimes he made long cruises in this substantial and comfortable vessel, which he delighted in navigating himself. He was lying in at Bremerhaven, for example, in May, when one of a sheaf of telegrams scattered along the line of North Sea ports in search of him, brought the news that his youngest son Joseph, who had drifted into Mashonaland after the collapse of the Jameson adventure, had been killed in the native rebellion. Upon consideration, the earl could not see that a post-haste return to England would serve any useful end. He sailed westward, however, after some telegraphic communication with England, and made his leisurely way down the Channel and round Cornwall to Milford Haven, where his wont was to winter his yacht, and where most of his crew were at home. The fact that he and the vessel were well known in this port rendered it possible to follow in detail subsequent events.

It was on the 10th of June that Lord Porlock came to anchor in Milford, and went ashore, taking the afternoon train for Shrewsbury. He returned on the 14th,

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accompanied by his eldest son and heir, Lord Cressage. This latter personage was known only from hearsay at Milford, and local observation of him was therefore stimulated by a virgin curiosity. It was noted that Viscount Cressage—a stalwart and rubicund young man of more than his father's height, but somewhat less swarthy of aspect—was laboring under very marked depression. He hung about the hotel, during the delay incident upon cleaning up the yacht, taking on new stores and altering some of the sailing gear, in a plainly moping mood, saying little to his father and never a word to any one else. A number of witnesses were able to make it clear that at first he did not intend to sail forth, but was merely bearing his father company while the latter remained in harbor.

The fact of their recent bereavement accounted in a general way for their reticence with each other, but it was impossible not to see that the younger man had something besides the death of a brother on his mind. When, on the second day of their waiting, the tide began to fill in which on its turn was to bear out the yacht, his nervous preoccupation grew painfully manifest. He walked across many times to the headland; he fidgeted in and out of the bar,

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taking drinks for which he obviously had no relish, and looking over and over again in the railway time-tables for information which he seemed incapable of fixing in his memory. At last, when everything was ready, and the earl stood with his hand out to say good-bye to his son, the latter had suddenly, and upon the evident impulse of the moment, declared with some excitement that he also would go. People remembered that he had said, as if in defensive explanation of his hasty resolve: "Perhaps that will teach her a lesson!" His father had only remarked "Rot!"—and with that the yacht sailed off, a heaving white patch against the blackening west.

But what followed was too grossly unreasoning to afford a lesson to anybody. The morning newspapers of the 18th contained in one column confirmation of the earlier report that the Hon. Anselm Torr, second son of the earl of Porlock, had been a passenger on the ill-fated "Drummond Castle," and had gone down with the rest in the night off Ushant; and in another column a telegram from Porthstinian, announcing the total loss of a large yacht, on the rocks known as the Bishop and Clerks, with all on board. The evening papers followed with the rumor that the lost yacht was the "Minstrel," with both Lord Porlock

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and his son, Lord Cressage, on board; but it was not until the next afternoon that the public possessed all the facts in this extraordinary affair. Then it happened that the edge was rather taken off the horror of the tragic coincidence, by the announcement that these sudden deaths brought forward as next heir to the dukedom Captain Edward Torr, late of the —th Hussars, who was better known, perhaps, as the husband of Miss Cora Bayard. The thought of Cora as a prospective duchess made such a direct appeal to the gayer side of the popular mind, that the gruesome terrors surrounding her advancement were lost to sight. When, a few days later, it was stated that the venerable Duke of Glastonbury had suffered a stroke of paralysis, and lay at Caermere in a critical state, the news only made more vivid the picture of the music-hall dancer turned into Her Grace which the public had in its mind's eye. Her radiant portrait in the photographic weeklies and budgets was what remained uppermost in the general memory.

For a time, however, in that little fraction of the public which is called Society, the figure of another woman concentrated interest upon itself, in connection with the Torr tragedy. The fact that a music-hall person

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was to wear a great title had no permanent hold upon the imagination of this class. They would probably see rather less of her then than now—and the thing had no longer the charm of the unusual. But they had known Lady Cressage. They had admired her, followed after her, done all sorts of nice things for her, in that season of her wonderful triumph as the most beautiful girl, and the most envied bride, in London. After her marriage she had been very little in evidence, it was true; one hardly knew of any other reigning beauty who had let the sceptre slip through her fingers so promptly and completely. What was the secret of it all? It could not be said that she had lost her good looks, or that she was lacking in cleverness. There was no tangible scandal against her; to the contrary, she seemed rather surprisingly indifferent to men's company. Of course, it was understood that her marriage was unhappy, but that was scarcely a reason for allowing herself to be so wholly snuffed out of social importance. Everybody knew what the Torrs were like as husbands, and everybody would have been glad to be good to her. But in some unaccountable way, without quite producing the effect of rebuffing kindness, she had contrived to lapse from the place prepared for

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her. And now those last words from the lips of poor young Cressage—"Perhaps that will teach her a lesson!"—sifted their way from the coroner's inquest in a Welsh village up to London, and set people thinking once more. Who could tell? It might be that the fault was not all on one side. According to the accounts of Milford, he was in a state of visible excitement and mental distress. The very fact of his going off alone in a yacht with his father, of whom he notoriously saw as little as possible on dry land, showed that he must have been greatly upset. And his words could mean nothing save that it was a quarrel with his wife which had sent him off to what proved to be his death. What was this quarrel about? And was it the woman, after all, who was to blame? Echoes of these questions, and of their speculative and varied answers, kept themselves alive here and there in London till Parliament rose in August. They were lost then in the general flutter toward the moors.

Lady Cressage, meantime, had not quitted Caermere or disclosed any design of doing so, and it is there we return to her, where she sat at her ease under the palms in the glass-house, with a book open before her.

The spattering reports of a number of

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guns, not very far away, caused her presently to lift her head, but after an instant, with a fleeting frown, she went back to her book. The racket continued, and finally she closed the volume, listened with a vexed face for a minute or two and then sprang to her feet.

“Positively this is too bad!” she declared aloud, to herself.

Unexpectedly, as she turned, she found confronting her another young woman, also clad in black, even to the point of long gloves, and a broad hat heavy with funereal plumes. In her hand she held some unopened letters, and on her round, smooth, pretty countenance there was a doubtful look.

“Good-mornin’, dear,” said this newcomer. Her voice, not unmusical in tone, carried the suggestion of being produced with sedulous regard to a system. “There were no letters for you.”

There was a momentary pause, and then Lady Cressage, as if upon deliberation, answered, “Good-morning — Cora.” She turned away listlessly as she spoke.

“Ah, so it *is* one of my ‘Cora’ days, after all,” said the other, with a long breath of ostentatious reassurance. “I never know in the least where to have you, my dear, you know—and particularly this mornin’; I made sure you’d blame me for the guns.”

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“Blame”—commented Lady Cressage, musingly—“I no longer blame anybody for anything. I’ve long since done with my fancy for playing at being God, and distributing judgments about among people.”

“Oh, you’re quite right about this shootin’ the home covers,” protested the other. “I gave Eddy a fair bit of my mind about it—but you know what he is, when once he’s headed in a given direction. You might as well talk soft to the east wind. And, for that matter, I was dead against his bringin’ these men down here at all—though it may surprise you to hear it.”

Lady Cressage, still looking away, shook her head very slightly. “No—I don’t find myself particularly surprised,” she said, with an effect of languor. “Really, I can’t be said to have given the matter a thought, one way or the other. It is neither my business nor my wish to form opinions about your husband’s friends. We were speaking of something else, were we not?”

“Why, yes,” responded Mrs. Edward; “I mentioned that sometimes I’m ‘Cora,’ and sometimes it’s very much the other way about. I merely mentioned it—don’t think I mean to complain—only I began calling *you* Edith from the start—from the first day I came here, after the—after the—”

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“I know you did. It was very kind of you,” murmured Edith, but with no affectation of gratitude in her voice. Then, slowly, she turned her eyes toward her companion, and added in a more considerate tone: “But then you are by nature a much kindlier person than I am.”

“Oh, yes, you say that,” put in the other, “but it isn’t true, you know. It’s only that I’ve seen more of the world, and am so much older than you are. That’s what tells, my dear—it’s years that smooths the temper down, and rubs off one’s sharp corners—of course, if one has some sense to start with. I assure you, Edith, that when I was your age I was a perfect tiger-cat.”

Lady Cressage smiled in a wan fashion, as if in despite of her mood. “You always make such a point of your seniority,” she said, not unamiably, “but when I look at you, I can never believe you’re of any age at all. I seem a thousand years old beside you.”

Mrs. Edward showed some dazzling teeth in her pleased appreciation of the compliment. Her smile was as characteristic as her voice, in its studiously regular and equable distribution. The even parting of her bright lips, with their symmetrical inner lines of white, was supported to a nicety of proportional value by eyelashes and eyes.

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"It's what I've been saying," she commented, with frank enjoyment. "It's good temper that does the trick."

To tell the truth, Mrs. Edward's was a face which bore no visible relation to years. It was of rounded oval in contour, with beautifully chiseled small features, a faultless skin which was neither fair nor dark and fine large eyes that seemed sometimes blue, and as often something else. In these eyes there lay always, within touch of the surface, a latent smile, ready to beam, to sparkle, to dance, to languish in mellow softness or glitter in cool abstract recognition of pleasantries afloat, all at the instant bidding of the lips below. These lips, delicately arched and of vivid warmth of color, were as restricted in their movements as is the mercury in a thermometer. They did not curl sidewise upon occasion; they never pouted, or pulled themselves inward together under the stress of sudden emotion. They did nothing but separate, in perfectly balanced measure, sometimes by only a hair's breadth, again in the freest fashion, but always in painstaking harmony with the spirit of the glance above. Students of this smile, or rather of this range of graded smiles, ordinarily reached the conclusion that it was the lips which gave the signal to

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the eyes. Certain it is that they worked together in trained accord, and that the rest of the face did nothing at all. The white forehead furrowed itself with no lines of puzzled thought; there was not the shadow of a wrinkle at the corners of the little mouth, or about the shapely brown lashes—and it seemed incredible that time should ever bring one.

Beside this serene and lovely mask—in the placidity of which one found the pledge of an easy temper along with the promise of unfailing youth—the face of Lady Cressage was still beautiful, but in a restless and strenuous way. If she did produce the effect of being the older of the two, it was because Mrs. Edward's countenance had nothing to do with any such standard of comparison.

“When you come to think of it,” the latter went on now, “you *do* seem older than I do, dear—I mean you seem so to me. Of course I know there's a good six years' difference between us—and as far as appearance goes, I needn't say that you'd be the belle of the ball in London as easily as you were four years ago—but all the same you have the knack of making me feel as if I were the youngster, and you the grown-up. I've a sister—five years younger than me—and she does the same thing. When she

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looks at me—just quietly turns her eyes full on me, you know—it seems as if I ought to have a pinafore on, and she have spectacles and a cap. Oh, she used to give me the jumps, that girl did. We haven't seen much of each other, these last few years; we didn't hit it off particularly well—but—why, hello! this *is* odd, if you like!"

"What is it?" asked the other, perfunctorily.

Mrs. Edward had been shuffling the envelopes in her hand the while she spoke, and idly noting their superscriptions. She held up one of them now, in explanation of her remark.

"Well, talk of the devil, you know—I was speaking of my sister Frank, and here's a letter from her. She hasn't written a line to me in—how long is it?—why, it must be—well, certainly not since I was married. Funny, isn't it? I wonder if it's anything about the pater."

She continued to regard the sealed missive absent-mindedly, as if the resource of opening it had not yet suggested itself to her. In the meantime, something else occurred to her, and she turned to face Lady Cressage, who had seated herself again.

"I meant what I said about these men Eddy's brought down," she declared. "I

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didn't want them to be asked, and I don't like their being here, any more than you do. Yes, I want to have you understand," she persisted, as the other offered a gesture of deprecation, "I hope I'm the last person in the world to round on old pals, but really, as I told Eddy, a man in his position must draw the line somewhere. I don't mind giving a leg-up to old Pirie—in a quiet way, of course—for he's not half a bad sort by himself; but as for the rest, what are they? I don't care for their families or their commissions—I've seen too much of the world to be taken in by kid of that sort—I say they're bounders. I never was what you might call keen about them as the right friends for Eddy, even before—I mean in the old days, when it didn't matter so much what company he kept. But now, with everything so altered, he ought to see that they're not in his class at all. And that's just what I can't get him to do in the least."

"Men have their own views in these matters. They are often rather difficult to understand," commented Edith, sententiously.

"I should think so!" began Mrs. Edward. "Why, if I were a man, and in Eddy's place—"

Her words had ended aimlessly, as her

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eyes followed the lines of the letter she had at last opened and begun to read. She finished the brief task, and then, going back to the top of the single page, went over it again more attentively. There was something indefinably impressive about the silence in which she did this, and Lady Cressage presently raised an inquiring glance. Mrs. Edward's face exhibited no marked change of expression, but it had turned deathly pale. The unabated redness of the lips gave this pallor a ghastliness which frightened Edith, and brought her to her feet.

“What in the name—” she began, but the other held up a black-gloved hand.

“Is this something you know about?—something you've been putting up?” Cora demanded, in a harsh, ungoverned voice, moving forward as she spoke. “Look at this. Here's what my sister writes.” She did not offer to show the letter, but huskily read forth its contents:

“ ‘London, September 30.

“ ‘My dear Cora: I don't know whether you will thank me or not, but I feel that some one ought to warn you, if only that you may pull yourself together to meet what is coming. Your house is built of cards, and it is only a question of days, perhaps of

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hours, when it will be pushed over. Your husband is not the heir, after all. I am truly in great grief at the thought of what this will mean to you, and I can only hope that you will believe me when I sign myself,

“ ‘Your sincerely affectionate sister,

“ ‘FRANCES.’ ”

The two women exchanged a tense look in which sheer astonishment encountered terror, and mingled with it.

“No, I know nothing of this,” faltered Edith, more in response to the other’s wild eyes than to the half-forgotten inquiries that had prefaced the reading of the letter.

“No trick of a child, eh? What do they call it, posthumous?” Cora panted, still with the rough voice which had shaken off the yoke of tuition.

Edith lifted her head. “That is absurd,” she answered, curtly.

As they confronted each other thus, a moving shadow outside caught their notice. Instinctively turning their eyes, they beheld through the glass a stranger, a slender young man with a soft hat of foreign fashion, striding across the lawn away from the house. He held his head high in the air, and they could see that the hands carried stiffly outstretched at his sides were clenched.

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“He struts across the turf as if he owned it,” said Edith, clutching vaguely at the meaningless relief which this interruption seemed to offer.

But Mrs. Edward had sunk into the chair, and buried her face in her black-gloved hands.

CHAPTER V

Christian began his walk with swift, energetic steps, and a guiding eye fixed resolutely on a distinguishing mark in the distant line of tree-tops beyond, as if both speed and directness of course were of utmost urgency to his purpose. While his body moved forward thus automatically, however, his mind remained engrossed with what had been said and done in the room he was leaving behind.

His brain reproduced over and over again the appearance of the two young brothers, their glances at each other, their sneering scowls at him. The picture of Augustine whispering in Edward's ear, and of Edward shaking his sulky head, stuck in his memory as a living thing. He had continued to see it after he had turned his back on them and gone to the window. The infamous words which had been spoken about his father were a part of this picture, and their inflection still rang in his ears just as the young men still stood before his eyes, compact of hostility to him and his blood.

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The noise of guns in the wood he approached was for a time subordinated in his mind to those bitter echoes of Edward's speech. When at last these reports of firing attracted his attention, he had passed out of sight of Caermere, and found himself on a vaguely defined path at the end of a broad heath, much overgrown with heather and broom and low, straggling, inhospitable-looking shrubs novel to his eye. Curious movements among this shaggy verdure caught his wandering notice, and he stopped to observe them more closely. A great many rabbits—or would they be hares?—were making their frightened escape from the wood in front of him, and darting about for cover in this undergrowth. He became conscious now of an extraordinary tumult in the wood itself—a confused roar of men's voices raised in apparently meaningless cries, accompanied by an unintelligible pounding of sticks on timber and crackling brush. This racket almost drowned the noise of the remote firing; its effect of consternation upon the small inhabitants of the thicket was only less than the bewilderment that it caused in Christian's mind. Forgetting altogether his own concerns, he pushed cautiously forward to spy out the cause of the commotion.

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Somewhat later, he emerged from the wood again, having obtained a tolerable notion of what was going on. He had caught a view of one line of beaters making their way through a copse, diagonally away from him—rough men clad for the most part in white jackets, who shouted and thrashed about them with staves as they went—and it was easy enough to connect their work, and the consequent rise and whirring rush of birds before it, with the excited fusillade of guns farther on. Christian did not get a sight of the sportsmen themselves. Albeit with some doubts as to the dignity of the proceeding, he made a detour of the piece of woodland, with the idea of coming out upon the shooting party, but when he arrived at the barrier it was to find on the spot only a couple of men in greenish corduroys, whom he took to be underkeepers. They were at work before a large heap of pheasants, tying the birds in pairs by the necks, and hanging them over a long stick, stretched between two trees, which already bent under its burden. They glanced up from their employment at Christian, and when he stooped to pick up one of the cartridge cases with which the ground at his feet was strewn, they exchanged some muttered comment at which both laughed aloud. He instinctively

threw the little tube down, and looked away from the men. The thought occurred to him that if they only knew who he was their confusion would be pathetic, but as it was, they had the monopoly of self-possession, and it was he who shyly withdrew.

The whole diversion, however, had cleared and sweetened his mood. He retraced his steps through the wood and then struck off in a new direction across the heath, at a more leisurely pace than he had come, his mind dwelling pleasantly upon the various picturesque phases of what he had witnessed. The stray glimpses of *la chasse* which had been afforded him in the South had had nothing in common with this. The unkempt freedom of the growths about him appealed to his senses as cultivated parks and ordered forests had never done. It was all so strong and simple and natural—and the memory of the beaters smashing along in the thicket, bawling and laying about them with their clubs, gave it a primitive note which greatly pleased his fancy.

The heath was even finer, in his eyes, than the wood. The air stirring across it, for one thing, had a quality which he seemed never to have known before—and the wild, almost savage, aspect of its squat gray and russet herbage, the sense of a splendidly unashamed

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idleness and unproductiveness suggested by its stretches of waste land, charmed his imagination. He said to himself, as he sauntered here, that he would gallop every day across this wonderful plain, with a company of big dogs at his horse's heels. The thought of the motion in the saddle inspired him to walk faster. He straightened himself, put his hands to his coat at the breast as he had seen young Englishmen do on their pedestrian tours, and strode briskly forward, humming to himself as he moved. The hateful episode of the morning had not so much faded from his thoughts, as shaken itself into a new kaleidoscopic formation. Contact with these noble realities out of doors had had the effect, as it were, of immeasurably increasing his stature. When he thought of those paltry cousins of his, it was as if he looked down upon their insignificance from a height.

He came at last face to face with a high stone wall, the pretensions and obvious antiquity of which told him at once that he had returned to the vicinity of the castle. Sure enough, there were discernible at a considerable distance down to the right some of the turrets and roofs of Caermere, and he turned his course in that direction. It seemed to him a long way that he walked by

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the side of this great wall, marveling as he did so at its size and at the ambitious views of the persons who built it. The reflection that they were ancestors of his own came to his mind, and expanded therein. He also would build like a great nobleman in his time! What was there so grand as building?—he mused as he looked about him—unless it might be the heath and the brownish-purple hills beyond, and these also one intuitively thought of as having been built.

Presently a small doorway appeared in the massive wall, and Christian, finding it unlocked, passed through it into a vast garden. The inner and sunny side of the wall, as far as he could see in either direction, was veined with the regularly espaliered branches of dwarf trees flattened against it, from which still depended here and there belated specimens of choice fruit. On the other side of the path following close this wall, down which he proceeded, were endless rows of small trees and staked clumps of canes, all now bereft of their season's produce. The spectacle did not fit with what had been mentioned to him of the poverty of Caermere. Farther on, a tall hedge stretching at right angles from the wall separated this orchard from what he saw now, by glimpses through an open arch, to

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be a flower garden. He quickened his pace at the sight, for flowers were very near his heart.

At first there was not much to move his admiration. The sunlit profusion of his boyhood's home had given him standards of size and glowing color which were barely approached, and nowhere equaled, here. Suddenly he came upon something, however, before which he perforce stopped. It was the beginning of a long row of dahlias, rounded flowers on the one side of him, pointed and twisted cactus varieties on the other, and he had imagined nothing like this before in his life. Apparently no two of the tall plants, held upright to the height of his breast by thick stakes, were alike, and he knew not upon which to expend the greater delight, the beauty of their individual blossoms or the perfection of skill exhibited in the color-arrangement of the line.

He moved slowly along, examining the more notable flowers in detail with such ardor that a young lady in a black gown, but with a broad hat of light straw on her pale hair, advanced up the path, paused, and stood quite near him for some moments before he perceived her presence. Then with a little start, he took off his hat, and held it in his hands while he made a stiff bow.

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“You are fond of flowers?” Lady Cressage said, more as a remark than an inquiry. She observed him meanwhile with politely calm interest.

“These dāhlias are extraordinary!” he exclaimed, very earnestly. “I have never seen such flowers, and such variety. It surprises me a great deal. It is a spécialité in England, n'est ce pas?”

“I think I have heard that we have carried the dāhlia further than other countries have done,” responded the lady, courteously giving the name the broad-voweled sound he had used. She added with a pleasant softening of eyes and lips: “But you ought not to begrudge us one little triumph like this—you who come from the very paradise of flowers.”

The implication in her words caused him to straighten himself, and to regard her with a surprised new scrutiny. He saw now that she was very beautiful, and he strove to recall the few casual remarks Lord Julius had dropped concerning the two ladies at the castle, as a clue to her identity. One had been an actress, he remembered—and this lady's graceful equanimity had, perhaps, something histrionic in it. But if she happened not to be the actress, then it would no doubt anger her very much to be taken

for one. He knew so little of women—and then his own part in the small drama occurred to him.

“It is evident that you understand who I am,” he said, with another bow. The further thought that in either case she was related to him, was a part of the family of which he would soon be the head, came to give him fresh confidence. “It is not only dāhlias that are carried to unrivaled heights of beauty in England,” he added, and bowed once more.

She smiled outright at this. “That is somewhat too—what shall I say?—continental for these latitudes,” she remarked. “Men don’t say such glowing things in England. We haven’t sun enough, you know, properly to ripen rose-hips—or compliments. I should like to introduce myself, if I may—I am Edith Cressage—and Lord Julius has told me the wonderful story about you.”

She held out her hand as she spoke, with a deliberate gesture, which afforded Christian time to note its exquisite modeling, if he had had the eyes for it. But he took the hand in his own rather cursorily, and began speaking with abruptness before he had finished his bow and relinquished it.

“It is much too wonderful,” he said, hastily. “It frightens me. I cannot get

used to it. I have the feeling that I should go away somewhere, and live by myself, till it became all familiar to me. But then I see it would be just as painful, wherever I went."

"Oh, let us hope it would be least painful here, of all places," urged the lady, in gentle deprecation of his tone. "Caermere is not gay, but it can be soothing and restful—to those who stand in need of solace. It has come to be my second home—I never thought one could grow so deeply attached to a place. It has been to me like a tender old nurse and confidante—in times when—when its shelter and consolation were very welcome"—she faltered for an instant, with averted face, then raised her moist eyes to his, and let them sparkle—"and oh, you will grow to love Caermere with all your heart."

Christian felt himself much moved. He had put on his hat, and stepped now to her side.

"I have seen nothing of it at all," he said. "I am going to ask that you shall show it to me—you who love it so much. But if I shall remain here now, that I cannot in the least tell. Nothing is arranged, so far as I know. I am quite in Lord Julius' hands—thus far."

They had tacitly begun to move down the path together, loitering to look at plants

on either side which particularly invited notice.

“Lord Julius is a remarkable man,” she said. “If one is fortunate enough to enlist his friendship, there is no end to what he can do for him. You can hardly imagine what a difference it makes for you in everything—the fact that he is warmly disposed towards you.”

“Yes, that I have been told,” said Christian, “and I see it for myself, too. I do not feel that I know him very well, as yet. It was only yesterday morning that I met him for the first time at an hotel in Brighton. We breakfasted together, we looked through papers together and then we began a long railway journey together, which only ended a few hours ago. We have talked a great deal in this time, but, as I have said, the man himself is not very clear to me yet. But no one could have been kinder—and I think he likes me.”

“Oh, of course he does,” affirmed Lady Cressage, as if anything else would have been incredible. “And—talking with him so much, so continuously, you no doubt understand the entire situation. I am glad that he at least left it to me to show you over Caermere; there is apparently nothing else in which I can be of use.”

Christian, though he smiled in kindly

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recognition of her attitude, offered no verbal comment, and after a wandering digression about dahlias, she returned to the subject.

“If there *is* anything I can tell you—about the family, the position of affairs in general, and so on—you should not stand on ceremony with me. Has he, for example, explained about money affairs?”

The young man looked keenly at her for an instant, as if the question took him by surprise. Then he answered frankly enough: “Nothing definite. I only gather that it will be made easier for me than it would have been for—for other members of the family, if they—had been in my place. But perhaps that is not what I should say to you.”

Lady Cressage smiled on him reassuringly.

“Oh, don’t think of me in that light,” she pleaded. “I stand quite outside the—what shall I say?—the interested family circle. I have no ax of any description to grind. You, of course, have been told my position in the castle—that is, so far as it can be told by others. It is a simple enough story—I was to have been everything, and then the wind happens to change off the Welsh coast and lo! I am nothing—nothing! It is not even certain that I am not a beggar—living

here on alms. Legally, everything is in such confusion that no one knows how he stands. But so far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter. My cup has been filled so full—so long—that a little more or less trouble is of no importance. Oh, I assure you, I do not desire to be considered in the matter at all."

She made this last declaration with great earnestness, in immediate response to the sympathetic look and gesture with which Christian had interrupted her narrative.

His gentle eyes regarded her troubled beauty with compassionate softness. "I venture to think that you will be considered a good deal, none the less," he remarked, in a grave yet eager tone. The sense of elation at being able to play the part of Providence to such a lady spread through his mind and possessed his being. The lofty possibilities of the powers devolving upon him had never been so apparent before. He instinctively put out his arm toward her, in such overt fashion that she could but take it. She did not lean upon it, but imparted to the contact instead a kind of ceremonial reserve which directly ministered to the patrician side of his mood.

They walked, if possible, still more slowly now, pausing before almost every stake;

their talk was of the flowers, with occasional lapses into the personal.

“What you said about Lord Julius,” she remarked, in one of these interludes, “is quite true. He has it in his power to say whether the duke shall be a rich man or a pauper, and until yesterday he was all for the pauper. If poor Porlock and his sons had lived, they knew very well that Lord Julius was no friend of theirs, and would starve the title whichever of them had it. And so with these others—Edward and Augustine—only with them, it isn’t merely dislike but loathing that Lord Julius has for them.”

“I met those young gentlemen this morning,” said Christian stiffly. “It seemed to me that Lord Julius went quite out of his way to be kind with them. I should never have gathered that he hated them.”

“Oh, not personally,” she explained. “I don’t think he dislikes anybody personally. But in what you may call their representative capacity he is furious with people if they don’t measure up to his idea of what they should be. I never heard of any other family that had such a man in it. I used to admire him very much—when I was newly married—I thought his ideals for the family were so noble and fine—but I don’t know—”

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“Do you have suspicions of Julius, then?” asked Christian, hurriedly.

“Oh, no, no!” she protested. “Nothing is farther from my thoughts. Only I have seen it all, here. I have lived in the very heart of it—and much as I sympathize with his feelings, I can’t help feeling that he is unjust—not willfully, but still unjust. He and his son are men of great intelligence and refined tastes; they would do honor to any position. But is it quite fair of them to be so hard on cousins of theirs who were not given great intelligence, and who had no capacity whatever for refinement? That is what I mean. You saw those young men this morning. They are not up to much, certainly; their uncle Porlock and his sons averaged, perhaps, even a shade lower—you see I am speaking quite frankly—but when it is all said and done, they were not so remarkably worse than other men of their class. If any of the six had succeeded to the title, he would not have been such a startling anomaly in the peerage. I doubt if he would have attracted attention, one way or the other. But it became a fixed idea with Lord Julius years ago to get control of the estates, and to use this control to bully the elder line into the paths of sweetness and light. It didn’t succeed in the least—

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and I think he grew a little spiteful. That is all. And besides—what does it matter? It is all ancient history now.”

Christian was looking straight before him, with a meditative gaze. They walked for some moments in silence before he spoke. “And how did he know that he would like me?” he demanded, musingly. “How should he be confident that I was better than the others? Perhaps—do you know?—was he very fond of my father?”

“I have no idea,” she responded. It was impossible not to note the brevity of her tone.

“No one speaks willingly of my father,” he broke forth with impulsive bitterness. “Even Lord Julius would tell me nothing of him. And the young lady on the boat—she too—”

He paused, and his companion, who had been looking away, glanced again at him. “The young lady on the boat,” she said, more by way of suggesting to him a safe topic than as an inquiry.

“Oh, I much want to know who she can be,” he cried, unconsciously accepting the diversion. He described the meeting at Rouen, the conversation and, after a fashion of his own, the girl herself. “She said,” he went on, “that she had personally something

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to do with the story—'remotely' was the word she used. I asked Lord Julius, but he could not think who she might be. She earns her own living—she told me that—and she had never been out of England before. She is not well educated—in the school sense, I mean—her French was ridiculous. But she spoke very beautifully her own language, and her mind filled me with charm, but even more so her good heart. We swore friendship for all time—or at least I did."

"Dear me!" said Lady Cressage. Her thoughts had not been idle, and they brought to her now on the instant a satisfactory clue. She pondered it for a little, before she decided to speak. "I think I know who this remarkable young lady must be," she observed then. "This Captain Edward whom you met this morning—he has a wife."

"Yes, I know," put in Christian abruptly—"the actress-lady; Julius told me of her."

"I suppose 'actress' would cover the thing," she answered, with an air of amiable indifference. "She danced more than she acted, I believe, but 'actress' is a very general term. Well, your eternal friend is, I suspect, her younger sister. I have never seen her, but by accident I happen to know

that she is aware of your coming to England.”

Christian’s mobile face had lengthened somewhat. “Is she also an—an ‘actress’?” he asked, dolefully.

Lady Cressage looked skyward, with half-closed eyes, in an effort of memory. “I really seem to have heard what she did,” she mused, hesitatingly. “I know her sister has often spoken of her. Is it ‘barmaid’? No. ‘Telegraph’? No, it’s her father who’s in the General Post Office. Why, now, how stupid of me! She can’t be a nurse, of course, or there would have been her uniform. Oh, now I remember—she’s a typewriter.”

It was not clear to her whether Christian wholly comprehended the term, now that she had found it. She perceived, however, that he disliked something in what she had said, or in her manner of saying it. The remarkable responsiveness of his countenance to passing emotions and moods within him had already impressed her. She regarded his profile now with a sidelong glance, and reconstructed some of her notions about him by the help of what she saw. Nothing was said, until suddenly he paused, gazing with kindled eye upon the prospect opened before him.

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They had come to the end of the garden, and stood at the summit of a broad stone-kerbed path descending in terraces. Above them, the dense foliage of the yews rising at either side of the gap in the hedge had been trained and cut into an arched canopy. From under this green gateway Christian looked down upon a Caermere he had not imagined to himself before.

The castle revealed itself for the first time, as he beheld it now, in its character as a great medieval fortress. On his arrival in the morning, emerging from the shadowed driveway into the immediate precinct of the house, he had seen only its variously modernized parts; these, as they were viewed from this altitude, shrank to their proper proportions—an inconsiderable fraction of the mighty whole. All about, the massive shoulders of big hills shelved downward to form the basin-like hollow in which the castle seemed to stand, but their large bulk, so far from dwarfing Caermere, produced the effect of emphasizing its dimensions. Its dark-gray walls and towers, with their bulging clumps of chimneys and turrets, and lusterless facets of many-angled roofings, all of somber slate, were visibly the product, the very child, of the mountains. A sensation of grim, adamant, implacable

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power took hold of the young man's brain as he gazed. For a long time he did not want to talk, and felt vaguely that he was signifying this by the slight, sustained pressure of his arm against hers. At all events, she grasped his wish, and preserved silence, holding herself a little behind him, so that he might look down, without distraction, upon his kingdom.

"These Torrs," he burst forth all at once, with a nervous uncertainty in his tones as of one out of breath, "these ancestors of mine—the family I belong to—did they produce great men? You must know their history. Julius says we are the most ancient family in England. I have not had the time yet to learn anything of what we did. Were there heroes and famous soldiers and learned scholars among us? To look at that wonderful castle there at our feet, it seems as if none but born chiefs and rulers of mankind could ever have come out of it."

"Captain Edward and his brother Augustine were both born there," she permitted her own over-quick tongue to comment.

He let her arm drop from his with a swift gesture, and wheeled round to look her in the face. The glance in his eyes said so much to her that she hastened to anticipate his speech.

“Forgive me!” she urged hastily. “It was silly thoughtlessness of mine. I do not know you at all well as yet, you know, and I say the wrong things to you. Do tell me you forgive me! And it is only fair to myself to say, too, that I have been in a bad school these last few years. Conversation as one practices it at Caermere is merely the art of making everything pointed and sharp enough to pierce thick skins. I should have remembered that you were different—it was unpardonable of me! But I have really angered you!”

Christian, still looking at her, found himself gently shaking his head in reassurance. It was plain enough to him that this beautiful young woman had suffered much, and that at the hands of his own people. What wonder that acrid memories of them should find their way to her lips? He also had been unhappy. He smiled gravely into her face at the softening recollection.

“We were speaking of different things, I think,” he commented, and nodded approval at sight of the relieved change which his tone brought to her countenance. “I know very well there are many disagreeable and unpleasant matters close about us—when we are down below, there. But now we are up above them, and we forget them all, or

ignore them—and I was asking you about the history of the family—its ancient history.”

She put her hand lightly upon his arm again. “Lord Julius is right about it being a very, very long history,” she said, putting into her voice a tacit recognition of his magnanimity. “I know it, in a certain way, but I can hardly make a good story of it, I’m afraid. The family is Keltic, you know. That is what is always said about it, as its most distinguishing characteristic. It is the only large English one which managed to survive through the Saxon period, and then the Norman period, and keep its name and its estates and its territorial power. This makes it very interesting to historians and archæologists. There are many stone circles and Druidic monuments about here, some of which are said to be connected with the introduction of Christianity into Britain. You will see them another day, and read the legends about them. Well, it is said that the chief who possessed this land here, and who had some kind of a stronghold there where the castle is, at that time, was a Torr. Of course, there were no surnames then, but it would have been his tribal appellation, or something of the sort. The fact itself, I believe, is generally accepted—

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that the family that was here in St. David's time is here now. It is a tradition that there should always be a David in the family; it used to be the leading name, but now Christian is usually the duke's name, and the others are all saints, like Anselm, Edward, Augustine and—and so forth."

The young man looked down in meditation upon the gloomy, historic pile. "It is a very grand beginning," he said, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps it was too grand for mere mortals to live up to," she ventured, with a cautious sidelong eye on him.

"I see your meaning," he assented, nodding. "Yes, no doubt it is natural. It is as if a boy were named Napoleon. He would be frightened to think what he had done to make his name and himself fit together—and very likely he would never do anything at all."

"Yes, that is it," she answered, and drew a long, consolatory breath.

They had begun to move down the wide winding path, and when they paused presently at one of the steps to note a new view of the buildings, she called his attention to something by a little exclamation and a pointing finger.

"Do you see the balcony there, up above

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and to the left of the flat-topped tower—no, this side of the highest chimneys—there are figures coming out on it from the window.”

“There is some one in a reclining chair, n'est ce pas?” he asked, following her finger.

“It is your grandfather,” she said softly. “Those are his apartments—the rows of windows with the white woodwork. When the sun gets round to them, they bring him out—if he is strong enough. Evidently this is one of his good days.”

Christian, gazing eagerly, made out beyond the attendants and the couch they bore, another figure, with a splash of white like a shield upon its front.

“Is it not Julius?” he asked swiftly, pressing her arm. “Oh, then by this time my grandfather knows of me—knows that I am here! Should you not think so? And no doubt, since it is his good day, they will take me to see him. Is that not probable?”

“I haven't the least idea,” she responded, after a momentary pause, “either as to what Lord Julius has told him, or as to how much he is capable of understanding. Except from this distance, I have not seen him since he was struck down with paralysis. I know nothing of his condition beyond a stray, guarded word now and then from the

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doctors. If I were a professional thief and he a crown jewel, I could not have been more securely shut out from him!"

The melancholy bitterness of her words, and tone appealed to the young man. He drew her hand closer to his side by a delicate pressure of the arm. "I can see that you have been very unhappy," he said, compassionately.

"Oh-h-h!" she murmured, with a shuddering sigh. "Don't—don't speak of it, I beg of you!"

"I also have had a sad youth," he went on, unconsciously tightening his arm. "But now"—and he lifted his head and smiled—"who knows? Who shall say that the bad days are not all gone—for both of us?"

Only the flutter of the hand against his arm made answer. They walked on together down the broad sunlit path.

CHAPTER VI

At the foot of the terraced slope, the wide, graveled path down which Lady Cressage had led Christian described a foral curve to the right, across a lawn which he recognized as belonging to his morning's experiences. The angle of the high, domed conservatory recalled itself to him. Beyond it, on the same side, would be the window from which he had quitted the house.

To the left, a smaller footpath turned into still another garden, and he was glad that his companion moved this way. They were in a relatively small inclosure, hedged upon three sides by closely knit high walls of box; the straggling, untrimmed profusion of this tall growth, through which a multitude of sweet-briers thrust still farther upward their dipping and interlaced green rods, gave the place a homely if unkempt aspect. On the fourth side rose the blue-gray masonry of the castle itself—an ancient curtain stretched between two towers. The autumn sunlight lay upon this stained old wall, and warmed it, and glowed softly

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among the leaves and saffron blossoms of the great rose-tree trained upon it. This garden preserved the outlines of some former quaint arrangement of walks and beds, but these were comfortably softened everywhere, and in part obscured, by the untrammelled freedom of vegetation. Even over the moldering red tiles of the paths mosses had been suffered to creep unmolested. A few late roses were in bloom here and there, and at one corner there rose a colony of graceful white lilies, the scent of which filled the air. It was all very restful and charming, and Christian, pausing to gaze about him, gave little exclamations of pleasure at what he saw.

In the center of the garden, surrounded by a low seat of weather-worn woodwork, was what seemed to be a fountain, culminating in a piece of statuary, so blackened and battered by time and storm that little could be made out of its creator's intentions. Christian, with some murmured inquiry, led the way toward this—and then perceived that Lord Julius, who had been sitting at the other and sunny side of the statue, was standing now in the path, confronting the new-comers with a friendly smile.

“This is *my* particular haunt at Caermere,” he explained to the young man.

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“In so huge a place, one is lost if he does not fasten upon a special corner or nook of some sort, and send down roots in it and make it his own. This was my mother’s garden, and for over fifty years now I have bargained with one generation of head gardeners after another to leave it alone—as she left it. When Cheltnam came, he was so famous a person that I submitted to his budding some new varieties on the old wall-rose there—but, bless me, even that is thirty years ago—before either of you was born. I see you young people have lost no time in becoming acquainted.”

Edith Cressage looked into the old gentleman’s eyes for a moment before she replied. They had exchanged this same glance—on her side at once puzzled, suspicious, defiant; on his full of a geniality possibly pointed with cynicism—very often during the last four years, without affecting by it any prepossession or prejudice in either’s mind. “We met by accident in the upper fruit-walk, and I introduced myself. It must be quite luncheon time. Shall we go in?” She added, as upon an afterthought, and with another steadfast look into his face, “I have promised to show him over the house and the castle.”

“Admirable!” said Lord Julius, cordially.

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He looked at his watch. "We will follow you in a very few moments, if we may. I dare say he is as ready for luncheon as I am, but I want to show him my old garden first."

"Oh, let me stop too!" she exclaimed, without an instant's hesitation. "May I confess it?—when you're not here I call it *my* garden, too. I knew it was your mother's—and I was always going to ask you to tell me about her, but the opportunity never offered. It is the one really perfect spot at Caermere, even to me. And I can understand how infinitely these old associations add to its charms for you! I shall truly not be in the way if I stop?"

The elder man regarded her with a twinkling eye from under his broad hat-brim as he shook his head. "To the contrary, we are both delighted," he answered, amiably enough. He began leading the way at this, and the two young people, walking perforce very close together on the narrow path, followed at his heels.

He pointed out to them that the fountain, which he could not remember being in working order even in his boyhood, was built over the ancient well of the castle. The statue apparently dated from William and Mary's time; at least, it was very like

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the objects they set up at Hampton Court. Part of its pedestal was made of three Ogham stones, which were said to have stood by the well in former times. Flint knives and other primitive weapons had been found in the garden. Antiquaries were not agreed as to the possibility of the well having been in existence at any very remote period, but it was not unlikely that this small garden had been the center of interest—perhaps the scene of Druidical sacrifices, or even of the famous conversion of the tribe resident here by St. David—at the beginning of things. These speculations as to precise localities were interesting, but scarcely convincing. The wall at the end was a more definite affair. It had been built after the Third Crusade by Stephen de la Tour, as the Normanized name went then.

“Ah, the name has not always been spelled the same then?” interrupted Christian here. He spoke with an eagerness which the abstract interest of the query seemed hardly to warrant.

“Heavens, no!” said Lord Julius. “It has been Tor with one ‘r’ and with two; it has been de la Tour, as I said, and Tour without the ‘de la,’ and Toure, and I know of at least one branch of the people of the name

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of Tower who are undoubtedly of our stock. It is quite conceivable that many others of them are, too."

"Then the forms of names can be altered at will?" pursued Christian. "If a man says, 'I will spell it so and so,' then it is all right?"

"Oh, yes," explained the other. "Often two spellings exist side by side. Witness the Seymours a few years ago. You had one brother writing it Seymour and another St. Maur. The latter is now the official spelling—for the present, at least."

"This is extremely interesting to me," the young man cried. "So I may keep my name as I have always borne it! I may write myself 'Christian Tower'! That lifts a load from my mind. I had been unhappy to think of abandoning the name my father liked. He always both spelled and pronounced it 'Tower,' and that is why I shall be so glad to do the same."

An acute kind of silence rested upon the group for an awkward minute.

"Oh, don't let us have any more archæology before luncheon, Lord Julius," put in the lady then. "Caermere so reeks with history that one must take it in small installments or be overwhelmed altogether. You were going to tell us about your mother,

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Lord Julius, and how you remember her, here in this dear old garden. And positively nothing has been changed since!"

"I mustn't go quite so far as that," said the old man, smilingly. He seemed grateful to her for the digression. "A certain systematic renovation has, of course, been necessary; I have arranged with the gardeners to manage that. I dare say there are scarcely any plants or roots here now which were individually in existence in my mother's time; but their children, their descendants, are here in their places. Except for Cheltnam's buds on the wall there, I don't think any novelties have been introduced. If so, it was against my wish. The lilies in that corner, for example, are lineal progeny, heaven knows how many times removed, of the lilies my mother planted there. These roses are slips from other slips of the old cabbage and damask and moss roses she used to sit and look at with her crewel-work in her lap. The old flowers are gone, and yet they are not gone. In the same way, my mother has been dead for sixty years, and yet this is still her garden, and she is still here—here in the person of me, her son, and of Christian, her great-grandson."

"And I," commented Lady Cressage,

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upon a sudden smiling impulse, "I alone am an intruding new species—like one of Cheltenham's 'niphetos' buds on the old rose. I hasten to extricate myself." And with a bright little nod and mock half-courtesy, she caught her gown in one hand, wheeled round and moved quickly down the path and through the hedge.

The two men watched her till she vanished.

"She is a beautiful lady," observed Christian, with enthusiasm; "and very courteous, too."

Lord Julius offered no remark upon this, but stood for a little with his gaze apparently fixed on the point whence she had disappeared. Then, without turning his head, he said in a gently grave way:

"If I were you, Christian, I would make as few allusions, in mixed company, to my father as possible."

"Ah, yes! this is what I desired to discuss with you!" said the young man, stoutly. He swung round to face the other, and his eyes sparkled with impatience. "Everybody avoids mention of him; they turn to something else when I speak his name—all but those abominable young men who offered him insult. That is what I should very much like to talk about!"

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“I had thought it might not be necessary,” replied Lord Julius. “At least, I had hoped you would pick up the information for yourself—a harmless little at a time, and guess the rest, and so spare everybody, yourself included. But that is precisely what you seem not to do; and I dare say I was wrong in not talking frankly with you at the start. But let me understand first: what do you know about your father?”

“Only that he was a soldier, a professional soldier. That I have told you,” panted Christian.

“Yes, and a very notable soldier,” responded the other. “He won the Victoria Cross in the Mutiny—the youngest man in all India to do so. That is for you to remember always—in your own mind—for your own pride and consolation.”

“Ah, yes, always!” murmured the son.

“And in other services, too, after he left England,” the elder man went on, “I have understood that he was a loyal and very valuable officer to those he fought for. This also is something for you to be proud of—but still inside your own mind! That it is necessary to remember—that you must keep it to yourself. Forgive my repeating the injunction.”

“Go on!” said Christian.

“Well,” Lord Julius began, speaking with more hesitation, “Ambrose as a soldier was magnificent, but you know enough from your books to know that splendid soldiers may easily be—how shall I say?—not so splendid in other walks of life. It is to be said for him that he was bare twenty-three—poor boy. It was in 1859; and, as misery would have it, I was in Syria, traveling with my wife. Perhaps if I had been in England, I could have done something. As it was, there was no one to help him; and of course it may be that he couldn’t have been helped. It was a case of a young man returning to London, with honors and flattery enough to turn even an old head, and walking blindfold into the worst company in Europe. I have no intention of going into details. You must take my word for it that suddenly four or five young men of great families fled to the Continent; and that, without much publicity in the papers, there was a very miserable sort of scandal after their flight. Other names were mentioned—but I needn’t go into that. It was to the interest of many influential people to hush the thing up, and to some extent they succeeded. After a while it became even possible for the others to come back to England—there are many ways of managing such

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matters—but there was one of them who never returned.”

Christian gazed into the old man's face with mute, piteous fixity of concentration.

“This one, of course,” Lord Julius pursued, picking his words still more cautiously, and liking his task less than ever, “was your father. The way was smoothed for the rest to come back, but not for him—that is, at first. Later, when he could have returned, he would not. Ambrose had a stubborn and bitter temper. He was furious with his father, with his family—with all England. He would touch none of us. Why, I myself went to Sicily many years ago—it was as soon as I had got back from the East—and learned the facts, and found out what could be done; and I tried to see him, and bring him home with me, but he would not speak with me, or even remain under the same roof with me—and so I could do nothing. Or yes, there was one thing—that is to maintain some kind of watch over you—after his death, and that we did. My own idea was to have brought you over to England years ago—as soon as your mother died—but Emanuel thought otherwise.”

He paused here in his narrative, for the

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reason that his companion was obviously no longer listening to him.

Christian had moved a step or two away, and with a white, set face was looking off over the hill-tops. His profile showed brows knitted and lips being bitten, under the stress of an internal tempest. It seemed to the old man a long time that he stood thus, in dry-eyed, passionate battle with his own mind. Then, with a sudden, decisive gesture he spread out his hands and turned impulsively to Lord Julius.

“You are an old man, and a wise one, and you were my father’s friend and you are my friend!” he said, with trembling earnestness. “I should be a fool not to pay heed to what you tell me. You advise that I do not mention my father more than is necessary. Eh bien, I take your advice. Without doubt it is right—just as it is right that I should speak less of my brother Salvator. I have remembered that since you warned me, and now I will remember this. But I should like”—he came forward as he spoke, still with extended hands, and looked with entreating earnestness up into the other’s face—“I should like to have you understand that Salvator is my brother not any the less, and that I love and honor and have pride in my father more than before. This I keep in my own mind,

as you advise—but one thing I will do for every one to take note of. I will write my name always 'Tower.' ”

The great-uncle put a big, comforting hand on his shoulder. “I should not dream of blaming you,” he said, gently. “But there is a man to tell us luncheon is ready.”

He nodded comprehension to the servant who had appeared at the opening in the hedge, and, still with his hand on Christian's shoulder, began to move in that direction.

“One other matter,” said the young man in lowered tones and hurriedly—“from the hill above, awhile ago, I saw my grandfather—in his chair, on the balcony. You said just now that my father hated him—was furious with him. Did he behave cruelly to my father?”

“Oh, no-o,” replied Julius, with an indefinite upward inflection on the deliberate negative. “Not cruelly.”

“But unjustly?”

“Oh, no, not unjustly, either—if only because he never in his life possessed the dimmest inkling of what justice meant. The duke is my brother, and I know him much better than any one else living, and so I am free to speak frankly about him. He has been a duke nearly eighty years—which is, I believe, unprecedented—but he has

been an ass still longer than that." After a pause he added: "I am going to take you to him this afternoon."

Christian hung his head as they walked along, and framed in his depressed mind more than one further inquiry about this grandsire of his, who held so august a station, and yet had been dismissed so contemptuously, but they did not translate themselves into speech. Nor, later, during the luncheon, was this great personage more than indirectly alluded to.

The way to this luncheon had led through three or four large rooms, opening one upon the other by small doors, the immediate approaches to which were given the effect of passageways by means of screens. What these apartments were used for, or how the residents of the castle distinguished them apart in their own minds, Christian could not imagine. To his rapid and curious inspection, they seemed all alike—each with its bare, indifferently polished floor, its huge stone fireplace, its wainscoting, walls and ceiling of dark, umber-hued wood, and its scant store of furniture which only heightened the ruling impression of big empty spaces. An occasional portrait was dimly to be discerned up in the duskiness of the oak panels, but the light from the narrow and

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small-paned windows was too faint to examine them by. More cheerless or apparently useless rooms the young man had never seen.

Lord Julius seemed to guess his thoughts. "This is all an old part—what might be called mid-Plantagenet," he explained, as they went along. "My father had these rooms pulled about a good deal, and done up according to Georgian standards, but it was time and money wasted. Even if big windows were cut through they would be too dark for comfort, to our notions. The men who made them, of course, cared nothing at all about daylight, at least inside a house. They spent as little time as possible under roofs, to begin with; they rose at daybreak and went to bed at dark. When they were forced to be under cover, they valued security above all things, and the fewer openings there were in the walls, the better they liked it. They did no reading whatever, but after they had gorged themselves with food, sat around the fire and drank as much as they could hold, and listened to the silly rubbish of their professional story-tellers and ballad-singers till they fell asleep. If it happened that they wanted to gamble instead, a handful of rush-lights or a torch on the wall was enough to see the dice by.

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Really, what did they want more? And for that matter, what do most of their lineal descendants want more either? Light enough to enable them to tell a spade from a heart, and perhaps to decipher the label on a bottle now and then. Nothing more. The fashion of the day builds plate-glass windows round them, but it is truly a gross superfluity."

The room in which Lady Cressage and the luncheon-table awaited them was of a more hospitable aspect. A broad expanse of lawn, and of distant trees and sky-line fading away in the sunny autumn haze, made a luminous picture of the high embrasured window stretching almost from corner to corner across one side. By contrast with the other apartments, the light here was brilliant. Christian, with a little apologetic bow and gesture to the others, dallied before the half-dozen portraits on the walls, examined the modeling of the blackened oak panels about them, and lingered in admiring scrutiny of the great carved chimney-piece above the cavernous hearth, on which a fire of logs crackled pleasantly. This chimney-piece was fairly architectural in its dimensions. It was as full of detail, and seemed almost as big, as the west front of a church, and he tipped his head back to look up at its intricate, yet

flowing scheme of scrollwork, its heraldic symbolism used now for decoration, now to point the significance, as it were, of the central escutcheon—and all in old wood of so ripe a nut-brown color that one seemed to catch a fragrance exhaled from it.

“That is the best thing here,” said Edith Cressage, moving over to stand beside him. “It came from Ludlow Castle. Those are the arms of the Mortimers. It *is* the Mortimers, isn’t it?” She turned to Lord Julius for support. “I always confuse them with the De Lacys.”

“Yes, the Mortimers,” answered Julius, as servants entered, and they took their seats. “But almost every other family of the Marches is represented in the devices scattered about. You can see the arrows of the Egertons, the eagles of the Grandisons, and up above, the corbies or ravens of the Corbets, and so on. That was the period when the Marches ruled England, and their great families, all married and intermarried and bolstered up by the feudal structure, were like a nation by themselves. The Mortimers, you know,” he added, turning to Christian, “became practically kings of England. At least they had their grandsons on the throne—but they couldn’t hold it after they had got it. The day of these

parts was really over before Bosworth Field. The printing press and Protestantism finished the destruction of its nobility. Only a house here and there has survived among us. Some few of the old names are preserved, like flies in amber, over in Ireland, but I should not know where to look to-day for a De Lacy, or a Tregoz, or a west country Le Strange, let alone a Mortimer. I suppose, in fact, we have more of the Mortimer blood among us than there is anywhere else."

Christian, seated so that he faced the great armorial pageant spread as a background to the fair head of the lady, smiled wistfully at his companions, but said nothing. The words about his sharing the blood of kings were like some distant, soft music in his ears. He looked at the escutcheons and badges, and sought in a dreamy way to familiarize himself with the fact that they were a part of his own history—that the grandeur they told of was in truth his personal heritage.

There was some talk going on between the others—conversation which, for a time, he scarcely strove to follow. Lord Julius had begun by expressing his joy at the absence from luncheon of the physician whom circumstances kept on the premises,

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and from this he drifted to an attack upon doctors as a class. He denounced them root and branch, as impostors and parasites, who darkened and embittered human life by fostering all the mean cowardices of small-brained people, in order that they might secure a dishonest livelihood by pretending to dispel the horrors their own low tricks had conjured up. The robust old gentleman developed these violent theories without heat or any trace of excitement, and even maintained a genial expression of countenance while he spoke. Lady Cressage seemed entertained, and even helped on the diatribe now and again with pertinent quips of her own. But Christian could see very little sense in such an assault upon a respectable profession, and his attention wandered willingly again to the splendid chimney-piece. He resolved to learn all there was to learn of the heraldry and local history embodied in this sumptuous decoration, without delay. But then, on every conceivable side there was so much to learn!

Suddenly he became aware that his thoughts had concentrated themselves on the extraordinary badness of the luncheon he was eating. Here at least was something Caermere could not teach him about—nor, for that matter, as it seemed, all Eng-

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land either. Since his arrival in the country, he reflected, he had not encountered one even tolerable dish. Vegetables and fish half raw, meats tasteless and without sauce or seasoning, bread heavy and sour, coffee unrecognizable, the pastry a thing too ridiculous for words—so his indictment shaped itself. He felt it his duty to argue to himself that quite likely this graceless and repellent diet was the very thing which made the English such physical and temperamental masters of the world, but the effort left him sad. He made a resolution that if ever Caermere were his a certain white-capped Agostino, in Cannes, should be imported forthwith. Then he became conscious again of what was being said at the table.

“If you could only imagine,” Lady Cressage was saying to Lord Julius, “what a boon your coming has been! I had positively almost forgotten what intelligent conversation was like. It seems ages since I last heard ten consecutive words strung together on a thought of any description. Let me see—it was June when you were last down, with Sir Benjamin Alstead; he has been here once since—but in your absence he put on such a pompous ‘eminent-physician’ manner that really I oughtn’t to count

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him at all—and with that exception, from June to October, civilization has left poor me entirely out of its reckoning. But perhaps”—they had risen now, and there was a certain new frankness, almost confidence of appeal in her glance into his face—“perhaps, as matters have turned, you will come oftener henceforth?”

Lord Julius nodded. “It is quite likely,” he said, and stretched forth his hand significantly to Christian’s shoulder. “But you were going to show him the house—and I suppose I may come along too. There is half an hour before we go to my brother—and our train does not leave Clune till nearly six.”

“You are not going to-day! and he too?” she exclaimed, hurriedly.

The old man nodded again. “We are expected at Emanuel’s to-night,” he answered. Then, as Christian had moved toward the window and seemed beyond hearing, he added, in a smiling aside, “There is one reason for dragging him away that is comical enough. It wouldn’t do for him to dine at Caermere in morning clothes, and so far as I can see he has no others.”

“He could be too tired to dine,” she suggested, quickly, in a confidential murmur. “Or, for that matter, there is a room full of

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Porlock's things—I suppose—I suppose poor Cressage's—would be too big for him. Oh, it's too dreadful to have him whisked off like this! Can't you send a telegram instead?"

Her tone was as frank as her speech—and on the instant her glance at his face made keen inquiry whether it had not been too frank.

He smiled in a tolerant, almost amused way. "Oh, he will return all in good time," he assured her, gently enough. "Caermere will see plenty of him, later on."

"Yes, but who can tell where I shall be then?" The necessity for speaking in an undertone gave her words an added intensity of feeling. "And it isn't only him—I had hoped you would be stopping some days at least—for I wanted to speak with you about this very thing. My position here—the uncertainty of everything—is intolerable to bear." She lifted her head, and turned her direct gaze into his eyes. "If only you liked me a little better, I could discuss the matter more freely with you."

"Humbug!" replied Lord Julius, with a geniality which was at least superficially reassuring. "You shouldn't say such things, much less think them. I can understand your impatience—but it will be pos-

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sible to straighten out affairs very soon now. I don't think you will be found to have suffered by the delay."

"Oh, that is all right," she answered, almost pettishly. "Everybody assures me of the most magnanimous intentions—but in the meantime"—she checked herself, tossed her head in resentment, apparently, at the tears which had started to her eyes, and forced herself to smile—"in the meantime, you must forgive my tantrums. It is so depressing here—all alone—or worse than alone! I'm really no longer fit to receive anybody. But now"—she raised her voice in an eager simulation of gaiety—"shall the personally conducted tour begin?"

Caermere had been inaccessible to so many generations of sightseers that no formula for its exhibition remained. The party seemed to Christian to wander at haphazard through an interminable succession of rooms, many of them small, some of them what he could only think of as over-large, but all insufficiently lighted, and all suggesting in their meager appointments and somber dejection of aspect a stage of existence well along on the downward path to ruin. He had only to look about him to perceive why Caermere had long ago been

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removed from the list of England's show-places. His companions between them kept his attention busy with comments upon the history and purpose of the apartments they passed through, but beyond a general sense of futile and rather shabby immensity he gained very little from the inspection. The mood to postpone comprehension of what he was seeing to another and a more convenient time was upon him, and he almost willfully yielded to it.

Once, when impulse prompted him to climb a little ladder-like staircase, and push open a door from which the black dust fell in a shower, and he discerned in the gloom of the attic chamber piles of armor and ancient weapons, a thrill of fleeting excitement ran through his veins.

"They say that Prince Llewelyn's armor is there," called up Lord Julius from the landing below. "Some day we will have it all out, and cleaned and furbished up. But don't go in now! You'll get covered with dirt. I used to venture in there and rummage about once in a while when I was a boy," he added as Christian came down. "But even then one came out black as a sweep."

There were fine broad stretches of rugged landscape to be seen here and there from

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narrow casements in the older, higher parts they were now traversing, and occasionally Christian was able to interest himself as well in details of primitive, half-obliterated ornamentation over arches and doorways of early periods, but he was none the less almost glad when they came out at last into a spacious upper hallway, and halted in tacit token that the journey was at an end.

“Now I will leave you,” said the lady, with lifted skirt and a foot poised tentatively over the first step of the broad descending stairs. “I shall have tea in the conservatory when you come down.”

Christian felt that something must be said. “It has all been very wonderful to me,” he assured her. “I am afraid I did not seem very appreciative—but that is because the place is too huge, too vast, to be understood quite at once. And I am so new to it all—you will understand what I mean. But I thank you very much.”

She smiled brightly on him and nodded to them both, and passed down the stairway. Christian was all at once conscious, as his eyes followed her, that there was a novel quickening or fluttering of his heart's action. For a brief second, the sensation somehow linked itself in his thoughts with the tall, graceful figure receding from him, and he

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bent forward to grasp more fully the picture she made, moving sedately along, with a hand like a lily on the wide black rail. Then he suddenly became aware that this was an error, and that he was trembling instead because the moment for confronting his grandfather had come.

Lord Julius, indeed, had already opened a massive mahogany door at the right of the stairs, and signaled to him now to follow.

CHAPTER VII

What Christian first perceived about the duke's apartments was that they had an odor quite peculiar to themselves. The series of small and badly lighted anterooms through which he followed Lord Julius—rooms with pallet-beds, clothes hung against the walls, and other somewhat squalid signs of domestic occupation—were full of this curiously distinctive smell. It was not so obvious in the larger and better-lighted chamber beyond, which the doctor in residence had converted to his own uses, and where he sat now reading a book, merely rising momentarily to bow as they passed. But in the next room—the big sleeping apartment, with its faded pretensions of stateliness of appointment, and its huge, high-posted bed, canopied by old curtains embroidered with heraldic devices in tarnished gilt threads—the odor was more powerful than ever, despite the fact that a broad window-door was open upon the balcony beyond. The young man's keen sense was baffled by this pervasive scent—compounded as it seemed

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to be of all the ancient castle's mustiness, of sharp medicinal vapors and of something else at once familiar and unknown. He sniffed inquiringly at it, as they neared the window, and apparently Lord Julius heard him, for he remarked over his shoulder:

"It is the dogs that you smell. They've practically removed the kennel up here."

On the stone floor of the balcony outside there were to be seen, indeed, some dozen old hounds, for the most part lying sleepily in the sunshine, with their heads pointed toward a large, half-covered reclining chair placed near the balustrade, and occasionally opening a drowsy eye to regard its occupant. There were a few dogs of other kinds as well, Christian noted upon a second glance, and one of these, a bulky black creature with a broad snout and hair curled tight like astrakhan fur, sat close to the chair and was thrusting its muzzle against a hand at its side.

This hand was what Christian saw first of his grandfather—an immense limp hand, with thick fingers twisted and misshapen, and skin of an almost greenish pallor. The dog's nose, thrust under it, moved this inert hand about, and the young man felt himself thrill unpleasantly, for some reason, at the spectacle.

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At the further end of the balcony two men in livery lounged against the wall, but upon a signal from Lord Julius they went in. The latter, threading his way among the hounds, led Christian round to the side of the chair.

“This is Ambrose’s boy,” he said, bending a little and raising his voice. “He is Christian, too.”

Upon the chair was stretched, in a half-sitting posture, the gigantic frame of a very old man. The grandson looked upon him in silence for a long time, his mind confused with many impressions. The vast shoulders and high, bullet-like head, propped up by pillows in the partial shadow of the hood, seemed vaguely to recall the vision his baby memory had preserved of his own father. But in detail there was no resemblance. Or yes, there were resemblances, but they were blurred almost beyond recognition by the rough touch of time. The face, with its big, harsh features and bushing brows, and its frame of stiff white whiskers under the jaws and chin, had something in it which for an instant the young man seemed to identify; then the unnatural effect of its uniform yellow-clay color drove all thoughts of its human relationships from his mind, and he saw nothing but a meaningless mask. It

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was as devoid of significance, indeed, as if it had been in a coffin. The eyes were open and they seemed to be fixed upon the distant rolling prospect of hills and forest, but whether they were seeing anything, Christian could not imagine. They certainly had not been turned to include him in their survey. The livid right hand, swaying as the black dog pushed it with its nose, was the only thing about the duke that moved.

"He does not know I am here," said Christian, at last. He spoke instinctively, with the ceremonious affectation of awe which one puts on in the presence of death. His grandfather hardly impressed him as being alive and still less made any appeal to his sense of kinship. He had expected to be overwhelmed with emotion at the meeting, but he found himself barely interested. His wandering glance chanced to take note of some of the dogs' faces about the chair. They were all alertly watching him, and the profoundly wise look in their eyes caught his attention. No doubt they were dreadful fools, if the truth could be known, but the suggestion of cultured sagacity in their gaze was extraordinary. He looked back again at his grandfather, and tried to say to himself that he was a great noble, the head of an ancient and proud line, and the actual

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father of *his* father—but the effort failed to spur his fancy. He turned to Lord Julius and lifted his brows in wearied interrogation.

“Move round in front of him,” counseled the other. “Get yourself in the range of his eyes.”

Christian obeyed, and, flushing a little with self-consciousness, strove to intercept the aged man’s gaze. There was no change upon the ashen face under the hood to tell him whether he had succeeded or not. The impulse to grimace, to wave his arms about, to compel attention by any wild and violent device, forced him to smile in the midst of his perplexed constraint. He stared for a few moments longer at the gaunt, immovable figure—then shrugged his shoulders, and, stepping over a dog or two, made bold to rejoin Lord Julius.

“I do not see that it is of any use,” he said, with annoyance. “If you wish to go, I am quite ready.”

Lord Julius lifted his brows in turn, and looked at his grand-nephew with curiosity. “I said nothing about going, that I recall,” he began, with an effect of reproof in his tone. But then he seemed to think better of it, and gave an abrupt little laugh. “It isn’t very invigorating, I’m bound to admit,”

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he confessed, cheerfully enough. "Wait a moment, and I'll stir him up a bit."

He bent forward again, with his head at the edge of the hood, and shouted into it: "If you want to see Ambrose's boy, here he is! If you don't want to see him, say so, and waste no more of our time!"

To Christian's surprise, the duke took instant cognizance of this remark. His large face brightened, or at least altered its aspect, into something like animation; his eyes emerged from their cover of lethargy, and looked alive.

"My back is very bad to-day," he remarked, in a voice which, though it bore the querulous note of the invalid, was unexpectedly robust in volume. "And I cannot make out whether the numbness is passing down below my knee or not."

Lord Julius nodded, as if confirming to himself some previous suspicion. "I thought as much," he commented in an aside to the young man. "It's merely his endearing little way. Have patience, and we'll draw the badger yet."

He bawled once more into the hood, with an added peremptoriness of tone: "I explained it all to you, hours ago, and I'm sure you understand it perfectly. Christian naturally wished to pay his respects to you,

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but if your back is too bad, why, there's no more to be said—and we'll be off. Good-bye to you!"

"Did I know his mother? Who was his mother? I have no recollection of her." The duke spoke peevishly, twitching his sunken lips in what was plainly an effort to pout them. Christian noted with curiosity that as he surrendered himself to such mental exertion as the talk demanded, the aged man's face grew disagreeably senile in effect. An infinity of gossamer-like wrinkles showed themselves now, covering the entire countenance in a minute network.

"No, you didn't know his mother!" replied Lord Julius, with significant curtness. "It is more to the point that you should know *him*, since he is to be your successor. Look at him—and say something to him!"

The duke managed to testify on his stiffened lineaments the reluctance with which he did what he was told, but he shifted his eyes in a sidelong fashion to take a brief survey of the young man. "Cressage could have given you five stone ten," he said to him, brusquely, and turned his eyes away.

Christian cast a look of bewildered inquiry up at Lord Julius, but encountered only a smile of contemptuous amusement. He summoned the courage to declare, in a voice

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which he hoped was loud enough: "I am glad to hear, sir, that this is one of your good days. I hope you will have many more of them!"

Of this assurance His Grace seemingly took no note. After a short pause he began speaking again. "There's a dog up here," he said, with the gravity befitting a subject to which he had given much thought, "that I'm sure falls asleep, and yelps in her dreams, and disturbs me most damnably, and I believe it's that old bitch Peggy, and when I mention it the fellows swear that she's been taken away, but I suspect that she hasn't."

"We will look to it," put in Lord Julius perfunctorily. He added, upon an afterthought, "Did the guns annoy you, this forenoon?"

The duke's thoughts were upon something else. He turned his eyes again, and apparently spoke to Christian. "A good hearty cut across the face with a whip," he said, with kindling energy, "is what'd teach swine like Griffiths their place—and then let 'em summons you and be damned. A farmer who puts up barbed-wire—no gentleman would listen to his evidence for a minute. Treat them like the vermin they are—and they'll understand that. Cressage had

the proper trick with them—a kick in the stomach first and reasons afterward. That's the only way this country can be hunted. When I got to riding over eighteen stone, and couldn't take anything, that ruffian Griffiths screwed up his gates and sent me round the turnpike like a damned peddler, and Ambrose—it was Ambrose, wasn't it?—or am I thinking of Cressage? But they weren't together—here, Julius! It was you who were speaking of Ambrose! What about him? By God, I wish he had my back!"

Lord Julius, with the smile in his beard hardening toward scorn, took Christian by the arm. "I think you've had enough grandfather to go on with," he said, quietly. "Never mind making your adieux. They would be quite wasted on him."

Without further words, they turned and moved away through the dogs to the window, and so into the house. The doctor, still at his book, rose once more upon their approach, and this time Lord Julius halted to speak with him.

"His Grace seems to ramble in his mind a good deal more than he did before luncheon. Do you see a change in this respect—say week by week?"

"It is not observable in gradations, Lord

Julius," answered the physician, a stout, sandy young man, who assumed his air of deference with considerable awkwardness; "sometimes he recovers a very decided lucidity after what had seemed to be a prolonged lapse in the other direction. But on the whole I should say there was a perceptible—well, loss of faculty. He knows the dogs, however, quite as well as ever—distinguishes them apparently by touch, remembers all their names, and recalls anecdotes about them, and, very often, about their mothers too. Fletcher tells me His Grace hasn't once miscalled a hound."

"They make an abominable atmosphere up here," commented the other.

The doctor smiled lugubriously. "I can't deny that, Lord Julius," he replied, "but all the same they are the most important part of the treatment. If we took them away, His Grace would die within the week."

"Unhappy dogs!" mused Lord Julius, partly to himself, and walked on. It was not until they were half-way down the big staircase that Christian felt impelled to speak.

"I should much like to know," he began, with diffident eagerness—"you have already spoken so plainly about my grandfather—the question will not seem rude to him, I

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hope—but when he was well, before the paralysis, was he in any respect like what he is now?”

“I should say,” answered Lord Julius, in a reflective way, “that he is at present rather less objectionable than formerly. One can make the excuse of illness for him now—and that covers a multitude of sins. But when he was in health—and he had the superb—what shall I say?—riotous health of a whale—he was very hard to bear. You have seen him and you have observed his mental and moral elevation. He remembers his dogs more distinctly than he does his children. In the Almanach de Gotha he is classed among princes, but what he dwells upon most fondly among his public duties is the kicking of tenant-farmers in the stomach when they try to save their crops from being ruined by the hunt. I may tell you, I was in two minds about taking you to him at all, and now I think I regret having done so.”

“No-o,” said Christian, thoughtfully. “It is better as it is. I am glad to have seen him, and to have you tell me about him, frankly, as you have done. It all helps me to understand the position—and it seems that there is a great deal that needs to be understood. I can see already that there is

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strange blood in the Torrs." He paused on the bottom step as he spoke, and turned to his companion with a wistful smile. "There is an even bolder question I should like to ask—how does it happen that *you* are so different? How do you account for yourself?"

Lord Julius laughed. "Oh, that is a long story," he said, "but I can put it into a word for you. I was made by my wife. I married a woman so noble and clever and wise and strong that I couldn't help becoming a decent sort of fellow in spite of myself. But I am going to talk to you about all that, later on. It is better worth talking about than anything else under the sun. Oh—Barlow, please!"

The old butler had passed from one door to another in the hall, and turned now as he was called, with a hand behind him upon the knob. Lord Julius, approaching, exchanged some words with him upon the subject of his afternoon's plans.

Christian, watching this venerable servant with curiosity, as a type novel to his experience, discovered suddenly that his scrutiny was being returned. Barlow, while listening attentively and with decorously slow nods of comprehension to what was being said to him, had his eyes fixed aslant, beyond

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his interlocutor's shoulder, upon the young stranger. Christian encountered this gaze, and saw it waver and flutter aside, as from force of polite habit, and then creep back again. This happened more than once, and Christian began to feel that it had some meaning. He observed that the butler inclined his head at last and whispered something—his pale, wan old face showed it to be an inquiry—into the other's ear. The action explained itself so perfectly that Christian was in no way surprised to see Lord Julius turn smilingly, and nod toward himself.

“Yes, he is Ambrose's son,” he said. “He has come to take his place. I know you for one won't be sorry—eh, Barlow?”

It was clear to the young man's perceptions that Lord Julius spoke as to one who was a friend as well as a servant. The note of patriarchal kindness in the tone appealed gratefully to him, and the affectionate mention of his father's name was sweet in his ears. A strange thrill of emotion, a kind of aimless yet profound yearning, possessed him as he moved forward. On the instant he realized that this was how he had expected to feel in the presence of his grandfather. The fact that the tenderness within him was appealed to instead by this gentle,

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sad-eyed old family dependant seemed to him to have something beautiful and very touching in it. Tears came into his eyes.

“You remember my father, then,” he said, and the breaking of his voice carried him into the heart of this sudden new mood of self-abandonment. “You would have known him as a little child—yes?—and you—you—” he paused, to dash away the tears with his hand, and strive to regain some control over his facial muscles—“you will have in your memory the good things about him—the boyish, pleasant things—and you loved him for them, did you not?”

Old Barlow, trembling greatly, and with a faint flush upon his white cheeks, stared confusedly at the young man as he advanced. “I held him on his first pony, sir,” he stammered forth, and then shook his head in token that he could utter no more. His glistening eyes said the rest.

Christian flung his arms round the surprised old man's neck, and kissed him on both cheeks, and then, with head bowed upon his shoulder, sobbed aloud.

PART II



CHAPTER VIII

The music of a spirited and tireless band of robins helped Christian to wake next morning. The character of their cheerful racket defined itself very slowly to his drowsy consciousness. He lay for a long time with closed eyes, listening to it, and letting his mind drift quite at random among the thoughts which it suggested. He knew they were robins because his hostess had said he would hear them; he lazily pictured to himself the tiny red-breasts gathered in the shrubbery outside, in obedience to some mysterious signal of hers, and singing to order thus briskly and unwearyingly to make good her promise.

In what gay, high spirits the little fellow sang! The sun must be shining, to account for so much happiness. He accepted the idea with a sense of profound pleasure, and appropriated it to his own wonderful case.

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For him, it was as if happiness had never existed before.

“ ‘Wilt thou have music? Hark! Apollo plays,
And twenty caged nightingales do sing.’ ”

He murmured the lines in indolent reverie, then opened his eyes, and smiled to think where he was, and what he had become a part of. Lifting himself on his elbow, he looked about him. The beauties of the apartment had not been lost upon him the previous evening. He had carried them with him in vague processional magnificence on his devious march through dreamland; he surveyed them again now in the morning light, rising after a while to pull aside the curtains, and bring in the full sunshine.

The room was, he said over and over to himself, the most exquisite thing he had ever seen. The ruling color was of some blue which could almost be thought a green, and which embraced as complementary decoration many shades of ocher and soft yellowish browns in woodwork, and in the thick, fleecy rugs underfoot. Around the four sides, at the level of his eyes, ran a continuous band of portraits—the English drawings of Holbein reproduced in the dominant tint of the room, set solidly into the wall, and separated from one another only by thin

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strips of the same tawny oak which framed them at top and bottom. The hooded, high-bosomed ladies, the cavaliers in hats and plumes and pointed beards, the smooth-faced, shrewd-eyed prelates and statesmen in their caps and fur, all knew him this morning for one of their own, as he went along, still in his nightshirt, and inspected them afresh. They appeared to greet him, and he beamed at them in response.

A dim impression of the earlier morning, which had seemed a shadowy passing phase of his dreams, revealed itself now to him as a substantial fact. Some one *had* been in the room, moving noiselessly about, and had spread forth for his use a great variety of articles of clothing and of the toilet, most of which he beheld for the first time. Overnight, his cousin Emanuel's insistence upon his regarding everything in the house as his own for the time being, had had no definite significance to his mind. He looked now through the array of silks and fine cloths, of trinkets in ivory and silver and polished metals, and began dressing himself with a long sigh of delight.

Recollections of the leave-taking at Caermere straggled into his thoughts as he pursued the task. He had seen Lady Cressage again in the conservatory, where she

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wore another dress, and had her beautiful hair carefully arranged as if in his honor, and poured out tea for him and Lord Julius in wonderful little cups which his great-grandfather, a sailor, had brought from China. Of her conversation he recalled little, and still less of the talk of the other lady, the actress-person, Mrs. Edward, who had joined the party, but whose composed pretty face had been too obviously a mask for anguish not to dampen everybody's spirits. He wondered now, as he plied his razor on the strap, what had become of her husband, and of that poor-spirited brother of his. Had they joined the pheasant-shooters, after their interview with him? The temptation to fire upon themselves instead of the birds must have sorely beset them.

But it was pleasanter to begin the retrospect some hours later, when the rough country of the Marches, and even Bristol, had been left behind. Lord Julius had explained to him then, as darkness settled upon the low, pasture-land levels they were swinging along past, that Somerset was also a county of the Torrs; two of their three titles were derived from it, indeed, and Somerset marriages had brought into the family, in the days following the downfall of the monasteries, some of the most important

of its estates. If the dukes had turned their backs on Caermere two centuries ago, and made their principal seat here in this gentler and more equable land, perhaps the family history might have been different. Christian had absorbed the spirit rather than the letter of his companion's remarks. English counties were all one to him, but intuitively he had felt that he was getting into a kindlier and more congenial atmosphere. Although it was a black night, he had stared a good deal at the window, trying to discern some tokens of this change in the dimly lighted, empty stations they glided through, or paused reluctantly in.

When they had finally quitted the train at Bridgewater, and had got under way inside the carriage waiting for them there, Christian had asked whether it was not true that the railway servants here were more courteously obliging than they had been in other parts.

Lord Julius had lightly remarked that it might be so; very likely, however, it was some indirect effect of the general psychical change the family underwent in shifting its territorial base. Then he had gone on more gravely, alluding for the first time to the episode of the butler.

“You must be prepared to find everything

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very different, here," he had said. "There is such a thing as having too much past—especially when it is of the wrong sort. Caermere is as tenacious of its memories as a prison—and they are as unpleasant. It forces upon you its air of never forgetting a single one of its miseries and injuries—and you feel that it cannot remember any compensating joys. I could see how the effect of it got into your blood, and broke your nerve. Under ordinary circumstances men do not kiss their butlers, or even sob on their bosoms. But I understood perfectly how old Barlow appealed to you. As you beheld him he might have stood as model for a statue of the Family Grief, choking down its yearning to wail over the generations gone to the bad. It was all right, what you did. For that matter, I was precious near raising a howl of lamentation myself. One is always alternating between tears and curses in that criminal old coal-mine of a castle. But now you are over a hundred miles away from it all—and if it was a thousand the difference couldn't be greater. You will find nothing whatever to cry about down here. Nobody has any bad dreams. There isn't a cupboard that ever sheltered a skeleton even overnight. In these parts, remarkable as it may seem, the Torrs are

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actually regarded with admiration—quite the salt of the earth—a trifle eccentric, perhaps, but splendid landlords, capable organizers, uncommonly good masters—and above all, happy people who insist that everybody about them shall be happy too. It was important to show you the other side first—at least that was what we decided upon, but you are done with that now—and we'll give you something to take the taste out of your mouth."

Christian recalled these assurances, now, with a delicious sense of being already enfolded and upheld by the processes of their fulfillment. The details of his reception at the broad, hospitably lighted door of Emanuel's house crowded in upon his memory, and merged themselves with other recollections of the later evening hours—the supper, the long, calm, sweetly intimate talk before the fire, the honest, wise, frankly affectionate faces into which he had looked to say "good-night"—it almost overwhelmed him with its weight of unimagined happiness. He had hardly guessed before what other men might mean when they gave a loving sound to the word "home." Yet now the doors of such a home as he could never have dreamed of had opened to him—to him, the homeless, lonely one! and he was nestled

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securely in the warm heart of its welcome. He could have groaned aloud under the burden of his rapture at the thought.

At last he went downstairs, his misgivings about the hour not quite allayed by recollection of the parting injunction to sleep his fill and get up when he liked. There were beautiful things to note and linger over on every side as he made his way—pictures and armor and wonderful inlaid work and tapestries, all subordinating themselves with distinguished good breeding to the fact that they were in a home and not a museum—but he moved along in rather conscience-stricken haste toward the part of the house which had seemed to him the previous night to be the center of domestic life. He formed a sudden resolution, as he explored the lower hallway, that when he got some money his first purchase should be of a watch.

After looking into a couple of rooms which were clearly not what he sought, Christian opened the right door, and confronted a breakfast-table, shining in its snowy attractiveness midway between a window full of sunlight and a brightly tiled chimney-place, with a fire on the hearth. There was no one in the room, and he stood for some minutes looking about him, liking very much the fresh, light-hued cheerfulness of every-

thing, but still wishing that some one would come to pour his coffee. By degrees, he assimilated the idea that the ingredients of breakfast were all here to hand. There were dishes beside the fire, and this was apparently the coffee-pot on the table—a covered urn, with a thin spirit-flame trembling beneath it. He had reached the point of deciding to help himself—or should he ring the bell instead?—when the door opened and the lady of the house came bustling in.

Mrs. Emanuel, as he styled her in his thoughts, looked the very spirit of breakfast—buoyant, gay-hearted and full of the zest of life. Last night, to the young man's diffident though strenuous inspection, she had seemed the embodiment of tender hospitality in general. Though his glances were more confident now, in the brilliant morning light, she still gave the impression of personifying the influences which she made felt about her, rather than exhibiting a specific personal image. She was not tall, nor yet short; her face pleased the eye without suggesting prettiness; she had the dark, clear skin and rounded substance of figure which the mind associates with sedate movements and even languor, but she herself moved, thought, spoke with alert vivacity. Above all things, a mellow motherliness in

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her had struck the forlorn youth the previous evening. Now it seemed much more like the sweet playfulness of a fond elder sister.

“You took me at my word; that’s right,” she said to him, as they shook hands. “I was afraid the man might disturb you, or give you the idea you were expected to get up. And do you feel perfectly rested now? A day or two more will do it, at all events. If I’d known how they were dragging you about, by night and by day! But your Uncle Julius has no knowledge of even the meaning of the word fatigue. Sit here, won’t you—and now here’s bacon for you, and here’s fish taken this very morning, and eggs I’ll ring for to be done as you like them, and how much sugar to your coffee? You mustn’t think this has been boiling ever since morning. It was made when you were heard moving about in your room.”

“I should be so sorry to have kept anybody waiting,” he began, in shy comment upon the discovery that he was eating alone.

She laughed at him with cordial frankness. “Waiting?” she echoed merrily. “Why, it’s about three o’clock. Lord Julius is nearly in London by this time, and the rest of us have not only breakfasted, but lunched.”

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“Lord Julius gone?” he asked with wide-open eyes.

She nodded, and raised a reassuring hand. “It’s nothing but business. Telegrams came early this morning which took him away by the first train. He would have gone later in the day in any case. He left the most fatherly adieux for you—and of course you’ll be seeing him soon in London.”

Christian was puzzled. “But this is his home here, is it not?” he asked.

“Not at all—more’s the pity,” she replied. “We wish for nothing so much as that he might make it so—but he elects instead to be the slave of the family, and to work like a bank-clerk in Brighton instead of cutting himself free and living his own life like the rest of us, in God’s fresh air. But he comes often to us—whenever the rural mood seizes him.” She seemed to comprehend the doubtful expression on the youth’s face, for she added smilingly: “And you mustn’t be frightened to be left alone with us. You’re as much our blood as you are his—and—”

“Oh, don’t think that!” he pleaded impulsively. “I was never so glad to be anywhere in my life as I am to be here.”

Her gray eyes regarded him with kindly softness. He saw that they were only in

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part gray eyes—that they were both blues and browns in their beautiful coloring, and that the outer edge of the iris deepened in tint almost to the black of the splendid lashes. He returned her look, and held it with a tentative smile, that he might the longer observe the remarkable eyes. All at once it flashed upon him that there was a resemblance.

“Your eyes are like my mother’s,” he said, as if in defensive explanation of his scrutiny.

“Tell me about your mother,” she rejoined, putting her arms on the table and resting her chin upon a finger. “I do not think I ever heard her name.”

“It was Coppinger—Mary Coppinger. I never saw the name anywhere else.” He added hesitatingly: “My brother told me that her father was a soldier—an officer—who became in his old age very poor, and was at last a gardener for some rich man at Malta, and my mother gave lessons as a governess to support herself, and it was there she met my father.”

The lady seemed most interested in the name. “Coppinger, is it!” she exclaimed, nodding her head at him. “No wonder my heart warmed at the sight of you. Why, now, to look at you—of course you’re County

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Cork. You're our slender dark type to perfection."

"I am afraid I do not understand," he murmured.

"Why, she could not have that name and be anything but a County Cork woman. Who ever heard of a Coppinger anywhere else? Only it is pronounced with a soft 'g,' not hard, as you speak it. I wonder—but that can wait; her father will be easily enough traced. And so you are an Irishman, too!"

Christian looked abashed at the confusing suggestion. "I think I am all English," he said vaguely.

She laughed again. "Are you turning your back on us? Did you not know it? I also am Irish. No doubt I am some sort of cousin of yours on my own account, as well as on Emanuel's. There are Coppingers in my own family, and in most of those that we have intermarried with. Your mother was a Protestant, of course."

He shook his head apprehensively, as if fearful that his answer must give pain. "No, she went to mass like other people, and I was sent to the Brothers of the Christian School. But she was not in any degree a *dévotee*, and for that matter," he added in a more confident tone, "I myself am still less *dévote*."

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“Ah!” was her only comment, and he quite failed to gather from it any clue to her sentiments on the subject. “Well,” she began again, “I’ll not put you through any more of your catechism now. Are you finished? Then come with me and we will find Emanuel, and incidentally you will see the place—or portions of it. It will take you a long time to see it all. Do you want to smoke? Put some of these cigars in your pocket—or here are cigarettes if you prefer them. Oh, we smoke everywhere. There is nothing on earth that we want to do that we don’t do—and there’s nothing we don’t want to do that any mortal power can make us do. There you have the sum of our philosophy.”

He had followed her into the hallway, where the doors were open wide to the mellow autumn afternoon. He put on the soft shapeless hat she gave him from a collection on the antlers, and was inspired to select a stick for himself out of the big standful at the door.

“Now I shall walk about,” he said, gaily, “quite as if I had never been out of England in my life. Is your husband—perhaps—shooting?”

She seemed always to laugh at him. Her visible merriment at his question dashed his

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spirits for an instant. Then he saw how genial and honest was her mirth, and smiled himself in spontaneous sympathy with it.

“Don’t dream of suggesting it to him!” she adjured the young man, with mock solemnity. “He has a horror of the idea of killing living creatures. He does not even fish for sport—though I confess I hardly follow him to that length. And don’t speak of him in that roundabout way, but call him Emanuel, and call me Kathleen or Kit—whichever comes easiest. Merely because Thom’s directory swears we’re forty years old, we’re not to be made venerable people by you. All happy folk belong to the same generation, no matter when they were born—and—but here is Emanuel now.

“I have been telling Christian,” she continued, addressing her husband as he paused at the foot of the steps, “that he is to be happy here, even in spite of himself.”

Emanuel shook hands with his cousin, and nodded pleased approval of his wife’s remark. His smile, however, was of a fleeting sort. “Nothing has come of the *Ænothera* experiments,” he announced to her in a serious tone. “I’m afraid we must give up the idea of the yellow fuchsia.”

CHAPTER IX

Emanuel Torr, at the age of forty, was felt by those who knew and loved him almost to have justified the very highest of the high hopes which his youth had encouraged. This intimate circle of appreciation was rendered a small one by the circumstances of his temperament and choice of career; but beyond this his name was familiar to many who had never seen him, or who remembered him at best as a stripling, yet who habitually thought and spoke of him as an example and model to his generation.

At Oxford, twenty years before, he had attracted attention of a sort rather peculiar to himself. Those who took note of him saw foreshadowed the promise, not so much of great achievements as of the development and consolidation of a great influence. He was not specially distinguished in his work at the University, and he made no mark at the Union, where there happened at the time to be glittering a quite exceptional galaxy of future front bench men, judges and bishops. In Emanuel's case, the interest he aroused was perhaps more sentimental

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than intellectual. His mind was seen to be of a fine order, but his character was even more attractive to the observant eye. The facts that he was half Jewish in blood, and that in time he would be the possessor of enormous wealth, no doubt lent an added suggestion of romance to the picture of delicate, somewhat coldly modeled features, of ivory skin and serious, musing dark eyes, and of a rare smile of wonderful sweetness, which Oxford men of the mid-seventies still associate with his name. It was in the days when Disraeli's remarkable individuality was a part of England's current history, and when the English imagination, in part from the stimulus of this fact, dwelt upon the possibilities of a new Semitic wave of inspiration and ethical impetus. The dreams, the aspirations, the mysterious "perhaps" of Daniel Deronda were in men's minds, and Johannesburg had not been so much as heard of.

What the University recognized in the youth standing upon the threshold of manhood, had been an article of faith within his home since his childhood. It is as well to recount at this place the brief story of that home.

At the age of twenty-five Lord Julius Torr, engaged in the listless pursuit of that least

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elusive of careers, called diplomacy, found himself at The Hague, and yawned his way about its brightly scrubbed solitudes for some months, until, upon the eve of his resolve to have done with the whole business, and buy a commission in a line regiment, he encountered a young woman who profoundly altered all his plans in life. It was by the merest and unlikeliest of accidents that he came to know the Ascarels, father and daughter, and at the outset his condescension had seemed to him to be involved as well. They were of an old family in the Netherlands, Jewish in race but now for some generations estranged from the synagogue, and reputed to be extraordinarily wealthy. It was said of them too that they were sternly exclusive, but to the brother of an English duke this had not appeared to possess much meaning. He had previously been of some official service to the father, in a matter wherein Dutch and English interests touched each other at Sumatra; from this he came to meet the daughter. He had been told by the proud father that she was of the blood of the immortal Spinoza, and had been so little impressed that he had not gone to the trouble of finding out who Spinoza was.

The marriage of young Torr, of the

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Foreign Office, to some Dutch-Jewish heiress a half-year later, received only a trifle more notice in England than did the news of his retirement from his country's diplomatic service. The duke had already four sons, and the brother, when it seemed that he intended to live abroad, was not at all missed. Nearly fifteen years elapsed before a mature Lord Julius reappeared in England—a Lord Julius whom scarcely any one found recognizable. He bore small visible relation to the aimless and indolent young attaché whom people, by an effort of memory, were able to recall; still less did he resemble anything else that the Torr family, within recollection, had produced. He took a big old house in Russell Square, and in time it became understood that very learned and intellectual people paid pilgrimages thither to sit at the feet of Lady Julius, and learn of her. Smart London rarely saw this Lady Julius save at a distance—in her carriage or at the opera. The impression it preserved of her was of a short, swarthy woman, increasingly stout as years went on, who peered with near-sighted earnestness through a large pince-nez of unusual form. On her side, it seemed doubtful if she had formed even so succinct an impression as this of smart London. She was content

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with Bloomsbury to the end of her days; and made no effort whatever to establish relations with the West End. Indeed, tales came to be told of the effectual resistance she offered, in later years, to amiable interested advances from that quarter. It grew to be believed that she had made an eccentric will, and would leave untold millions to Atheist charities. The rumor that she was among the most highly cultivated women of her time, and that the most illustrious scientists and thinkers would quit the society of kings to travel post-haste across Europe at her bidding, did not, it must regretfully be added, seem incompatible with this theory about a crazy will. Finally, when she died in 1885, something was printed by the papers about her philanthropy, and much was said in private speculation about her disposition of her vast fortune, but it did not come out that any will whatever was proved, and London ceased to think of the matter.

The outer world had in truth been wrong from the beginning. Lady Julius was not a deeply learned woman, and the limited circle of friends she gathered about her contained hardly one distinguished figure, in the popular use of the phrase; her opinions were not notably advanced or unconventional; she did not shun society upon philo-

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sophic principles, but merely because it failed to attract a nature at once shy and practical; so far from being rich in her own right, she had insisted many years before her death upon transferring every penny of her fortune to her husband.

Inside her own household, this dark, stout little woman with the eye-glasses was revered as a kind of angel. She was plain-faced almost to ugliness in the eyes of strangers. Her husband and her son never doubted that she was beautiful. Now, when she had been a memory for ten years and more, these two talked of her lovingly and with no constraint of gloom, as if she were still the pivot round which their daily life turned.

The elder man particularly delighted in dwelling upon the details of that earlier change in him, under her influence, to which allusion has been made. Emanuel had in his mind, from boyhood, no vision more distinct or familiar than this self-painted picture of his father—the idle, indifferent, unschooled, paltry-ideaed young gentleman of fashion—meeting all unawares this overpowering new force, and kneeling in awed yet rapturous submission before it. To the boy's imagination it became a historical scene, as fixed and well known in its

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lines of composition as that of Nelson's death in the cockpit. He saw his beardless father in dandified clothes of the Corn-Laws-caricature period, proceeding along the primrose path of dalliance, like some flippant new Laodicean type of Saul of Tarsus—when "suddenly there shined around him a light from heaven." Lord Julius, indeed, thought and spoke of it in much that same spirit. The recollection that he had not known who Spinoza was tenderly amused him: it was the symbol of his vast oceanic ignorance of all things worth knowing.

"Ah, yes," the son used to say, "but if you had not had within yourself all the right feelings—only lacking the flash to bring them out—you would not have seen how wonderful she was. You would not have understood at all, but just passed on, and nothing would have happened."

And the father, smiling in reverie, and stroking his great beard, would answer: "I don't see that that follows. I remember what I was like quite vividly, and really there was nothing in me to explain the thing at all. I was a young blood about town, positively nothing more. No, Emanuel, we may say what we like, but there are things supernatural—that is, beyond what

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we can see, and are prepared for, in nature. It was as unaccountable as magic, the effect your mother produced upon me from the beginning. At the end of a few hours, when it was time for me to take my leave, and I turned—there was a gulf in front of me, cutting me off from where I had been before I came to her, that very day. It was so wide, it seemed that I could barely see across it.”

To any listener but Emanuel such language must have been extravagant. To him there were no words for overpraise of his mother. It was not alone that he had never seen her in anger or even vexation; that he had never known her to be in error in any judgment, or suspected in her an uncharitable or unkindly thought. These were mere negations, and the memory of her was full of positive influences, all wise and pure and lofty. Very early in life, when he began to look about the world he found himself in, he learned to marvel that there were no other such women anywhere to be seen. She had been so perfect, with seemingly no effort to herself! Why should other women not even try?

Emanuel had been born some ten years after the marriage of his parents, and they thus came into his baby consciousness as

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persons of middle age, in appearance and its suggested authority at least, by comparison with the parents of other children he saw about him. Nowhere else, however, either then or in later years, did he see another home so filled from center to circumference with love, and tender gentleness of eye and word and deed. The perception that this environment was unique colored all his boyhood. It became a habit with him to set in contrast his own charmed existence against the unconsidered and uneven experiences of other children, and to ponder the meaning of the difference. As he grew up, the importance of this question expanded in his mind and took possession of it. He was consumed with the longing to make some effective protest against the peevish folly with which humanity mismanaged its brief innings of life. From the cradle to the grave the race swarmed stupidly along, elbowing and jostling in an aimless bustle, hot and ill-tempered through exertions which had no purpose; trampling down all weaker than themselves and cursing those who, in turn, had the strength to push them under; coming wearily at the end to the gate and the outer darkness of extinction, a futile and disappointed mob—having seen nothing, comprehended nothing, profited nothing.

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The progress of a generation across the span of life might be made so serene and well-ordered and fruitful an affair! What else had man to concern himself about than this one thing—that “peace on earth, good will to men,” should rule in his time? And how was it that this alone, of all possible problems, received from him no attention at all?

The impulse toward a mission was discernible in the lad; it altogether dominated the young man. His parents, regarding him lovingly and yet with wise inquiry, were fascinated by what they saw. A sense of lofty responsibility in their trusteeship for this beneficent new force formed a fresh bond between them, which grew to absorb within itself all their other ties. They came to regard themselves in no other light than as the parents of Emanuel. To preserve him from vitiating and stunting suggestions; richly to nourish, yet with an anxious avoidance of surfeit, both the soul and the mind within him; to give him strength and means and single-hearted courage adequate to the task he yearned to undertake—they asked nothing better of life than this.

After Oxford, he went abroad for a couple of years, having as a companion a young

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Fellow of Swithin's, a trifle older than himself, who shared his moral attitude if not his passionate aspirations. He saw many parts of the world, and scrutinized closely in each the working of those portions of the social mechanism which interested him. Returning with a mass of notes and a mind packed with impressions and theories, he set to work to write a big book. At the end of a year he produced instead a small volume, dealing with one little phase of the huge, complex theme he had at heart. It was a treatise on the relations between parents and children, and it received very favorable reviews indeed. University men felt that it was what they had had the foresight to expect from this serious and high-minded young fellow, who was lucky enough to have the means and leisure for ethical essay-writing. Evidently he was going in for that sort of thing, and they noted with approbation that he had been at great pains with his style. Much to Emanuel's surprise, only some three hundred copies of the work were sold; upon reflection, he saw that it was no part of his plan to sell books, and he forthwith distributed the remainder of the edition, and another edition as well, among the libraries of the Three Kingdoms. Within the next three years two other brochures

went through much the same experiences. They treated respectively of primary education and of public amusements. Again the reviews were extremely cordial; again the men who had always predicted that Torr would do something regarded their prophetic intuition with refreshed complacency; again Emanuel drew considerable checks in favor of his publisher. What had been hinted at rather vaguely heretofore was now, however, announced with confidence in "literary" columns: these small volumes were merely chapters of a vast and comprehensive work to which the author had dedicated his life—the laborious exposition of a whole new philosophy of existence, to be as complete in its way as Herbert Spencer's noble survey of mankind.

Not long after came the death of Emanuel's mother—an unlooked-for event which altered everything in the world to the bereaved couple left behind. They went away together in the following month, with a plan of a prolonged tour in the Orient, but came back to England after a few weeks' absence, having found their proposed distraction intolerable. Lord Julius promptly invented for his own relief the device of taking over upon himself the drudgery of caring for his millions, which heretofore had been

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divided among a banker, a broker, a solicitor and two secretaries. Emanuel saw his way less directly, but at last he found the will to begin a tentative experiment with some of his theories of life on a Somersetshire farm which his father gave him. The work speedily engrossed him, and expanded under his hands. He became conscious of growth within himself as well. The conviction that life is a thing not to be written about, but to be lived, formulated itself in his mind, and he elaborated this new view in an argument which persuaded his father. The Somersetshire estates of the family, which had been bought by Lord Julius in 1859, when the duke and his son Porlock joined to set aside the entail, were placed now unreservedly at Emanuel's disposal. What he did with them is to be seen later on.

At the moment, it was of the first importance that he should decide for himself the great question of celibacy v. marriage. The far-reaching projects which possessed his brain would, beyond doubt, be multiplied infinitely in value if precisely the right woman were brought in to share his enthusiasm and devotion. It was no whit less clear that they would dwindle into failure and collapse under the blight of the wrong woman. The dimensions of the risk so

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impressed him, as he studied them, that for more than two years he believed himself to be irrevocably committed to the cold middle course of bachelorhood.

Then, by a remarkable stroke of good fortune, he met, fell in love with and married the sister of Lord Rosbrin, a young Irish peer whom he had known at Oxford. No one has ever doubted, he least of all, that she was the right woman.

He wrote no more books, in the years following this event, but gradually he became the cause of writing in others. A review article upon the character and aims of his experiment in Somersetshire, written in an appreciative spirit by an economist of position, attracted so much attention that the intrusion of curious strangers and inquisitive reporters threatened to be a nuisance. After this, his name was always mentioned as that of an authority, when sociological problems were discussed. There was even a certain flurry of inquiry for his books, though this did not turn out to have warranted the printing of the new popular edition. Sundry precepts in them became, however, the stock phrases of leader-writers. People of culture grew convinced that they were familiar with his works, and only a few months before the period at which we meet him, his university

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had conferred upon him an honorary D.C.L., which gratified him more deeply than any other recognition his labors and attainments had ever received.

CHAPTER X

Christian, observing his celebrated cousin by daylight for the first time, perceived the necessity of revising some of the previous night's impressions.

Under the illumination of the shaded lamp and the glowing bank of peat on the study hearth, Emanuel in his velvet jacket and slippered ease had seemed a delicately refined creature, of so ethereal a type that life for it outside the atmosphere of books, and of a library's thought and talk, would be unnatural, or even impossible. With his back to the afternoon sunshine, however, and with rough, light clothes suggesting fresh-air exercise, Emanuel was a different person.

In stature he was a trifle taller than Christian; perhaps he was also something heavier, but what the newcomer noted most about the figure was the wiry vigor of muscular energy indicated in all its lines and movements. There was apparent no trace of any physical resemblance to his father, the massive Lord Julius, and Christian, as this

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fact occurred to him, remembered what he had heard about the race from which the mother had come. He could not say that Emanuel's face was like anything which he had thought of as distinctively Jewish. The forehead was both broad and prominent, and at the top, where early baldness exposed the conformation of the skull, there were curious sutural irregularities of surface which attracted attention. The rest of the face was indefinably distinguished in effect, but not so remarkable. Christian thought now that it was a more virile countenance than he had imagined it to be. Vague suggestions of the scholarly dreamer flitted through its expressions now and again, but it was still above all things the face of a man of action.

Christian had said to himself, in that crowded instant of analysis, that he had never seen any Jewish face which at all resembled this of his cousin's. Yet somewhere he had seen a face so like it!—the memory puzzled and absorbed his mind. The same crisping, silky black-brown hair; the same full line of brow and nose; the same wide-open dark eyes, intently comprehending in their steady gaze—how strangely familiar they were to him! He saw them again in his mind's eye, and they had the same shadow-casting background of sun-

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light—only as he looked at the mental picture, this sunlight was fiercer and hotter, and there was a golden, hazy distance of purple-blue sea. Suddenly he laughed aloud, and his brain was alive with recollections.

“I never recognized you last night,” he declared. “Is it not strange that I should have been so blind? But seeing you in the sunlight—ah, I remember you well enough.”

Emanuel smiled too, a little awkwardly. “Of course I was not making any secret of it,” he said. “It would have come up naturally, sooner or later, in the course of talk.”

But Christian had turned to the lady, and was speaking with gay animation. “He it is whom I have so often thought of, for years now, as the ‘mysterious stranger’ of my poor little romance. How long is it ago? Oh, ten years perhaps, since I saw him first. It was at Toulon, and I was walking along the quai in the late afternoon, and he stopped me to ask some question, and we fell to walking together and talking—at first about the old town, then of myself, because he wished it so. A long time passed, and lo! I saw him again. This time he came into Salvator’s little shop at Cannes—it was in the Rue d’Oran—and I was alone, and we talked again—it seems to me for more than

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an hour. And I wondered always who he could be—because he made me feel that he had friendly thoughts about me. And then, once more—it was a year ago last summer—he met me again, and came and sat beside me on a seat in the Jardin Public, at Nice. It must have been in June, for the season was ended, and it surprised me that he should be there.”

“Oh, yes, I know all about it,” put in Kathleen. “He told me of his seeing you, and what he thought of you, almost as soon as your back was turned. But at that time, of course—things hadn’t happened.”

“Ah, but he wanted to be kind to me, even then,” the young man broke forth, with a glow in his eyes. “I felt that in his tone, the very first time, when I was the young boy at school. Oh, I puzzled my brain very often about this young English gentleman who liked to talk to me. And here is a curious thing, that when the Crédit Lyonnais gave me my summons to come to England, it was of him that I thought first of all, and wondered if he had not some part in it. And then I was so dull—I come to his own house, and sit at his own table with him as my cousin, and do not know him at all! It is true that he had no beard then—but none the less I am ashamed.” He

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spread his hands out and smiled a deprecatory gesture at them both as he added: "But then everything has been upside down in my mind since I came to England. It has been as if I were going up the side of a straight cliff in a funicular railway—my heart throbbing in terror, my brain whirling—afraid to look down, or out, or to realize where I was. But to-day I am happily at the end of the journey, and the good safe ground is well under my feet—and so I am not confused any more, but only very, very glad."

The elder couple exchanged a frankly delighted smile over the enthusiast's head. "You take him for a stroll about the place," said the wife. "Perhaps I will come and find you, later on."

In obedience to the suggestion, the two men turned, and went off together across the lawn.

Emanuel began speaking at once. "My father," he said, "has given me a rough outline of what you have seen and heard. In the nature of things, it could not all be pleasant."

"Oh, I have quite forgotten the unhappy parts," the young man declared. "I resolved to do that; it would be folly to remember them."

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“They have their uses, though,” persisted the other. “I wanted you to start out with just that impression of the family’s seamy side. We have an immense deal to make up to the people about us, and to humanity in general, have we Torrs. It seemed to me that you could not realize this too early in your experience here. What impressions did Caermere itself make upon you?”

Christian hesitated a little, to give form to his thoughts. “I am imagining it in my mind,” he said at last, slowly, and with extended hands to shape his meaning to the eye, “as a huge canvas, one of the very biggest. As it happens, there is an unpleasant picture on it now, but that can be wiped out, covered over, and then on the vast blank surface a new and splendid picture may be painted—if I have the skill to do it.” He paused, as his companion nodded comprehension of the figure, and then added abruptly: “I have not put the question direct before—but it is really the case that I am to succeed my grandfather—to be duke of Glastonbury, is it not?”

“Yes,” answered Emanuel, gravely. “That is the case.”

“Lord Julius told me to ask you everything,” Christian went on, in defense of his curiosity. “But, grand Dieu! there is

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so much to ask! Shall I be a rich man, also? There are dukes in France who can scarcely give a dinner to a friend—and in Italy who are often in doubt about even their own dinners. I understand that English dukes are different—but it has been said to me that my grandfather, for example, is not a rich man. He would be rich, no doubt, in some other station, but as a duke he is poor. Shall I also be poor?"

Emanuel smiled, more, it seemed, to himself than for the benefit of the young man. With amusing deliberation he took from his pocket a little oblong book with flexible covers. "Have you ever owned a check-book?" he asked drily.

Christian shook his head.

"Well, this is yours. It came from London this morning. I have written here on the back of the first check, on the part that remains in the book, these figures. They show what the bank holds at your disposal at the present moment."

Christian took the book, and stared with awe at the figures indicated. "Three thousand pounds! That is to say, seventy-five thousand francs! But—I do not understand. What portion is this of my entire fortune? There is more besides—to come at some future period—*n'est ce pas?*"

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The sum itself had seemed at first glance to be of bewildering dimensions. Soberer second thoughts, however, told him that he had been lifted into a social stratum where such an amount might easily come and go a number of times during one's life.

"Well," Emanuel began, hesitating in turn over his phrases, "strictly speaking, you have no fortune at all. This money has been placed to your credit by my father—or if you like, by us both—to put you in a position of independence for the time being. You are quite free to spend it as you like. But—this is a somewhat delicate matter to explain—but we look to you in turn to be more or less guided by us in, say, your mode of life, your choice of associates and—and so on. Don't think that we wish in the least to hamper your individual freedom. I am sure you will feel that that is not our way. But we have formed very high hopes indeed for your career and—how shall I make you understand?—it rests a good deal with us to say how far the realization of these hopes warrants us in going on. That isn't plain to you, I see. Well, to put it frankly, you have nothing of your own, but we turn our money over to you because we believe in you. If unhappily—let us suppose the very improbable case—we should find ourselves no

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longer believing in you, why then we should feel free to reconsider our financial responsibilities towards you. That is stating it very baldly—not at all as I should like to have put it—but it gives you the essence of the situation.”

They had paused, and Christian regarded him with a troubled face. “Then if you come not to like me, or if I make mistakes, you take everything away from me again? I have never heard of a system like that. It seems to place me in a very strange position.”

The youth’s mobile countenance expressed such wistful dejection, as he faltered out these words, that Emanuel hastened to reassure him.

“No, no,” he urged, putting a brotherly hand on his shoulder, “it is the fault entirely of the way I explained it. No one will ever take anything away from you. In all human probability you will live and die a wealthy and powerful nobleman—and perhaps something a good deal more than that. But let me show you the situation in another way. You have seen your grandfather—so I need say little about him. When he had reached the age of fifty or thereabouts he had come to the end of his resources. Since the estates were entailed, nothing could be sold or mortgaged, and debts of all sorts were

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crowding in upon him and his eldest son, Lord Porlock. They were at their wits' end to keep going at all; Porlock could not hold his head up in London, much less marry, as he was expected to do. If it had not been for the invention of life insurance, they could hardly have found money to live from week to week. That was in 1858 or '9, when I was two or three years old. It was then that my father adopted his policy toward the older branch of the family. As you perhaps know, he was a very rich man. He came forward at this juncture, and saved the duke and his household from ruin."

"That was very noble of him. It is what I should have thought he would do," interposed Christian. They had begun walking again.

"Oh, I don't know that noble is quite the word," said Emanuel. "The element of generosity was not very conspicuous in the transaction. The truth is that the duke and his son were not people that one could be generous to. They had to be bound to a hard-and-fast bargain. They agreed between them to break the entail, so that all the estates could be dealt with as was deemed best, and bound themselves to sell or mortgage nothing except to my father, unless with his consent. He on his side

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settled seventy thousand pounds on Porlock and his heirs, thus enabling him to marry, and he not only purchased from the duke the Somerset properties, of which this is a part, but he bought up his debts at the sacrifice of a good many thousands of pounds, so that in practice he became his brother's only creditor. No doubt there *was* generosity in that—since he cut down the rate of interest to something almost nominal by comparison with the usury that had been going on—but his motive was practical enough. It was to get complete financial mastery of the family estates. Nearly forty years have passed since he began; to-day he holds mortgages on practically every acre. If it were not for the mine near Coalbrook, which latterly yields the duke a certain surplus over the outlay at Caermere, my father would probably own it all outright. Well, you have followed it so far, haven't you?"

Christian thoughtfully nodded his head. "These are not affairs that I have been brought up to understand," he commented, "but I think I comprehend. Only this—you speak of your father's adopted policy; that means he has a purpose—an aim. The lady at the castle—Lady Cressage—spoke to me about this, and I wish—"

"Ah, yes, you met her," interposed

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Emanuel. "I am not sure she was the best fitted to expound our policy to you."

"Oh, she was very sympathetic," the young man hastened to insist. "She had the warmest praises for both you and your father. And I could not but feel she wished me well, too."

Emanuel made no immediate reply, but walked slowly along, revolving silent thoughts, with a far-away, deliberative look in his eyes. When he spoke at last, it was to revert with abruptness to the earlier topic. "The policy, as we are calling it," he said, "can be put in a nutshell. We take that kind of pride in the family which impels us to resolve that, if we cannot induce it to do great things, we will at least prevent it doing base things. The position which your grandfather inherited was one of remarkable opportunities, and also of exceptional responsibilities. He was unfit to do anything with the opportunities, and as for the responsibilities, he regarded them with only ignorant contempt. His immediate heirs were very little better. It became a problem with us, therefore, how best to limit their power for harm. Money was the one force they could understand and respect, and we have used it accordingly. I say 'we' because as the situation has gradually developed itself, it

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is hard to say which part of it is my father's and which mine—and still more impossible to imagine what either of us would have done independently of my mother. I will tell you more about her sometime. It was she, of course, who brought the money to us, but she brought much else besides. However, we will not enter upon that at the moment. Well, suddenly, last summer, the deaths changed everything. Up to that time, what we had been doing had had, so to speak, only a negative purpose. We had been keeping unfit people from parading their unfitness in too scandalously public a fashion. But all at once the possibility of doing something positive—something which might be very fine indeed—was opened up before us. As you know now, we were aware of your existence, but there were inquiries to be made as to—well, as to the formal validity of your claim. After that, there was some slight delay in tracing your whereabouts—but now you are here, at last.”

“Now I am here, at last!” Christian repeated softly. He looked up into the sky; somewhere from the blue an invisible lark filled the air with its bubbling song. He drew a long breath of amazed content, then turned to his companion.

“That men like you and your father should

be making plans and sacrifices for one like myself," he said—"it is hard for me to realize it. There is nothing for me to say but this—that I will spare no thought or labor to be what you want me to be. And you will make it all clear to me, will you not? in every detail what it is I am to do?"

"Oh, hardly to that length," said Emanuel. He smiled once more—that grave, sweet, introspective smile of his, which suggested humor as little as it did flippancy—and spoke more freely, as if conscious that the irksome part of his task lay behind him. "We dream a great dream of you, but it would be folly to attempt to dictate to you at every stage of its realization. That would do you more harm than good, and it would be unfair to both parties, into the bargain. No, what I desire is to show you the practical workings of a system, and to fill you with the principles and spirit of that system. I think it will interest you deeply, and I hope you will see your way to making it, in its essentials at least, your own. It has taken me many years to build it up, and I can't pretend to suppose that you will grasp it in a week or a year. But you will see at least the aim I have in view, and you will get a notion of how I progress toward it. I shall be satisfied, for the time being, merely

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to commend it to your judgment as the aim which you might do well to set before you.— It occurs to me to ask you: have you decided opinions in politics?”

Christian shrugged his shoulders diffidently. “In France my friends were of many parties, but since I thought never of myself as a Frenchman, I did not take sides with any of them. My brother Salvator is very advanced indeed; he is a Free Mason, and his friends are Carbonari in Italy and Socialists in France. But to me, these things had not much meaning. I said always to myself that I was English, and I read journals from London when I could, to learn about English parties. But it was not easy to learn. I stood in the streets often at Cannes in the early spring to see Mr. Gladstone when he passed, and to take off my hat to him, because I read that he was the greatest Englishman. But then I talked with English people on the Riviera about him, and they all cursed and ridiculed him, and told me that in England no respectable people would so much as speak to him. So it is very hard to know the truth—when you are born and bred in another country.”

“Even those who are born here do not invariably agree upon definitions of the truth,” commented Emanuel. “But I was

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not speaking of parties or politicians, so called. Politics, in its bigger sense, means the housekeeping of humanity—the whole mass of interests that the individuals of the human race have in common. But I don't want to generalize to you. Let us stop here for a few minutes; I have brought you to this point that you may get the view."

Their leisurely stroll through pastures and meadows, and latterly across a strip of grassy common dotted with sheep, had brought them by a gradual ascent to the summit of a knoll, crowned by a group of picturesquely gnarled and twisted old trees, the boughs of which were all pointed backward in the direction whence the men had come. Christian, coming to the ridge and halting, confronted the unexpected breeze, steady and sustained as an ocean swell, which he could hear murmuring through the land-ward bent branches overhead. In front of him, at the distance of a stone's throw, the sloping heath abruptly ended in what for the instant he supposed was the sky-line—and then saw to be a vast glittering expanse of water, stretching off to an illimitable horizon.

"Oh, the sea!" he cried out, in surprised delight. "I had never dreamed that we were near it."

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He could distinguish now the faint intermittent rustle of the waves on the hidden beach far below. Perhaps a mile out the profile of a craft under full sail shone magically white in the sunlight. He knew it to be a yacht, and began watching it with an intuitive appreciation of its beauty of line and carriage. Then in a sudden impulse he swung around and faced his companion. "I do not like to look at it," he broke out nervously. "I am afraid to see the ghosts of those cousins who were drowned—killed to make room for me. Where their yacht went down on the rocks—was that close by here?"

"At least sixty miles away—in that direction," and Emanuel gave an indifferent nod towards the west. "I wouldn't encourage ghosts of any sort, if I were you, but theirs would be least of all worth while. I wanted you to look about you from here—not specially seaward, but in all directions. There is a small village at the water's edge, almost directly under our feet, which can't be seen from above—we will get round to it, perhaps to-morrow—but look in other directions. As far as you can see along the coast to right and left—and inland, too—the system I spoke of is in operation. It is all my land. Get the scope of it into your mind.

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Roughly speaking, you can see over some nine or ten thousand acres. Imagine that multiplied by seven or eight, and you will have an idea of the territory that your grandfather still owns—at least nominally.”

Christian kept a rapt gaze upon the prospect, and strove in silence to grasp the meaning of the words.

“On the land that you see before you,” Emanuel went on, “in one capacity or another, nearly two thousand human beings have homes. On your grandfather’s estates there must be nearly if not quite ten times that number. Think what this means. You will be in a position to affect the prosperity, the happiness, the well-being, body and soul, of fifteen or twenty thousand people. It is a little nation—a small kingdom—of which you will be the head.”

The young man turned slowly and forced himself to look out upon the deep, but still said nothing.

“This position you may make much of, or little, or worse than nothing at all,” the other continued. “It is a simple enough matter to put the work and the responsibility upon other shoulders, if you choose to do it. Many very respectable men born to such positions do wash their hands of the worry and labor in just that fashion. They

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lead idle lives, they amuse themselves, they take all that is yielded to them and give nothing in return—and because they avoid open grossness and scandal their behavior attracts no particular attention. In fact, it is quite taken for granted that they have done the natural thing. Being born to leisure, why should they toil? Possessing the title to wealth and dominion and the deference of those about them, why should they be expected to go to work and earn these things which they already own? That is the public view. Mine is very different. I hold that a man who has been born to a position of power among his fellows, and neglects the duties of that position while he accepts its rewards, is disgraced. It is as dishonest as any action for which less fortunate persons go to prison.”

“Yes, that is my feeling, also,” said Christian in low, earnest tones. “It’s all true—but—”

“Ah, yes, the ‘But,’ ” commented Emanuel, with his perceptive smile. “Now let me explain to you that I have met this ‘But,’ and done battle with it, and put it under my feet. I began planning for this struggle when I was very young. All the good people I knew admitted frankly the evils I speak of; they saw them quite clearly, and

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talked with eloquence and fine feeling about them, and at the finish they said 'But!'—and changed the subject, and everything went on as before. It became apparent to me that this eternal 'But' is the enemy of the human race. There it stood forever in the path, blocking every attempt of benevolent and right-minded people to advance in real progress. So I said: at least one life shall be given to the task of proving that there need be no 'But.' I have been working here now for years, upon lines which were carefully thought out during other years of preparation. The results are in most respects better than I could have expected; they are certainly many-fold better than any one who had not my faith could have believed possible. Sundry limitations in the system I have, no doubt, discovered. Some things which seemed axiomatic on paper do not work themselves out the same way in practice—but as a whole the system is recognized now as having justified itself. There was an article in the 'Fortnightly' on it last November which I will give you to read. I have written some chapters upon certain phases of it, myself, which you might also look at. But the principal thing is that you should see the system itself in full operation."

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“I am eager to begin,” declared the young man, with fervor.

They had turned by tacit consent, and were sauntering back again over the short, soft grass of the heath.

Emanuel paused and picked from a furze-bush a belated spray of bright yellow blossoms. As he continued his walk, he pulled one of these flowers to pieces, and attentively examined the fragments.

“I gather that you are much interested in flowers,” said Christian, to make conversation.

The other laughed briefly, as he threw the stuff aside, then sighed a little. “Too much so,” he answered. “I wish I had the courage to give it up altogether. It murders my work. I spend sometimes whole hours in my greenhouses when I ought to be doing other things. The worst of it is that I realize perfectly the criminal waste of time—and still I persist in it. There is something quite mysterious in plants—especially if you have grown them yourself. You can go and stand among them by the hour, and look from one to another, with your mind entirely closed to thoughts of any description. I used to assume that this mental rest had a recuperative value, but as I get older I suspect that it is a kind of lethargy instead

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—a mere blankness that can grow upon one. I find myself, for example, going incessantly to see certain pans of my own hybridized seedlings—and staring aimlessly at them till I get quite empty-headed. Now, I am too busy a man to be able to afford that.”

“But if you get pleasure from it,” expostulated Christian, gently.

“We have no right to think of our pleasure,” Emanuel asserted with decision, “while any duty remains unperformed. And rightly considered, duty *is* pleasure, the very highest and noblest pleasure. The trouble is that even while our minds quite recognize this, our senses play us tricks. For example, when I saw how much time I was wasting on flowers, I tried to turn the impulse into a useful channel. The blossoms of fruit trees, for instance; the growth and flowering and seeding processes of melons and broad-beans and potatoes and so on, are just as interesting and worthy of study, and they mean value to humanity into the bargain. So I said I would concentrate my attention upon them, instead—but there was some perverse element in me somewhere; I couldn’t do it. The mere knowledge that these excellent vegetables were of practical utility threw me off altogether. They bored

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me—so I went shamefacedly back to the roses and fuchsias and dahlias.”

“They have wonderful dahlias at Caermere,” interposed Christian. “I walked for a long time among them with Lady Cressage, and she told me all their names. Poor lady, she is very sad, in spite of the flowers. I—I think I should like to say it to you—I find myself very sorry for her. And—such a bewildering number of things are to be done for me—is there not something that can be done for her?”

Emanuel walked slowly on in silence for some moments, regarding his companion’s profile out of the corner of his eye, his own face showing signs of preoccupation meantime. When at last he spoke, the question seemed to have lost itself in convolution of his thoughts.

“Considering their northern exposure,” he said meditatively, “they grow an extraordinary amount of fruit at Caermere.”

CHAPTER XI

At the end of a fortnight Christian found himself able to confront the system, and even look it in the face, with a certain degree of mental composure. He was far from imagining that he had comprehended it all, but the thought of it no longer made his brain whirl by the magnitude of its scope, or frightened him by its daring. The implication that he was expected to do still more with it than Emanuel, its inventor and evangel, had done, possessed its terrors, no doubt, but one is not young for nothing. The buoyancy of youth, expanding genially amid these delightful surroundings, thrust these shadows off into the indefinite future, whenever they approached.

This system need not detain us long, or unnerve us at all. Lord Julius had spoken figuratively of it as the Pursuit of Happiness; perhaps that remains its best definition.

Like other systems, it was capable of explanation by means of formulas; but the most lucid and painstaking presentation of these could not hope to convey complete

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meaning to the mind. Stated in words, Emanuel's plan hardly appealed to the imagination. Save for a few innovations, not of primary importance, it proceeded by arguments entirely familiar to everybody, and which indeed none disputes. Most of its propositions were the commonplaces of human speech and thought. The value of purity, of cheerfulness, of loyalty, of mercy—this is not gainsaid by any one. The conception of duty as the mainspring of human action is very old indeed. For this reason, doubtless, Emanuel's efforts to expound his System by means of books had failed to rivet public attention. He could only insist afresh upon what was universally conceded, and Mr. Tupper before him had done enough of this to last several generations.

Viewed in operation, however, the System was another matter. Our immemorial platitudes, once clothed in flesh and blood, informed with life, and set in motion under the sympathetic control of a master mind, became unrecognizable.

Emanuel as a lad had thought much of the fact that he was of the blood of the Spinozas. When he learned Latin in his early boyhood, the task was sweetened and ennobled to his mind by the knowledge that

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it would bring him into communion with the actual words of the great man, his kinsman. Later, when he approached with veneration the study of these words, the discovery that they meant little or nothing to him was almost crushing in its effects. Eventually it dawned upon his brain that the philosopher's abstractions and speculations were as froth on the top of the water; the great fact was the man himself—the serene, lofty, beautiful character which shines out at us from its squalid setting like a flawless gem. To be like Spinoza, but to give his mind to the real rather than the unreal, shaped itself as the goal of his ambitions.

It was at this period that he became impressed by the thought that he was also of the blood of the Torrs. On the one side the poor lens-grinder with the soul of an archangel; on the other the line of dull-browed, heavy-handed dukes, with a soul of any sort discoverable among them nowhere. Slowly the significance of the conjunction revealed itself to him. To take up the long-neglected burden of responsibilities and possibilities of the Torrs, with the courage and pure spirit of a Spinoza—there lay the duty of his life, plainly marked before him.

Ensuing years of reading, travel and reflection gave him the frame, so to speak,

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in which to put this picture. He had from his childhood been greatly attracted by the glimpses which his father's library gave him of what is called the Mediæval period. As he grew older, this taste became a passion. Where predilection ended and persuasion began, it would be hard to say, but when he had arrived at man's estate, and stood upon the threshold of his life-work, it was with the deeply rooted conviction that the feudal stage had offered mankind its greatest opportunities for happiness and the higher life. That the opportunities had been misunderstood, wasted, thrown away, proved nothing against the soundness of his theory. He had masses of statistics as to wages, rent-rolls, endowments and the like at his fingers' ends, to show that even on its reverse side, the mediæval shield was not so black as it was painted. As for the other side—it was the age of the cathedrals, of the Book of Kells, of the great mendicant orders, of the saintly and knightly ideals. It was in its flowering time that craftsmanship attained its highest point, and the great artisan guilds, proud of their talents and afraid of nothing but the reproach of work ill-done, gave the world its magnificent possessions among the applied arts. Sovereigns and princes vied with one another

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to do honor to the noblest forms of art, and to bow to the intellect of an Erasmus, who had not even the name of a father to bear. Class caste was the rule of the earth, yet the son of a peasant like Luther could force himself to the top, and compel emperors to listen to him, more readily then than now. The bishop-princes of feudal England were as often as not the sons of swineherds or starveling clerks, whereas now no such thing could conceivably happen to the hierarchy. Above all things, it was the age of human character. Men like Thomas More, with their bewildering circle of attainments and their extraordinary individual force, were familiar products. In a thousand other directions, Emanuel saw convincing proofs that mankind then and there had come closest to the possibilities of a golden age. True, it had wandered off miserably again, into all manner of blind lanes and morasses, until it floundered now in a veritable Dismal Swamp of individualism, menaced on the one side by the millionaire slave-hunter, on the other by the spectral anarchist, and still the fools in its ranks cried out ceaselessly for further progress. Oh, blind leaders of the blind!

No. Emanuel saw clearly that humanity

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could right itself by retracing its steps, and going back to the scene of its mistaken choice of roads. It had taken the wrong turning when it forsook the path of coherent and interdependent organization—that marvelously intricate yet perfectly logical system called feudalism, in which everybody from king to serf had service to render and service to receive, and mutual duty was the law of the entire mechanism.

Though Christian heard much more than this, enough has been said to indicate the spirit in which Emanuel had embarked upon the realization of his plan. The results, as Christian wonderingly observed them, were remarkable.

The estate over which the System reigned was compact in shape, and enjoyed the advantage of natural boundaries, either of waste moorland or estuaries, which shut it off from the outside world, and simplified the problem of developing its individual character. In area it comprised nearly fifteen square miles, and upon it, as has been said, lived some two thousand people. About half of these were employed in, or dependent upon, the industrial occupations Emanuel had introduced; the others were more directly connected with the soil. Whether artisans or farmers, however, they lived

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almost without exception in some one of the six little villages on the property.

In each of these hamlets there were conserved one or more old timbered houses; the newer cottages had been built, not in servile imitation of these, but after equally old models, no two quite alike. As the "Fortnightly Review" article said, if the System had done nothing else it had "gathered for the instruction and delight of the intelligent observer almost a complete collection of examples of early English domestic architecture of the humbler sort." The numerous roads upon the estate were kept in perfect order, and were for the most part lined with trees; where they passed through the villages they were of great width, with broad expanses of turf, shaded by big oaks or elms, some of which had been moved from other spots only a few years before, to the admiring surprise of the neighborhood. Each village had a small church edifice of its own, quaintly towered and beautiful in form, and either possessing or simulating skillfully the graces of antiquity as well. Beside the church was a building presenting some one or another type of the tolsey-house of old English towns, devoted to the communal uses of the villagers. About the church and the tolsey was the public garden and common,

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with a playground with swings and bars for the children at the back—and there was no grave or tombstone in sight anywhere. A hospitable, ivy-clad, low-gabled inn, with its long side to the street, was a conspicuous feature on each village green.

Christian retained a vivid recollection of entering one of these taverns with Emanuel, very early in his tour of observation. Above the broad, open door, as they went in, swung the cumbrous, brightly painted sign of "The Torr Arms." Two or three laborers in corduroys were seated on benches at the table, with tankards before them; they dragged their heavily shod feet together on the sanded floor, and stood up, when they saw Emanuel, touching their hats with an air of affectionate humility as he smiled and nodded to them. There was a seemingly intelligent and capable landlady in the bar, who drew the two glasses of beer which Emanuel asked for, and answered cheerfully the questions he put to her. Two bright-faced young women, very neatly dressed, were seated sewing in this commodious bar, and they joined in the conversation which Emanuel raised. Christian gathered from what he heard and saw that his cousin took an active interest in the fortunes of this tavern and of both its inmates and its

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patrons, and that the interest and liking were warmly reciprocated. The discovery gave him a more genial conception of Emanuel's character than he had hitherto entertained.

“That is one of my most satisfactory enterprises,” Emanuel had said when they came out. “We brew our own beer, as well as the few cordials which take the place of spirits, and I really feel sure it's the best beer obtainable in England. I am very proud of it—but I am proud of these taverns of ours too. That was one of the hardest problems to be solved—but the solution satisfies me better, perhaps, than anything else I have done. Nobody ever dreams of getting drunk in these ‘pubs’ of ours. Nobody dreams of being ashamed to be seen going into them or coming out. The women and children enter them just as freely, if they have occasion to do so, as they would a dairy or grocer's shop. They are the village clubs, so to speak, and they are constantly open to the whole village, as much as the church or the talsey. But here is one of my parsons. I want you to take note of him—and I will tell you about his part in the System afterward. He is as interesting a figure in it as my publican.”

A tall, fresh-faced, fair young man

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approached them as Emanuel spoke, and was presented to the stranger as Father William. Christian observed him narrowly, as he had been bidden, but beyond the fact that he was clad in a somewhat outlandish fashion, and seemed a merry-hearted fellow, there was nothing noteworthy in the impression he produced. He stood talking for a few minutes, and then, with affable adieux, passed on.

“That is wholly my invention,” commented Emanuel, as they resumed their walk. “There is one of them in each of the six villages, and a seventh who has a kind of general function—and really I have been extraordinarily fortunate with them all. They come from my college at Oxford—Swithin’s—and when you think that twenty years ago it was the most bigoted hole in England, the change is most miraculous. These young men fell in with my ideas like magic. I don’t suppose you know much about the Church of England. Well, it drives with an extremely loose rein. You can do almost anything you like inside it, if you go about the thing decorously. I didn’t even have the trouble with the bishop which might have been expected. These young men—my curates, we may call them—have among themselves a kind of guild or confraternity.

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They are called Father William, or Father Alfred; they wear the sort of habit you have seen; they are quite agreed upon an irreducible minimum of dogmatic theology, and an artistic elaboration of the ritual, and, above all, upon an active life consecrated to good works. They have their own central chapter-house, where they live when they choose and feel like enjoying one another's society, but each has his own village, for the moral and intellectual health of which he feels responsible. Without their constant and very capable oversight, the System would have a good many ragged edges, I'm afraid. But what they do is wonderful. They have made a study of all the different temperaments and natures among the people. They know just how to smooth away possible friction here, to encourage dormant energy there, to keep the whole thing tight and clean and sound. They specially watch the development of the children, and make careful notes of their qualities and capacities. They decide which are to be fully educated, and which are to be taught only to read and do sums."

"I am not sure that I understand," put in Christian. "Is not universal education a part of your plan?"

Emanuel smiled indulgently. "There was

never grosser nonsense talked in this world," he said, with the placid air of one long since familiar with the highest truths, "or more mischievous rubbish into the bargain, than this babble about universal education. The thing we call modern civilization is wrong at so many points that it is hard to say where it sins most, but often I think this is its worst offense. The race has gone fairly mad over this craze for stuffing unfit brains with encumbering and harmful twaddle. In the Middle Ages they knew better. The monks of a locality picked out the children whose minds would repay cultivation, and they taught these as much as it was useful for them to know. If the system was in honest operation, it mattered nothing whether these children belonged to the lord of the manor or the poorest peasant. Assume, for example, that there was a nobleman and one of his lowest dependents, and that each of them had a clever son and a dull one. The monks would take the two clever ones, and educate them side by side—and if in the end the base born boy had the finer mind of the two, and the stronger character, he would become the bishop or the abbot or the judge in preference to his noble school-fellow. On the other hand, the two dull boys were not wearied by schooling from which they could get no

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profit. The thick-headed young noble, very often without even learning his alphabet, was put on a horse, and given a suit of armor and a sword; the heavy-witted young churl was given a leathern shirt and a pike or a bow, and bidden to follow behind that horse's tail—and off the two happy dunces went, to fulfill in a healthful and intelligent fashion their manifest destiny. Those were the rational days when human institutions were made to fit human beings—instead of this modern lunacy of either shaving down and mangling the human being, or else blowing him up like a bladder, to make him appear to fit the institutions. Of course, you must understand, I don't say that this medieval system worked uniformly, or perfectly, even at its best—and, of course, for a variety of reasons, it eventually failed to work altogether. But its principle, its spirit, was the right one—and it is only by getting back to it, and making another start with the light of experience to guide us this time, that we can achieve real progress. Fortunately, my parsons entered fully, and quite joyfully, into my feelings on this point. They couldn't have labored harder, or better, to make the System a success if it had been of their own invention."

"I have seen English parsons often," said

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Christian, vaguely. "They are always married, n'est ce pas?"

"Oh, no—no!" answered Emanuel, with impatient emphasis. "That would never do here. It is difficult enough to find men fit to carry on the task we have undertaken. It would be asking too much of the miracle to expect also unique women who would bring help rather than confusion to such men. Oh, no—we take no risks of that sort. Celibacy is the very basis of their guild. It is very lucky that their own tastes run in that direction—because in any case it would have had to be insisted upon."

Christian wondered if he ought to put into words the comment which rose in his mind. "But you, and your father," he ventured—"you personally—"

"Ah," interposed Emanuel, with a rapt softening of expression in face and tone, "when women like my mother and my wife appear—that lifts us away from the earth and things earthly, altogether. But they are as rare as a great poem—or a comet. If they were plentiful there would be no need of any System. The human race would never have fallen into the mud. We should all be angels."

After a little pause he added: "The woman question here has been a very hard nut to

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crack. We have made some progress with it—but it is still one of the embarrassments. Of course there are others. The restless young men who leave the estate, for example, and having made a failure of it elsewhere, come back to make mischief here: That is an awkward subject to deal with. The whole problem of our relations to outsiders is full of perplexities. To prevent intercourse with them is out of the question. They come and go as they like—and of course my own people are equally free. I can't see my way to any restrictions which wouldn't do more harm than good—if indeed they could be enforced at all. I have to rely entirely upon the good sense and good feeling of my people, to show them how much better off they are in every way than any other community they know of, and how important it is for them to keep themselves to themselves, and continue to benefit by their good fortune. If they fail to understand this, I am quite powerless to coerce them. And that is where the women give us trouble. It is the rarest thing for us to have any difficulty with the men. They comprehend their advantages, they take a warm interest in their work, and we have developed among them a really fine communal spirit. They are proud of the System, and fond of

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it, and I can trust them to defend it and stand by it. But this isn't true of all the women. You have always the depressing consciousness that there are treacherous malcontents among them, who smile to your face but are planning disturbance behind your back. It is not so much a matter of evil natures as of inferior brains. Let a soldier in a red coat come along, for example—an utterly ignorant and vulgar clown from heaven knows what gutter or pigsty—and we have girls here who would secretly value his knowledge of the world, and his advice upon things in general, above *mine!* How *can* you deal with that sort of mind?"

Christian smiled drolly, and disclaimed responsibility with a playful outward gesture of his hands. "It is not my subject," he declared.

"But it has to be faced," insisted Emanuel. "My wife has devoted incredible labor and pains to it—and on the surface of things she has succeeded wonderfully. I say the surface, because that is the sinister peculiarity of the affair; you can never be sure what is underneath. When you go up to London, you must do as I have done since I was a youth: take a walk of a bright afternoon along Regent Street and Oxford Street, where the great millinery and drapers' and

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jewelers' shops are, and study the faces of the thousands of well-dressed and well-connected women whom you will see passing from one show-window to another. There will be many beautiful faces, and many more which are deeply interesting. But one note you will catch in them all—or at least in the vast majority—the note of furtiveness. Once you learn to recognize it you will find it everywhere—the suggestion of something hidden, something artfully wrapped up out of sight. God knows, I don't suggest they all have guilty secrets—or for that matter secrets of any sort. But they have the trained facial capacity for concealment; it is their commonest accomplishment; their mothers' fingers have been busy kneading their features into this mask of pretense from their earliest girlhood."

"Would you not find it also on the men's faces?" demanded Christian, with a dissolving mental vision of sly masculine visages before him as he spoke. "That is to say, when once you had learned to detect the male variation of the mask? And even if it is so, then is not the reason of it this—that men have long been their own masters, making their own laws, doing freely what they choose, and there is no one before whom they must dissemble?"

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Emanuel had not the temperament which is attracted by contradiction. He listened to his cousin's eager words, seemed to ponder them for a space, and then began talking of something else.

Those whom Emanuel called "his people" were for the most part descendants of families who had been on the soil for centuries—since before the Torrs came into possession of it. In a few cases, their stock had been transplanted from the Shropshire estates of the same house. Emanuel had discerned it to be an essential part of the System that its benefits should be reaped by those to whom his family had historic responsibilities. The reflection that the Torrs in Somerset only went back at the farthest to Henry VIII.'s time, and became large landlords there so recently as Charles II.'s reign, saddened him when he dwelt upon it. He would have given much to have been able to establish the System at Caermere instead, where the relations between lord and retainer had subsisted from the dawn of tribal history. He dwelt a good deal upon this aspect of the matter in his talks with Christian. "If you take up the idea," he would say, "you will have the enormous advantage of really ancient ties between you and your people. Here in Somer-

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set we are, relatively speaking, new-comers—merely lucky bridegrooms or confiscating interlopers of a few generations' standing. I have had to create my feudal spirit here out of whole cloth. But you at Caermere—you will find it ready-made to your hand."

Emanuel had created much more besides.

The villages hummed with the exotic industries he had brought into being. The estate produced most of its raw material—food, wool, hides, peat for domestic fuel, stone in several varieties for building, and numerous products of the sea. It drew coal, wood and iron across the channel from the Caermere properties. The effort of the System had been from the outset to expand its self-sufficiency. Christian saw now the remarkable results of this effort on both sides. One village had its leather workers, beginning with the tanners at one end and finishing with the most skillful artificers—glovers, saddlers and shoemakers—at the other. A second village possessed its colony of builders—masons and carpenters alike—and with them guiding architects and designers of furniture and carving. Here also were the coopers, who served not only the brewery, but the butter-makers. These latter formed in turn a link with the great dairy establishment, which had for its flank

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the farming lands. The gardens, nurseries, orchards and long glasshouses were nearest to Emanuel's residence, and their workers made up the largest of the hamlets. This was in other senses the metropolis of the state, for here were the printing-press, the bindery, the chemical laboratory, the electric-light plant, the photographic and drawing departments, the clergy house and the estate office. The smallest of the villages was in the center of the stock farm, where scientific breeding and experimental acclimatization had attained results of which the staid "Field" spoke in almost excited terms.

But to Christian's mind by far the most interesting village was that nestled on the sea-shore, under the protection of the cliffs. When he had once seen this place, his cousin found it difficult to get him away from it, or to enlist his attention for other branches of the System. There was a small but sufficient wharf here, to which colliers of a fair burden could have access; shelter was secured for the home-built fishing craft in the little harbor by means of a breakwater. The red-roofed, gray-stone cottages clustered along the winding roadway which climbed the cliff made a picture fascinating to the young man's eye, but his greater delight was in something not at first visible. Around a

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bend in the cove, out of sight of the village, was a factory for the manufacture of glass, and beyond this were pointed out to him other buildings, near the water's edge, which he was told were used for curing, pickling and otherwise preserving fish. "We make our own glass for the gardens and forcing houses, and for all the dwellings on the estate," Emanuel had told him, "and for another use as well."

The statement had not aroused his curiosity at the moment, but a little later, when he confronted the embodiment of its meaning, he murmured aloud in his astonishment. He found himself walking in a spacious corridor, beneath a roof of semi-opaque, greenish glass, and between walls that seemed of solid crystal, stretching onward as far as the eye could reach. A bar of sunlight, striking through aslant from somewhere outside, painted a central glowing prismatic patch of color, which reflected itself in countless wavering gleams of orange and purple all about him. A curious moving glitter, as of fountains noiselessly at play, traversed the upper surface of these glass walls, and flashed confusion at his first scrutiny. Then he gave a schoolboy's shout of joy and rushed forward to the nearest side. He was in a giant aquarium—and these were

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actual fishes of the sea swimming placidly before him! Even as he stared in bewildered pleasure, with his nose flattened against the glass, there lounged toward him, across the domed back of a king-crab, the biggest conger he had ever imagined to himself. He put up a hand instinctively to ward off the advance of the impassive eel—then laughed aloud for glee.

“Oh, this is worth all the rest!” he cried to Emanuel.

“Yes, good idea, isn't it?” said the other. “It was my wife who suggested it. We had started making our own glass—and really this was a most intelligent way of using it. In time I think it will be of great value, too. We have some clever men down here, from time to time, to study the specimens. I'm sorry no one is here for the moment. I thought at first of building a residence for them, and putting it all at their disposal in a regular way as a kind of marine observatory, like that at Naples. But after all, it would hardly be fair to the system. My first duty is to my own people, and we've got some young men of our own who are making good use of it. There are a hundred or more of these tanks, and we are fitting up electrical machinery to get automatic control of the water supply, and to regulate the tem-

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perature more exactly. But beyond the spectacle of the fishes themselves—our people make holiday excursions here every fortnight or so—and certain things we learn about food and fecundation and so on, I don't know that there's much to be said for the practical utility of this department. Further on you will see the oyster and mussel beds, and the lobsters and crabs. I attach much more importance to the experiments we are making out there. There seems almost no limit to what can be done in those fields, now that we have learned how to go to work. It is as simple a matter to rear lobsters as it is to rear chickens."

"But it is all wonderful!" cried Christian, once more. "But tell me—this costs a great sum of money. I am afraid to think how much. Is it your hope—shall you ever get a profit from it?"

Emanuel smiled. "There is no question of profits," he explained, gently. "The System as a whole supports itself—or rather is entirely capable of doing so. The capital that I have spent in putting the System upon its feet, so to speak, I count as nothing. It belonged to the people who had been with us all these centuries and I have merely restored it to them. In the eyes of the law it is all mine, and from that point of view I

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am a much richer man than I was before the System began. But in practice it belongs to all my people. I take enough to live as befits my station; each of the others has enough to maintain him in *his* station, comfortably and honorably. Whatever the surplus may be, that is devoted to the objects which we all have in common. You see it is simplicity itself."

"But that is like my brother Salvator's doctrine," said Christian. "It is socialism, is it not?" Emanuel's fine brows drew together in an impatient frown. "Please do not use that word," he said, with a shade of annoyance in his tone. "The very sound of it affronts my ears. Nothing vexes me more than to have my work unthinkingly coupled with that monstrous imposture. If you will think of it, I am more opposed to what is called socialism than anybody else on earth. I have elaborated the one satisfactory system, on lines absolutely opposed to it. I furnish the best weapon for fighting and slaying that pernicious delusion that the whole world offers. So you see, I have a right to protest when people confuse me with my bitterest antagonist."

"Pardon!" said Christian, with humility. "I am so badly informed upon all these matters!"

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“Ah, well, you will understand them perfectly, all in good time,” his cousin reassured him in a kindly way.

Christian drew a furtive sigh as they moved along. To his fancy the large fishes in the tanks regarded him with a sympathetic eye.

CHAPTER XII

“It has done Emanuel a world of good to have you here,” said Kathleen, on the morning of Christian’s leave-taking. “Of course it has been a delight to us both—but he has had a personal benefit from it, too. He works too hard. He carries such a burden of details about in his mind—by day and by night, for he sleeps badly and is forever dreaming of his work—that companionship with some new and attractive mind is of the greatest rest and help to him. And he is very fond of you.”

Christian nodded gratified acknowledgment of the words and their spirit, with a glow in his dark eyes. In little more than an hour he would be on his way to London—that mighty, almost fabulous goal of his lifelong dreams. He was already dressed for the journey, in a traveling-suit of rough, fawn-colored cloth, and as he sat at ease in the breakfast-room with his cousin’s wife, his glance wandered very often from her face to a pleased contemplation of these garments. They were what he individually liked best in the wonderful collection of

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clothes for which a fashionable tailor had come from London to measure him, and which were this moment being packed by the man up-stairs in bags and portmanteaus equally new. The tweeds enabled him to feel more like an Englishman than he had succeeded in doing before.

He smiled diffidently at her. "I am so excited about going," he said, his voice wavering between exuberance and appeal—"and yet I ought to be thinking of nothing but my sorrow in leaving you dear people. But that will come to me soon enough—in a storm of homesickness—when once I find myself really alone."

"Oh, I'll not deny we expect a *little* homesickness," she replied to him, cheerfully—"but it must not be enough to at all take the edge off your spirits. Oh, you'll be vastly entertained and interested by all you see and hear. Young Lord Lingfield—you'll be seeing him to-night at dinner—he will be greatly pleased to take you about, and properly introduce you. He will do it better than any other we can think of. He is not by any means an intellectual gladiator, but he is good-looking and amiable and he goes everywhere."

"He is my relation, too, I think Emanuel said?"

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“Let’s work it out—his grandfather’s sister was your grandmother. Yes, that is it. She was the Lady Clarissa Poynes, the sister of the old earl of Chobham, who used to wear the blue coat and brass buttons to the end of his days. So she would be the aunt of the present earl, and the grand-aunt of young Lingfield. You stand in exactly the same relationship to Lord Lingfield that you would to a son of Emanuel’s—if he had one, poor man!”

Christian had long since become sensible of the pathos which colored these references to the childlessness of the house. A tender instinct impelled him to hasten a diversion.

“And how strange it is!” he cried. “They are as close to me, these people, in blood as Emanuel is—and yet I care nothing for them whatever. I shall meet them, and know them, and not feel that I am bound to them at all—whereas Emanuel is like a brother to me, whom I have been with and loved all my life. And you,” he added, with a smile in his eyes—“you are more than any sister to me.”

“Well, then, let me talk to you like a sister,” she rejoined.

He thought he had not seen her before in precisely the mood which was discernible in her face and tone this morning. Outwardly

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she was as gay and light-hearted as ever, and certainly she had not seemed on any previous day to come so near being beautiful as well. The sense of sheer pleasure in being where she was, in listening to her and looking at her, and holding her affectionately bright attention for his own thoughts, was peculiarly strong in him to-day. But there was also the consciousness of a new gravity in her attitude toward him—a kind of yearning apprehension of dangers threatening him. He saw again in her eyes when she looked at him that likeness to his mother's glance—a wistfully sad glance as he most often recalled it. And yet Kathleen smiled merrily with it all, when occasion required.

“You are entering upon the great experience now,” she said to him. “I think it was very wise of Emanuel to show you first what we may call his ideal state of society. By all the rules, it ought to help you to understand in the right way what you will see of the society which—well, which isn't in an ideal state. But there are certain things which get to be understood, not so much by brains, as by years. That is to say, the very cleverest youth may not be able to see, in this one respect, what is plain enough to most dull persons at forty. Emanuel tells me

that he has talked with you about women in general."

"He does not like them very much," said Christian, laughingly.

She twisted the corners of her mouth in a droll little grimace, which seemed to express approval of his mirth, and something more besides.

"He takes them with tremendous seriousness," she answered. "That is his way with everything. He makes all sorts of classifications—the bigger they are and the more complicated the better he likes them—and then he treats each one as a problem, and he worries at it with all his energy until he works out a satisfactory solution. It is only in that sense that he has a grievance against women. He has proceeded upon the theory that the sex is a unit, for philosophical purposes at least, and that he ought to be able to get at the rules which govern its actions. But we continue to baffle him," she added, again with the playful curl of the lips.

"Oh, you—you are not in the problem," protested Christian. "For you and his mother he has only the veneration one gives to one's favorite saints."

"His mother was a great woman," said Kathleen, serious once more. "I never saw her, but she is my patron saint, as you put

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it, quite as much as his. I never permit myself to doubt that we should have loved each other deeply—and it is the sweetest thing any one can think of me, or say to me—to link us together. But even the saints have their specialties—and that implies limitations. I have a notion that Emanuel's mother did not know many women, and so fell into a way of generalizing about them. Emanuel has that same tendency. I, who work among them daily, and make it my business to be teacher and mistress and mother and sister to some five hundred of them, young and old, foolish and wise—I come to believe that these generalizations are entirely mistaken. If a woman is brought up like a man, and circumstanced precisely like a man, and knows nothing of any conventions save those which control a man—why, then you can't tell the difference between her opinions and actions and those of her brother. But you never get the chance to view a woman under those conditions."

"But here we shall see them!" cried Christian, with premature enthusiasm. "You will change all that!"

"Oh, no, I shan't," she answered abruptly. "It is not being tried—it is not desirable. What I am doing proceeds quite on orthodox lines. We make a point of developing them

in the way of usefulness—material usefulness, I mean. We teach them the useful accomplishments—spinning, weaving, sewing, dairy and poultry work, and above all things good cooking.”

“That I can well believe,” he declared. “I have never eaten so many good dishes in my life as here.”

“Yes, I *have* a talent in that direction,” she assented. “And I am prouder of it because it represents a triumph over my ancestral prejudices. You will get nothing good to eat in Ireland. The Irish have never respected food as a proper subject for serious human thought. It is the rarest thing to hear them mention it. There may be some fine spiritual quality in that—but at all events we cook well here, and I have worked a complete revolution in that respect on the estate. There are certainly no such cooks and housekeepers anywhere else in England as my women. But you see what I mean. There is no effort to take women away from the work they have always been doing, but only to make them do it better.”

“But that in itself is very much,” urged Christian. Somehow he had the feeling that he was defending the System against a critic.

“Undoubtedly,” she admitted. “And of course we do something more than that.

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In a good many cases, when it was not inconvenient, I have put young girls of aptitude forward to learn designing and other arts. Some of them have made me some very tolerable tapestry, and a few of them are as intelligent and valuable in the greenhouses as our best men. In the matter of music they really beat them. Emanuel insists on a choir of glee singers in each village—and at Christmas time we have a competition of 'waits' which will be worth your while coming to hear. For my part, I have a string orchestra of girls that I should not be ashamed to have play in London."

The word seemed to bring them back. "You were going to speak to me," Christian ventured, "about London. One thing—I shall see you there often, shall I not?"

She slowly shook her head. "No, we have outgrown London, I'm afraid. It can be proved, I believe, that it is the biggest town in the world—but to us it is too small for comfort. It is now more than a year since we have been up at all. Why should we go? We have the National Gallery by heart, and the year's pictures are rather distressing than otherwise. The theaters are intellectually beneath notice. There is the opera of course, and the concerts, but the people annoy us by talking loudly, and

besides, we have our own music, and occasionally we bring down a Paderewski or a Sarasate for our people to hear. At the houses where we would naturally go, the women talk about matters of which I know absolutely nothing, and Emanuel either quarrels with the men about what they call their politics, or chokes silently with rage and disgust. And then the spectacle of the people in the streets—the poor of London!—that fairly sickens our hearts. We have no joy of going at all. Occasionally we have guests down here, but it is not a very happy time they have of it. Everything is so strange to them that they are confused, and walk about with constraint, as if they were being shown around an asylum. So it happens that I see very few women of my own class—and really know less about them than most people. And yet," she added, with a twinkle in her eye, "so naturally audacious a race are the Irish—it is precisely about ladies in London society that I am going to read you a lecture."

Christian drew up his feet, and assumed an air of delighted anticipation.

"First of all, you are six and twenty, and you will be thinking of marrying. What is more, you are what is called a great match, and for every thought that you give

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to the subject of a wife, others will give ten thousand to the subject of you as a possible husband."

The young man looked into her kindly eyes with a sustained glance of awakening thought. This dazzling and princely position which she had thus outlined—sure enough, it was his! How extraordinary that this had not suggested itself to him before! Or had the perception of it not really lain dormant in his consciousness all the while? This question propounded itself to a mind which was engrossed in something else—for of a sudden there rose upon the blank background of his thoughts the luminous face of a lady, beautiful, distinguished, exquisitely sensitized, and as by the trick of a dream she first wore a large garden hat, and then was bare-headed, her fair hair gathered loosely back into a careless knot. The mental picture expanded, to show the full length of her queenly figure as she descended a broad staircase, with one lovely hand like a lily against the oak of the rail. Then it contracted, and underwent a strange metamorphosis, for it was another face which he saw, a pale, earnest, clever face, and instead of the great stairway, there was the laced tawdriness of a French railway compartment.

Then, with a start, and a backward move-

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ment of the head, he was free of dreamland, and blushingly conscious of having stared his cousin out of countenance. He laughed with awkward embarrassment. "I—I suppose it is true—what you say," he remarked, stumblingly.

She had perhaps some clew to the character of his reverie. She smiled in a gently quizzical way, but went on soberly enough. "The thing of all things," she said, "is to be clearly and profoundly convinced in your own mind that your marriage will be the most important event of your life—that it will indeed affect, for good or for bad, every conceivable element of your life. You have the kind of temperament which would be peculiarly susceptible to such intimate influences. There are great numbers of men—the vast majority—to whom it does not matter so much. They accommodate themselves to their burdens, and shuffle along somehow, with the patience of a cart-horse. But you—the wrong wife would wreck you and kill you. I am speaking frankly, laddie,"—she gave the novel word an intonation which made it music in his ears—"because you have no mother, and because you are going into a very trying and delicate situation with what I feel to be a pathetic lack of preparation."

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Christian drew his chair nearer to her, and crossed his knees, and leaned back in an attitude of intimate ease. The conversation appealed powerfully to him as having more of the atmosphere of domesticity and sweet home influences in it than any he had ever heard.

“I know almost nothing at all of women,” he said, quite simply. “The mothers of my pupils I saw sometimes and occasionally a sister, but they were not in any sense my friends. As to marriage—of course that has never been in my head. Until only the other day, the idea of a wife would have been absurd. But now—as you say—it is not any longer absurd.” He paused and gazed absently past her, as if in pursuit of the thoughts his own words had set in motion. “I wonder—I wonder”—he murmured, and then turned his bright eyes to her, full of wistful expectancy. “Have you, par exemple, some one in your mind for me?” he asked.

She laughed and shook her head. The implication in his tone, of entire readiness to accept the bride of her selection, had its amusing and its flattering sides; upon a second glance, however, it contained something else not so much to her liking. She frowned a little at this something.

“Oh, you must not approach the subject in that spirit,” she adjured him. “It is the one affair of all others on earth in which you must be guided absolutely by your own heart and your own mind. We speak of the heart and mind as distinct from each other; I don’t know that they are not one and the same. Perhaps I would put it this way—when your heart *and* your mind are completely agreed, when your personal liking and your deliberate judgment pull together in exactly the same direction—so that it seems to you that they *are* one and the same thing—then—then——”

“Then what?” demanded Christian, bending forward.

“Oh, I am not fortunate in expressing myself to-day,” Kathleen declared, with a gesture of playful impatience. “But in general, this is what I wanted to say: Do not be betrayed into haste in this matter of deciding about a girl. You will see a large number of extremely attractive young ladies. They will certainly not be looking or behaving their worst for your benefit, and you on your side will be lacking the experience to tell precisely what it is all worth. So walk quietly along, with your wits about you, and see what there is to be seen for a time, and commit yourself to nothing. A year hence,

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for example, you will look back upon your present condition of mind with surprise. You will not seem to yourself at all the same person. I can't promise that you'll be happier," she added, with a little smiling sigh, "but you will know a great deal more about what you want—or rather about making sure that you are getting what you want."

"I know what I shall do," he declared, after a moment's reflection. "I shall come always to you, and beg your wise and good advice. You will tell me if I am making a bad choice."

"You talk as if you were entering upon a lifelong series of experiments," she laughed at him. "No, I'll undertake no such responsibility as that, young man." She explained, more gravely: "It is never quite possible for a friend, no matter how wise and fond the friend may be, to advise upon this matter. To give information upon the subject, that is another affair. But specific advice, no. But let me finish what I had in mind to say. You have seen here, during this past fortnight, what great hopes are built upon your administration of your affairs when you come into the title. No, don't speak yet. You must not pledge yourself at all to the System. It would be unfair to let you do it. But at all events

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you have seen it, and you will think it all over, and, whether you take it up altogether or not, I know it will have its effect on you. You will set an ideal of usefulness and duty before you, and you will have your heart fixed on realizing it. Well, then, I counsel you above all things to keep that idea in mind whenever you think of marriage. A man has a good many sides to his life, but the side which is most vital to him is that of the work he wants to do in the world. If the wife fits perfectly on that side, the discrepancies elsewhere are of small account by comparison. They smooth away, they adjust themselves. But the misfit on the side of the man's ambitions—that never effaces itself. And so, just in proportion as the work you want to do becomes clear in your mind, you ought to define to yourself the type of woman who will be most sympathetic toward that work, and who will best help you in it—or rather, who will help you in it in the way you like best. I don't say you will find the perfect type of that woman—but you should have the type before you, and be able to measure people by its standards. But I have harangued you long enough! There is something in the atmosphere here: we all deliver lectures to each other at the most unscrupulous length.

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Poor boy! We've done nothing but make speeches to you since you showed in sight."

Christian deprecated her suggestion with persuasive hands. "I have learned here, I think, all that I know," he protested. He did not, however, insist upon further generalizations. "One thing you said," he remarked, thoughtfully, "puts a question into my head. You said it was better to give information than advice. Now there is so much that I am in ignorance about. Perhaps I do wrong to ask you—but I am curious to know more about the people of the family—our own family. There are no ladies of my own blood? I mean, all I have seen or heard of come to us by marriage, like yourself."

"You hit upon the weakest and unhappiest point," she replied. "There has not been a daughter born in the Torr family for over a hundred years. I have always insisted that this has operated like a curse on the family. The beautiful humanizing charm of little girls about the house—this they have never felt. The mothers have had no daughters to lean upon, the men have never known what a sister was like. That one fact, it seems to me, is enough to account for everything that is hard and rough and cruel in their story."

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Christian bowed his head in silent token of comprehension.

“I am always more grieved than angry, when I’m thinking of the black sheep in the family fold,” she went on. “They had never a chance. It was like a tradition in the family that the father should be a brute and the mother a fool. A daughter here and there might have softened the combination—but with little boys alone face to face with it—what could they do? They grew up in the stables and the kennels. Think of those two young men whom you met at Caermere, for example. Lord Julius told me of their scene with you, and I’m far from blaming you—but think of their bringing up! Their father, Lord Edward, I remember very well. I saw him when I was a girl, at the Punchestown races, and my brother told me his name. Even without it, I should have remembered his face as the coarsest and meanest I ever saw. He married a woman out of some vile gambling set that he was in as a young man. She is still alive somewhere, and has an allowance from Lord Julius for suppressing herself, and not using the family name. Well, when I think of the blood in those two boys, and of the horrors of their childhood till they were taken away from their mother,

and sent into the country to school—upon my soul I can only wonder that they come so near decency as they do. Your encounter with them happened to strike out sparks, but you must remember what a blow it represented to them.”

The young man gave a somewhat perfunctory nod. His sympathies were somehow obdurate upon this particular point.

“Oh, and that reminds me,” she went on. “I said that the family was daughterless—but Eddy has a little girl. It is very quaint to think what she will grow up like, under the maternal wing of Cora Bayard. Yet I am told there are worse mothers than Cora. I’ve never seen her, myself.”

“I saw her at Caermere,” Christian remarked. “She seemed very frightened and sad—and since it was because of me, I did not look much at her. I remember only the effect of a likeness to Pierrot—the red lips on the white face. But”—he drew his chair still nearer, and betrayed by manner and tone alike his approach to a subject of more than casual interest—“the other lady whom I saw there—Lady Cressage—I had much conversation with her. I feel that she and I are friends. I liked her very much indeed—but I have no information about her whatever. If I am permitted to confess it—I

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tried to talk about her with Lord Julius and with Emanuel, but they at once spoke of other things. You see how frankly I am telling you everything; that is because you make me feel so wonderfully at home. But perhaps you do not like to talk about her, either."

She smiled pleasantly enough in comment upon his faltering conclusion. "Oh, I think you exaggerate the conspiracy of silence," she answered. "Neither Lord Julius nor Emanuel has anything hostile to say about Edith Cressage, but she doesn't quite appeal to their imagination, and so they find nothing of any sort to say. But it is only fair to remember that they are both men with peculiar and exacting standards for women. They would be equally silent about a hundred other ladies of unblemished character, and of beauty and wit untold. It is nothing at all against her that she hasn't excited their enthusiasm. I do not know her at all well, but I think she is very nice. Now—is that what you wanted me to say?"

The mild note of banter which informed her words put Christian if possible even more at his ease. He stood up, with his hands in the sleek pockets of his new coat, and bent down upon her a joyous smile.

"No, ever so much more!" he insisted,

gaily. "She is very beautiful; she has the air and the distinction of a grande dame; she speaks like a flute, and what she says is clever and apropos; she is unhappy, and yet with no bitterness toward any one; she seemed to like me very much, and, mind you, she was the first fine lady whom I had ever met. Enfin, she is my cousin, and the fact impresses me. What is more natural than that I should be eager to know all about her?"

Kathleen did not respond readily to his mood. She knitted her brows slightly once more, and looked away from him toward the window. "It is rather hard for me to explain," she began at last, doubtfully. "From a good many points of view—her own included—I dare say we do her an injustice. Don't misunderstand me; we are all sorry for her—and I for one have my moments of doubt whether we oughtn't to be something more than sorry."

"Yes, that is the phrase," put in Christian, strenuously. "I think that I myself am something more than sorry for her."

She looked up at him, at first with a shadow of apprehension in her eyes. Then she estimated aright his enthusiasm with a gentle smile. "I will explain as well as I can," she said, softly. "As you say, you

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are entitled to be told. The feeling, then, is—I am speaking of Lord Julius and Emanuel, and more or less of myself too—the feeling is that she ought not to have made the marriage she did. Everybody knew that the young man she married was a worthless creature—a violent, ignorant, low-minded fellow. You could not see him, much less talk with him, without recognizing this. One knows perfectly well that she must have hated the very thought of him as a lover or a companion. But he is the heir to a dukedom, and so she marries him. You see what I mean; it seemed an unpleasant thing to us.”

Christian considered with a puzzled air the situation thus defined. “But,” he commented, with hesitation, “it is the *métier* of a young woman to get a husband, and to get the best one for herself that she can. If she is so beautiful that a man wishes to make her a duchess, why, that is her triumph. Would you have her forego it? And if she says ‘no’, why, then the next one he asks says ‘yes’—and it is merely that the first one has waived her place in the queue for another. The queue remains the same. And if this were not so, why, then, young men who are not very good, they would get no wives at all. But,” he added, in extenu

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ation of his dissent, "all these matters are so differently regarded, you know, in France."

She did not look altogether pleased with him. "I thought you would have caught my meaning more readily," she said, "despite your Continental point of view. For that matter, it is the common English point of view also. There is a matrimonial market, of course, and girls offer themselves in it to the highest bidder, and nothing that we can do will change it. But at least we are free to think what we like of the wretched business—and to hold our own opinions of the people who traffic in it."

Kathleen had stated her position with a certain argumentative warmth, which gave her tone a novel effect of reproof. The sight now of the young man's saddened and surprised expression sent her mood up with a rebound. She put a hand on his arm, as he stood before her, and reassured him by a kindly laugh. "Ah, now," she said, with genial pleading in her soft voice, "don't be making a mountain of my molehill. I only wanted you to understand how we felt. And as I have told you, we have our reservations about even that feeling. The poor girl did only what she was expected to do—what her mother and her family and all the friends that surrounded her took it quite as

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a matter of course that she should do. Probably she never once encountered the opinion that she should do otherwise. No doubt that is to be said for her. In fact, I should never have dreamed of blaming her to you, if you had not pressed me. And after it's all said and done, you may take it from me that perhaps I don't blame her so very much. She was poor, and not over comfortable at home, I think, and she was very young, and people ran after her to an extraordinary extent—and to be the beauty of the season in London is enough to turn any one's head. Poor creature—it's bitterly enough she's paid for her whistle!"

He smiled down into her eyes. "That is how I knew you would end by speaking of her," he said. "It is in that same way that she moves me—by my compassion. And this is my fancy"—he began, in a more vivacious tone—"I should like to tell it to you—it seems that I am to have the power to do so many such wonderful things—well, then, nothing would delight me more than to be very good to her. It is my *fantaisie*—and there is no harm in it, *is there?*—to atone to her for some of the unhappiness she has suffered. I have thought about it much since I left Caermere. It seems that it would be a good thing for me to do—like an

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act of piety. You must remember—she was the first lady who spoke kindly to me in England. And I think you will be pleased with me for being grateful. But, of course, if Emanuel tells me 'no'——”

“Oh, no one will tell you 'no,' ” she assured him, rising as she spoke, and looking into his face with beaming eyes. “It is the kind of spirit we like in you. Never imagine that we will be obstacles in its way. Only be on your guard against the soft heart running away with you. The world is full of clever and adroit people who practice upon innocent generosity. It is not so much the worth of what they wheedle from you, as the shock of your discovery of their tricks. That hurts a young nature, and very often callouses and hardens it. But here I am, lecturing you again!”

Christian had not, in truth, been following her remarks with complete attention. Something had come up in his mind, which by the time she stopped he seemed to have turned over and over, and examined from many standpoints, and finally decided to speak about.

“I was not wholly exact,” he began, with constraint, “when I said that Lady Cressage was the first lady who spoke kindly to me in England. I mentioned it to Lord Julius—

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there was a very charming and good young lady who traveled with me from Rouen, and crossed on the boat—and it is a very curious thing, but when we became acquainted, and I hinted to her about my story, she knew who I was. Indeed, it was she who told me who I was. I had the whole wonderful tale from her—and the kindness and sweet sympathy with which she told it to me, a little at a time—ah, that is what I will never forget! I am bound to remember her with gratitude all my life. And that is another *fantaisie* of mine—that I shall do something good for her. Oh, she has no selfish thoughts! She would not even tell me her name!”

Kathleen’s comment was prefaced by a mirthful chuckle. “I can’t deny that gratitude is a very active and resourceful element in your composition,” she declared, and laughed again. “Oh, we’ll advertise for her. How would this do: ‘The young lady who meets returning lost heirs to the British nobility at Rouen, and lets them down easily’? Or we might——”

“Ah,” Christian interrupted, pleadingly, “I am really very sincere about her. You cannot imagine anything finer or more delicate than her character. And besides,”—he added this with visible reluctance—“I have learned since who she is. Lady Cressage

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told me. She is the sister of the lady you call Cora—the wife of that young man Edward—but she is not an actress! It is not in the least her *type!* She earns her own living—she has some work to do—I think it is with a writing-machine—that is, a type-writer, n'est-ce pas?"

Mrs. Emanuel did not immediately reply, but moved to the window, looked out and then walked slowly back to where he stood. "I am not going to suggest an unkind thought about this girl," she said, deliberately. "I would not want you to think differently of her, or of the grateful impulse you have toward her. Indeed, I have heard something of her—and it is much to her credit. But—this sounds a mean thing to say, and yet it has its important true side—people should stick to their class. Bear that always in mind. There seem to be brilliant exceptions to the rule, whenever we look about us—but just the same, the rule exists. But—now I *will* stop, once for all!" She mused at him, with a twinkling eye. "You poor lad, there's something about you that draws down lectures as a lightning-rod draws electricity. And here's the trap!"

When Emanuel returned from London a few days later, to report that his young cousin had been comfortably installed in

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chambers on Duke Street, St. James's, and seemed to get on capitally with Lord Lingfield, who was showing him the ropes, Kathleen received the news with less than her accustomed cheerfulness.

"I haven't been quite happy, thinking of him alone in London," she admitted, in the course of their conversation. "I feel, somehow, as if we should have gone up, and taken a house for the winter."

"Ah, but, sweetheart," he urged, almost reproachfully, "you see how I am up to my eyes in all sorts of work. This is really about the most trying and ticklish stage we have gone through yet. If the fibrous silk processes are what is claimed for them, and your girls display the aptitude that you count upon——"

But Kathleen for once seemed not to listen. She had turned, and moved a few steps listlessly away. She took a flower from a vase, picked it to pieces and gazed in a brown study at the meaningless fragments.

"Yes, I know," she remarked at last, with a half sigh. Then she threw the petals into the grate, and, with a decisive little shake of head and shoulders, wheeled round, and came smilingly to her husband.

"And whom did you see in town?" she asked.

PART III



CHAPTER XIII

Toward the end of April, there came an afternoon on which Christian seemed to himself to wake up of a sudden as from a harassed sleep.

He had been in England for over six months, when all at once he became conscious of this queer sensation: the experiences of his half year put themselves together before his mental eye in the aspect of a finished volume—of something definitely over and done with.

There was warm spring in the London air, and at first the vague feeling of unrest impressed him as a part of the general vernal effect. The device of taking a stroll through the parks, to note the early flowers and the wonderful infancy of leafage among the trees, seemed at the outset to fit this new mood that was upon him. Then abruptly he wearied of nature and turned

his back upon it, driving in a hansom to his club. Here there was no one whom he knew, or at least cared to speak with. He sat for a time in the billiard-room, watching with profound inattention the progress of a game he knew nothing about. From this he wandered into the library, where some fierce-faced old gentlemen slept peacefully in armchairs about the alcoves. The sound of their breathing vexed him; he pretended to himself that otherwise he would have found solace in a book. The whim seized him to go home to his chambers, and have tea there comfortably in gown and slippers, and finish a novel Lady Milly Poynes had induced him to begin weeks before.

Once in his own easy-chair, the romance lying opened beside him, he put back his head, stretched his feet and yawned. He left untasted the tea which Falkner brought in; with fingers interlaced behind his neck he stared up at the blue of the sky through his window in formless rumination.

His earlier glimpses of London were dim enough memories now. The town had been described by his cousin Lingfield as empty when he arrived, and after a few days of desultory sight-seeing, he had been carried off to the earl of Chobham's place in

Derbyshire. Here, among people who behaved like kindly kinsmen to the young new-comer, yet failed to arouse much interest in his mind, he learned to shoot well enough to escape open protests by the autocratic head gamekeeper, and to keep his seat in the saddle after a fashion of his own. These acquirements stood him in good stead at the four or five other country houses to which the amiable Lingfield in due course led him. Without them, meager as they were, he would have been in a sorry plight indeed. They provided him with a certain semblance of justification for his presence among people who seemed incapable of amusing themselves or their guests in any other way. There were always ladies, it was true, and it was generally manifest to him that he might spend his time with them if he chose, but after a few tentative experiments he fell back upon the conviction that he did not know how to talk to English ladies. He drifted somehow through these months of hospitable entertainment, feeling that he had never known before what loneliness could mean.

When, at Christmas, he went to spend another fortnight with Emanuel, he had it in his heart to confess to disappointment, and even depression. He had not thus far

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fitted at all into the place which had been prepared for him, and he looked forward, with wistful eagerness, as he journeyed westward, to the balm of sympathy and tender comprehension with which Kathleen and Emanuel, dear people that they were, would soothe and heal his wounded self-consciousness. Somehow, the opportunity of unburdening his troubled mind, however, did not come to him. There were other guests, including Lord Julius, and such exceptional attention was devoted on the estates to elaborating the holiday festivities of the various villages, that no individual could hope to secure consideration for his own private emotions. It was sometimes suspected that Emanuel made so much of Christmas in his System, unconsciously no doubt, because the Jewish side of him felt the need of ostentation in its disavowal of theological prejudices. For whatever reason, the festival was observed here in a remarkable spirit. The little churches were embowered in holly and mistletoe, and were the scenes of numerous ornate services. There were processions, merry-makings, midnight visitations of the "waits," concerts and dances throughout the week, and only the strictly necessary work of the community was performed meanwhile. On New Year's

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Day the rejoicings culminated in a children's carnival from one end of the property to the other, with big trees laden with lights and gifts in the German fashion, and exhibitions of the magic lantern, and other juvenile delights. The fortnight passed, and Christian returned to London, as has been said, without having anything like the intimate talk he had expected. Both Kathleen and Emanuel had seemed pleased with him; they had noted with approving comment his progress in the use of idiomatic English, and his rapid assimilation of the manners and bearing of those about him; they had heard none but welcome reports of him from outside, and made clear to him their gratification at the fact. Their smile for him was as affectionate, their display of pleasure in his presence as marked, as ever, but he had the sense, none the less, of something altered. Lord Julius bore him company on his journey to London, and after a brief halt, took him away again for another fortnight, this time at Brighton. He was no more successful with the father, in the matter of helpful confidences, than he had been with the son. It was impossible to tell the strong, big, redoubtable old gentleman of what he felt to be his weaknesses. A kind of desponding pride possessed him, and

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closed his lips. He was not happy, as he had supposed he would be, and he could not bring himself to feel that at any point the fault was his. It was the position that was incongruous. Yet how could he complain, or avow his discontent, without seeming an ingrate to the benefactors whose heart had been in the work of shaping and gilding that position for him?

Parliament met this year in January, and Christian saw now a London which he had not imagined to himself—for which nothing, indeed, had prepared him. There came all at once a great many invitations, and the young man, surprised and not a little dismayed, called Lord Lingfield to his assistance. The prospect unfolded to him by this accomplished professor of the proprieties was terrifying enough. At the end of a week Christian cried out that the reality was too much. But Lingfield could see no alternative to going on. "You will get used to it soon enough, now that you have once taken the plunge," he assured him. "There are certain things that a fellow has to do, you know, when he's in London in the season, or even now, in what you may call the half season, unless he's going to chuck the thing altogether." Christian replied with excitement that this was precisely what

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he wished to do. In his own mind he had already reached the point of debating whether he could honorably go on using the money placed to his credit at the bank, most of which was still there, if he fled from London, and even England.

Lord Lingfield was a fine young man, irreproachable in attire and manners, who expected to do something in politics, and who regarded his duty both to the future which he hoped to create for himself, and to the immediate present which had been created for him, with conscientious gravity. He had never thought of lightening or evading the tasks set before him; he had no perception whatever of the possibility of making such things easier for others. He assured Christian with gentle solemnity that desertion was not to be mentioned, and that even mitigation was undesirable. "It has all been arranged for you," he urged. "Upon my word, you are very lucky. You have been to two houses already where I never get asked except to luncheon, and here is a card here which I could hardly believe my eyes to see. To trifle with such chances would be simple madness. You will get to have all London at your fingers' ends, your very first season. Such a start as you're likely to have, I've never seen in

my life. My dear fellow—you don't understand what it means."

"But I'm tired to death!" groaned Christian. "No doubt they are excellent people, but they weary me to the bone. The dinners, the calls, the receptions, the dances—I have no talent whatever for these things. It is very kind of these people—but I know I am ridiculous in it all. I give them no pleasure, and God knows I receive none. Then why must it go on? For whose benefit is it? I swear to you, I would not mind the labor and fatigue, if it was any good that I was doing. Emanuel, for example, toils like a slave, but then his work has great results. But this of mine——!"

"Ah, yes," interposed Lingfield, smilingly. "But Emanuel could never have made much running in London. He disputes with people too much, don't you know. They don't like that. And I think you make much too hard work of it all. There's no need for *you* to talk, you know. It isn't expected of you. And I don't see why you can't move quietly along, going everywhere, being seen at the right places, and being civil to everybody, and not worry yourself at all. That's what you need, my dear boy—repose! Let the other people do the worry. Now, of course, in a case like Dicky West-

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land's it's different. He has to be amusing and useful, or he wouldn't get asked. But you are not on all fours with him at all. To tell the truth—no doubt it'll sound strange to you, but it is the truth all the same—it's better form for you not to be amusing, or brilliant, or that sort of thing. Fellows in your place don't go in for it, you know."

Christian sighed, and chafing at the necessity of submission, still submitted.

Now, as he lay back in his chair, the retrospect was augmented by six other weeks, in which he had passively yielded to what Lingfield had assured him was the inevitable. He had dined out almost every-night, and had made countless calls. It seemed to him that he must have met everybody in this huge metropolis who had a pair of shoulders or possessed a dress coat. He yawned at the thought of them.

Was he not himself to blame for this? At Christmas time he had been quite confident in answering "no" to this question; now he did not feel so sure about it. At one place or another he had come into contact with most of the members of the government, and with many of those distinguished statesmen on the opposite bench who, by the grace of the genial British electorate, would

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be ministers next time. He had talked with eminent artists, eminent scientists, eminent writers, eminent soldiers and sailors, and watched them and listened to them as they sat over their cigars, or moved about among the ladies in the drawing-rooms. Hostesses whose cordial good will toward him seemed equaled only by their capable control over others, had said to him time and time again: "If there is any one you want to know, tell me." The phrase lingered in his mind as a symbol of his position. He had merely to mention his wish, like some lucky person of the fables who possessed a talisman. It could not be said that he had used his magic power foolishly or perversely. He had followed in dutiful, painstaking solicitude the path marked out for him by his advisers. He had done the best that was in him to do; he had gone wherever Lingfield bade him go; he had loyally kept awake late at night; he had smiled and bowed and spoken affable words; he had fulfilled punctually all the engagements imposed upon him. What was more, he could no longer pretend that he made a failure of the thing; it was known to him that he had created a pleasant impression upon London, and that people liked him.

For all that, he could not feel that in turn

he liked these people. Among those of whom he had seen the most, was there any whom he profoundly desired ever to see again? He passed some random figures in mental review, and suffered them to vanish without thrusting forth any tentacle of thought to detain them. They had not entered his real life; they meant nothing to him. Positively he was as much alone in London to-day as he had been when he first set foot in it. Indeed, was he not the poorer to-day by all those lost illusions and joyous, ardent hopes now faded to nothingness? In return for these departed treasures, he had only empty hands to show—and a jaded, futilely mutinous, empty mind as well.

The soft, equable tinkle of the door-bell caught his ear, but scarcely arrested his attention. Perhaps unconsciously the sound served to polarize his thoughts, for suddenly it became apparent to him that he was in revolt. All this intolerable social labor was ended for him—definitely and irrevocably ended. He would not dine at another house; he would burn forthwith his basket of cards, and the little book with its foolish record of ladies' days "at home."

He sat up and sipped at his lukewarm tea, with the glow of a new resolve on his face.

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Falkner—a smooth-mannered, assiduous, likable man of middle age whom Emanuel had given him from his own household—entered the room to announce a caller. A brisk, alert tread on the polished hall floor behind him cut into his words, so that Christian did not catch them. He rose, and looked inquiringly.

For an instant, he felt that he was not glad to see the person who came in. It was a young man of about his age, tall and fair, and handsome in a buoyant, bright-faced way of his own. His blue eyes sparkled cheerfully into Christian's doubtful glance, and he held out a hand as he advanced. Everybody in the world called him Dicky Westland, and for this opening moment Christian thought of him as preëminently typical of all the vanities and artificialities he was on the point of forswearing.

"Not seedy, I hope?" the new-comer said in comment upon the other's loose attire—and perhaps upon his dubious countenance as well. His voice had a musical vivacity in it which seemed to lighten the room. Christian, as he took the hand and shook his head, smiled a little. It began to occur to him that really he did like this young man.

"No," he replied, with a gesture toward a chair. "I'm all right. Only the whim

seized me—to come home and read a book. I got homesick, I think.”

This statement, once in the air, seemed funny to the young men, and Dicky Westland laughed aloud. Christian, sitting down opposite his visitor, felt himself sharing his animation. “It was good of you to come,” he declared, with a refreshed tone. “The truth is, I’m tired out. I am up too late. I run about too much.”

“Yes, a fellow does get hipped,” assented Dicky. “But you are so tremendously regular, it doesn’t do you any harm. A days’ rest now and then, and you’re right as a trivet again.”

“Regular,” Christian repeated, musingly. He formed his lips to utter some reflection upon the theme, and then closed them again. “Will you have a cup of tea?” he asked, with the air of thinking of something else.

The other shook his head, and preserved a posture of vivacious anticipation, as if Christian had made a literal promise to unburden his mind. The suggestion was so complete that Christian accepted it as a mandate.

“I am glad you came,” he said, “because—well, because I have come to a conclusion in my mind, and I should like to put it into words for you—so that I can also hear it my-

self. I am resolved to go away—to leave London.”

Dicky lifted his brows in puzzled interrogation. “How do you mean?” he asked.

“I do not like it,” Christian replied, speaking more readily now, and enforcing his words with eager hands. Lingfield had cautioned him against this gesticulatory tendency, but the very consciousness that he was in rebellion brought his hands upward into the conversation. “It is not what I care for. I come into it too late, no doubt, to understand—appreciate it, properly. The people I meet—I have no feeling for them. It seems a waste of my time to sit with them, to stand and talk, to go about from one of their houses to another. At the end of it all, there is nothing. They have all thick shells on, and they are not going to let me get inside of them. And, moreover, if I did get inside, who can be sure there would be anything of value there? It does not often look so to me, from the outside. But it is a waste of time and labor, and it does not amuse me in the least, and why should I pursue it?”

“Quite right!” said Dicky.

“Then you agree with me?—you approve?” asked Christian, not concealing his surprise.

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“Of course I do. It’s awful rot,” the other affirmed. He observed his host silently for a space, and meanwhile, by a quite visible process, the familiar external elasticity, not to say flippancy, of his manner seemed to fall away from him. “With me, of course,” he went on, almost gravely, “I have to do it. I must get my secretaryship, or I can’t live. My relations could put me into the swim, but they can’t support me there indefinitely. I have only two aunts, you know—dear old things, they are—and they keep me going, but they have only life interests, and I fancy they have to scrape a little as it is.

“So you see,” pursued Dicky Westland, “I must help myself, and it’s only by knowing the right people, and being seen at the right places, that a fellow can bring anything off. For example, now: Lady Winsey is a distant cousin of mine, and she’s promised the aunts, you know, and there’s an old Sir Hogface Something-or-Other dodging about the place, who’s going to get a West Indian governorship in May, and Lady Winsey has not only had him at her house to dinner, where he could see me, but has contrived to throw me at him at three other houses. Next week I’m to go down to a closing meet in Berkshire, just because he’s to be there—

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and that she arranged, too. And it's all to get a place worth perhaps three hundred a year, with yellow fever thrown in—if it comes to anything at all.”

“Three hundred a year,” commented Christian, knitting his brows. “I still make pounds into francs to know what a sum means,” he explained, smilingly, after a moment. “Once I would have thought that a great fortune—and only a few months ago, too, at that.”

“Well, you see how it is,” said Dicky. “I mustn't let any chance slip by. But if I stood in your shoes, dear God! how I would chuck it all!”

“But what would you do instead?” Christian propounded this question sitting back in his chair, with the tips of his fingers joined, and a calm twinkle in his eye. He discovered himself feeling as if it were his companion who had made confessions and craved sympathy.

Dicky looked into his hat, and pouted his lips in whimsical indecision. “What I mean is,” he explained at last—“my point was this—I hate the whole thing, and if I didn't have to do it, why then I wouldn't do it, d'ye see? I'd go about with nobody except the people I really cared about—my right-down, intimate friends. That's the idea.”

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“Ah—friends!” said Christian. “That is the word that sings in my ears!”

He rose impulsively, and began walking about the room with a restless step. Now and again he halted briefly to look down upon his companion, to enforce with eyes as well as gesture some special thing in his talk. “Yes, friends!” he cried. “Tell me, you Dicky Westland, where are friends to be found? Have you some, perhaps? Then where did you come upon them? It is what I should like very much to know. Listen to me! I have been in England six months. I possess in England, say two—three—no, five friends—and all these came to me in my first week here. All but one belong to my family, so they were here, ready-made for me. But since that time, now that I am for myself, I have not gained one friend. Is there then something strange—what do I say—forbidding in me? Or no—it is nonsense for me to say that. It is the other way about. I have seen nobody who awakened voices within me. There has been no one who appealed to me as a friend should appeal. I live among a thousand rich and fine people who are as good to me as they know how to be—and yet I am as if I lived in a desert. And it is very cold—and lonely—and heartbreaking in this desert of mine!”

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Westland looked at him, as he stood now in the pathetic abandonment of his peroration, with a contemplative squint in one eye.

"I see what you mean," he remarked finally. "You've been looking for flesh and blood, and you find only gun-metal." He thrust out his lips a little, and gave further consideration to the problem. "There isn't any need for you to go away, you know," he added after a pause. "You can have any kind of life you like in London. It is all here, if you want it. But what is it that you do want?"

Christian threw himself sidewise into his chair, and bent his head with a sigh. Then, with a new light in his eyes, he looked up. "You yourself said it"—he exclaimed—"to see only my true friends. That is my idea of life: To have a small circle of people whom I love very much, and to make constant opportunities to be with some of them—talking as we like to talk, going about together, making life happy for one another as we go along. All my youth, I envied rich people, because I thought that they used their wealth to command this greatest of delights. I imagined that if one had much money, then one could afford to spend his time only with his close, dear friends. But what I discover is that they do something

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entirely different. They seem not to let friendship come into their lives at all. They desire only acquaintances, and of these the more they have the better, if they bear the proper cachet."

"It is the women," said Dicky, sententiously. "They like the crowd, and the new faces. And what they like, of course they have. They run the whole show."

Christian nodded comprehension—then put out a hand to signalize a reservation. "I know women—here in England—who have a higher idea than this," he declared, softly.

"Of course, so we all do," assented Westland. "There are a million splendid women, if one could only get at them. But it's a sort of trades union, don't you know. You don't take the workmen you want, on your own terms; you take those the society gives you, and the terms are arranged for you. It's like that with women. You meet some awfully jolly girls now and then, but they are not in the least degree their own masters. If you try to get to know them well, either they're frightened, and pull back into their shells, or you're headed off by their mothers. But," he added upon reflection—"of course it's different with you."

"At least I am not interested," said Chris-

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tian, wearily. The advice of Kathleen had produced upon his mind an even greater effect, perhaps, than he imagined. He had encountered, by the dozen, extremely beautiful and engaging girls, whose charm should have been enhanced in his eyes by the dignity and even grandeur of their surroundings. But an impalpable yet efficient barrier had stood always between them and him. If they exhibited reserve, he was too shy for words. If they expanded toward him with smiles or any freedom of demeanor, he recalled instantly the warning of Emanuel's wife, and that was fatal. "I have not cared for any of them," he reaffirmed.

"Oh!" cried Westland of a sudden, his comely, boyish face beaming with the thought that had come to him. "How stupid of me! I'd forgotten what I came for—and I'm not sure it doesn't precisely fill the bill. Are you doing anything to-night? Will you come with me to the Hanover Theater at midnight? It's the five-hundredth performance of 'Pansy Blossoms'—and there's to be supper on the stage and a dance. I don't think you've seen much of that sort of thing, have you?"

Christian shook his head, and regarded his companion doubtfully. "Nothing at all of it," he said, slowly. "But it does not attract

me very much, I'm afraid. You would better take some one else. I should be a fish out of water there. The people of the theaters—they are not congenial to me—that is, I do not think they would be."

"But, hang it all, man, how do you know till you've tried?" Dicky put a little worldly authority into his tone as he proceeded. "You mustn't mind my saying it to you—it is you who make your own desert, as you call it, for yourself. If you say in advance that you know you won't like this sort of person, or that, how are you ever going to form any friendships?"

Christian received the remonstrance with meekness. "You do not quite understand me," he said, amiably enough. "I have some work to do in the world, and I don't think that actresses and actors would help me much to do it. The young men who run after them do not seem, somehow, to do much else. It is only a prejudice I have; it applies only to myself. If others feel differently, why, I have not a word to say."

"No, you must come!" Westland declared, rising. "It's nonsense for you not to see that side of things. My dear fellow, it's as respectable as the Royal Academy—or Madame Tussaud's. Are you dining any-

where? Then I'll run home and dress, and I'll drive round here for you. We'll dine together, and then look in at some of the halls. Shall I say seven? It gives us more time over our dinner."

Christian accepted, with a rueful little smile, his committal to the enterprise. "You must not mind if I come away early," he said, getting to his feet in turn.

The other laughed at him. "My dear man, you'll never want to come away at all. But no, seriously—it's just the kind of thing you want. It'll amuse you, for one thing—and deuce take it, you'll be young only once in your life. But more than that—here you are swearing that you'll do no more social work at all, and you don't know in the least what other resources are open to you. It isn't alone actresses that you meet at a place like this, but all sorts of clever people who know how to get what there is out of life. That is what you yourself want to do, isn't it? Well, it'll do you no harm, to say the least, to see how they go about it."

"Very likely," Christian replied, as the other turned. "I will be ready at seven."

He followed him to the door, and into the hallway. "Mind," he said, half jokingly, half gravely, as he leaned over the banister, "I have not altogether promised. When

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midnight comes, I may lose my courage altogether."

"Ah, it's that kind of timidity that storms every fortress in its path," Dicky called up to him from the stairway.

CHAPTER XIV

The two young men dined at the Café Royal. "It's as good a kitchen as there is in London, and in the matter of people it isn't such a tiresome repetition of those one meets everywhere else as Willis's or the Prince's. To see the same shoulders and the same necks, night after night—a fellow gets tired of it."

To this explanation by Dicky of his choice, as they rolled forward in their hansom, Christian made no direct response. After a little he said: "Very soon now, I am going to do something that seems to have been in my mind for months. Perhaps I have only thought of it since this afternoon: I cannot be sure. But I am going to do it—I am going to know for myself what the real London and the real England are like. A thousand gentlemen in black clothes and silk hats, a thousand ladies with low-cut dresses and feathers in their hair—all thinking and talking about themselves and their own little affairs—that does not mean London. And a few large houses in the country, where these

same people spend a few months riding after the hounds and shooting tame birds and wearying each other with idle, sleepy talk—that does not represent England.”

“Doesn’t it!” cried Westland. “I should say that’s just what it did, worse luck!”

“No, no!” protested Christian. “I don’t want to be told that it does—for then I should want to go away altogether. No—there is the other thing, and I am going to find it out, and see it and know it. When all those years of my boyhood and youth I was so proud of being an Englishman, it was not this empty, valueless life of the West End, or the chase of foxes and birds in the country, that I longed for, and nourished pride in.”

“Oh, but they do other things, you know,” laughed Dicky. “They are in Parliament, some of them, or they are at the bar, or in the Services, or they manage estates or are directors in companies, and that sort of thing. And some of them go in a lot for charities, and work on committees and organize things, you know. You’d hardly believe how much of that most of the women let themselves in for.”

“That is not what I mean,” said the other, rather abruptly. “To me all that is not worth the snap of a finger,” and he empha-

sized his words by a gesture with the hand which rested on the door of the hansom.

At an advanced stage of the dinner, the young men came to the subject again. In reply to a random inquiry Christian said that his grandfather, the duke, as far as he knew, was neither worse nor better in health than he had been all winter. "I have not been to Caermere since my first visit," he went on. "I am really living upon a programme arranged for me, I should think, by a committee of my relations. Lord Lingfield is my active bear-leader. He conducts me, or sends me, wherever it has been decided that I shall go. It was not deemed important that I should go to Caermere again—and so I have not gone. Voilà tout! If I had been free to myself, I think I should have gone."

"It must be an awfully jolly place, from the pictures I've seen of it," said Westland.

"Jolly!" cried Christian. "My dear creature, it is a grave, a mausoleum, a place of skulls and dead men's bones! You have never seen such a family vault in all your days. When I even begin to think of undertaking the task of brightening it into life again, I grow dizzy. The immensity of the work unnerves me. And now I do not know if I shall ever put my hand to it. The country-gentleman idea—which you make so

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much of in England—it does not appeal to me. It is too idle—too purposeless. Of course my cousin Emanuel, he makes a terrible toil of it—and does some wonderful things, beyond doubt. But after all, what does it come to? He helps people to be extremely fine who without him would only be tolerably fine. But I have the feeling that one should help those who are not fine at all—who have never had the chance to be fine, who do not know what it means. Emanuel's wife—oh, a very lovely character—she said to me that they disliked coming up to town, the sight of the London poor distressed them so much. Well, that is the point—if I am to help anybody at all, it is the London poor that I should try to help. Emanuel's plan is to give extra bones, and teach new tricks, to dogs already very comfortable. My heart warms to the dogs without collars, the homeless and hungry devils who look for bones in the gutters."

"Oh, you're going in for settlements and that sort of thing," commented Dicky. "I hear that is rather disappointing work. If you don't take the sporting papers at the reading-room they say the men won't come at all. Slingsby Chetwynd was awfully keen on the thing. He went down to stop a whole week—at Shoreditch or Houndsditch or the

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Isle of Dogs, or somewhere like that—and a woman smashed his hat in, and he fell into a cellar—and he was jolly glad to get back again the same night.”

Christian was pursuing thoughts of his own. The wine was admirable—as indeed it should have been considering the pains Dicky had been at, with pursed lips and lifted eyebrows, in the selection of it—and Christian had found an unaccustomed pleasure in its aromatic, sub-acid taste. He had drunk rather freely of it, and was satisfied with himself for having done so. He leaned back in his chair now, and watching the golden fountain of bubbles forever streaming upward in his glass, mused upon welcome new impulses within him toward the life of a free man.

“None the less,” he remarked, indifferent to the irrelevancy of his theme, “I should have liked to go to Caermere during the winter. I am annoyed with myself now that I did not go—whether it was arranged for me or not. There is a lady there for whom I felt great sympathy. I had expected to be of service to her long before this—but I am of service to no one. She is a cousin—no doubt you know her—Lady Cressage.”

“But she is in London,” put in Westland.
“I only know her a little, but Lady Selton

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used to be by way of seeing a good deal of her. She told me last week that she was in town—taken a little flat somewhere—Victoria Street way, I think. She doesn't go in for being very smart, you know. Why—yes—of course she's your cousin by marriage. Awfully pretty woman she was. Gad! how well I remember her season! All the fellows went quite off their heads. How funny—that she should be your cousin!"

Christian took no note of his companion's closing words, or of the tone in which they had been uttered. He scowled at the playful bubbles in his glass, as he reflected that the news of her arrival in London ought not to have come to him in this roundabout, accidental way. Why did none of his own people tell him? Or still more to the point, why had not she herself told him? He really had given her only an occasional and sporadic thought, during these past four or five months. Now, as he frowned at his wine, it seemed to him that his whole winter had been burdened with solicitude for her. Or no, "burdened" was an ungracious word, and false to boot. He would say "mellowed" or "enriched" instead.

"You must find out for me"—he began, and then, upon a second thought born of pique, checked himself. "Or do not mind—

it is of no consequence. I shall hear as a matter of course." He called for the bill with a decision in his voice which seemed full of warning that the topic was exhausted.

Westland could not help observing the fat roll of crackling white notes which the other drew from his pocket. If they were all of the smallest denomination, they must still represent something like his whole year's allowance. The general understanding that Christian's unfamiliarity with English ways excused, and even invited, wise admonition from his friends, prompted him to speak.

"That's rather a lot to carry about with you, old man," he said, in gentle expostulation.

"Oh, I like it!" Christian declared, with shining eyes. He snapped the elastic band about the roll, with an air of boyish delight in the sound, as he returned it to his pocket. "If you knew the years in which I counted my sous!"

It was nearly ten o'clock when they left. Beginning with the Pavilion, they went to four or five music halls, only to find that there were no seats to be had. "Why, of course it's the boat-race," exclaimed Dicky at last. "Stupid of me to have forgotten it. I say, I ought to have come for you this morning, and taken you up the river to see

it. It's worth seeing—for once. I wonder Lingfield did not arrange it for you."

"Oh, several people asked me to join their parties," Christian replied. "But it did not attract me. The athletics here—they rather annoy me. It is as if people thought of nothing else. And to have students at the universities consumed with the idea—that is specially unpleasant to my mind. You must remember—I am a teacher by profession."

"We'll go back to the Empire," Westland decided. "Ever been there? Well, it's worth seeing, too—perhaps more than once. The Johnnies 'll be out in extraordinary force, I'm afraid, but then you ought to see them too, I suppose. It takes all sorts to make a world—and the world is what you've come out to look at. Let me get the tickets—or, well, if you insist—ask for the promenade."

It was indeed a novel spectacle, which smote and confused his eyes, rather than revealed itself to them, when Christian found himself inside. The broad, low, rounded promenade was so crowded with people that at first sight walking about seemed wholly impracticable, but Dicky stepped confidently into the jumbled throng and began moving through it, apparently with ease, and the other followed him. They made their way to the end, where a man in

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uniform guarded a staircase; then, turning, they elbowed along back to the opposite end of the half-circle. This gained, there was nothing in Dicky's thoughts, seemingly, but to repeat the performance indefinitely. Their progress was of a necessity slow. On the inner side a dense wall of backs and high hats rendered hopeless any notion of seeing the stage below. Christian, struggling after his guide, wondered what else there was to see.

After a time it became obvious to him that the women who formed so large an element of the lazily shifting crowd were also the occasion of its being. They walked about, looking the men in the face with a cold, free, impassive scrutiny upon which, even if he had never seen it before, intuition would have fixed a label for him. Other women, from the plush seats on the outer edge of the circle, bent upon the whole moving mass of promenaders the same stoical, inscrutable gaze. The range of age among them did not seem extended to his uninformed glance. In years they were apparently all about alike. Some, indeed, had fresher faces and smoother skins than others, but when the eyes were considered a certain indefinable equality was insisted upon in them all. Their toilets were often striking in effect,

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and especially their hats—exaggerating both in breadth of brim, and in the height and bulk of the edifice of plumes above, the prevalent fashion in such matters—were notable to the spectator; but Christian found himself, upon consideration, more interested in their eyes than in anything else.

A certain stony quality in this stereotyped gaze of theirs suggested a parallel to his memory; he had seen precisely that same cool, unruffled, consciously unconscious stare in princesses who had looked at him without beholding him in the far-away days of his life about the hotels of the Riviera. It was very curious, he thought—this incongruous resemblance. But a little closer analysis showed that the likeness was but partial. These ladies of the promenade could look about them with the imperturbability of princesses, it was true, but only so long as they saw nothing which concerned them immediately. Nay, now he could discern beneath the surface of this passionless perustration a couched vigilance of attention, which ever and again flashed uppermost with electric swiftness. When this mercurial change came, one saw the temperament mapped out like a landscape under the illumination of lightning. There gleamed forth expectancy, dread, joy,

irritability, fun, dislike or wistful hope—whatever the mood of the instant yielded—with a force of intensity almost startling. Then, as quickly as it came, the look might vanish; even if it flickered on, the briefest interval of repose brought back again the watchful, dispassionate, hardened regard.

“Have you had enough of this?” Dicky asked, with an implication of weariness in his tone.

Christian, halting, took slow and bewildered cognizance of the fact that he had been going from one end of the promenade to the other for a very long time. Insensibly, at some period of the experience, he had taken the lead from his companion, and had been dragging him about in his wake.

“It is very interesting,” was the vague excuse he offered to Dicky, and even more to himself.

A sofa just beside them was for the moment unoccupied. Christian seated himself with the air of one physically tired out. “Ought we not to order drinks?” he asked his companion, who stood over him, looking down somewhat doubtfully.

“Oh, dear, no—not here!” Dicky replied, with conviction. “It’s nearly closing time—and we’ll go over to the club for half an

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hour—where we know our tippie. Shall we run along now?"

"No—sit down here," said Christian. He spoke with the authority of a profound emotion, that glowed in his eyes and quivered on his lips. Westland obeyed him, pretending to a nonchalance which his mistrustful glance belied.

"This is all very extraordinary to me," Christian continued, in a low, strenuous voice. He spoke with even more than his wonted fluency. "It catches hold of me. It fills my mind with new thoughts. There is something in the very air here—"

"Musk and cigarette smoke," interposed Dicky, lightly. Then he saw that levity struck a false note.

"Pah!" the other jerked forth, impatiently. "Don't talk like that! It is the most terrible, the most touching, the most inspiring thing I have seen in my life. I breathe in a new ambition here, out of this atmosphere. We were talking of the London poor. I thought they made the loudest appeal—but they are nothing beside *this!*" He spread his thin, nervous hand out as he spoke, and swept it in a comprehensive gesture over the spectacle before them. "These are my sisters—my unhappy and dishonored sisters, scorned and scornful—oh, yes, they are all my sisters!"

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“But fortunately they don’t know it,” urged Dicky, surveying the ladies with pouting lips and half-closed eyes. “For God’s sake, don’t mention it to them.”

Christian turned round, with one knee on the sofa, and claimed his companion’s attention. “I wanted to be able to add you to my very little list of friends,” he said, gravely. “All the evening I have had that in my mind—and it may be something else, too. But if you cannot understand me, now, when I tell you how all this moves me—and if you only care to mock at what I say—why, then, it is not needful to say more.”

Dicky faced about in turn, and regarded him with a puzzled glance, from which he was at pains to exclude all signs of frivolity. “But you haven’t told me *how* it moves you at all,” he said, vaguely.

“Oh, how,” repeated Christian with hesitation. “It is not easy to say just how. But I am devoured by a great compassion. I could weep tears at the heart-misery I see here. They shout in the papers and wring their hands over the massacre of Armenians—but right here—this thing—is it not more cruel and dreadful still? Here there is no question of race hatreds and religious hatreds, but just the cold, implacable

pressure of poverty on human souls, crushing them and sinking them in shame."

"Oh, that's only a part of the story—not such a deuce of a big part either," urged the other, gently. "Don't get so excited about it, my dear fellow. It is by no means a new thing. And wait till you know more about it, and have thought it over—and then, if you feel that there is anything you can do, why, take my word for it, it will still be here. It won't disappear in the meanwhile. You'll still be in time."

Christian regarded him wistfully, and with a mild, faint smile. "You would never enter into my feelings about this," he said, softly. "We are made differently. It strikes you as strange, does it not, that a young man, coming into contact with this for the first time, should be filled only with the yearning to help these poor girls, and do good to them? It surprises you? It is something new to you, *n'est ce pas?*"

Dicky grinned within decorous limits. "My dear boy," he declared, confidentially, "so far from being new, it's the oldest thing in the world. Every young fellow worth his salt that I have ever known, or that anybody's ever known, has swelled himself out with precisely these same reform sentiments. In this very promenade here I have witnessed

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at least a dozen attacks like yours. And don't think I am jeering at the thing. It is a very beautiful and generous spirit indeed, and I admire it awfully, I assure you—only—only, as one gets to know his way about a trifle better, he sees that there isn't so much in it as he thought there was. And that's what I was trying to say to you. Don't let your first impulses run away with you. If the subject interests you, appeals to you, very well; get to understand it. You will find that it is more complicated, perhaps, than you think. But when you know it all, why, then you can do what you like."

Some of the light seemed to have been turned out. A definitive blare rolled up from the orchestra below; the throng of promenaders, though still informed by the most leisurely of moods, was converging upon the door of exit. The two young men arose.

Christian suddenly yawned. "I am tired—and depressed," he said, wearily. "I think I will ask you to let me go home."

"Nonsense!" said Dicky, promptly. "We'll go to the club, and get a pick-up, and then you shall see something that won't depress you. I grant you this *is* rather melancholy. God knows why we came."

An hour or more later, emerging from a

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confusing sequence of narrow passages and winding ascents and descents, Christian followed Westland out through a groove of painted canvas to the stage of the Hanover Theater.

He had never seen a theater from this point of view, and the first few minutes of his scrutiny—here where he stood at the wings, while Dicky looked after the coats and hats—were full of pleased interest. The huge dusky space of the galleries overhead, strange and formidable in its dark bulk like some giant balloon, was very impressive. By contrast, the stage itself seemed to give out light. A long riband of a table stretched across the back, and down the two sides, and about this clustered many people; shining shirt-fronts and bald heads, pale shimmering dresses and white shoulders, the glitter of napery and plates and glasses—all was radiant under the powerful electric glow from above. He could see now, in the half-shadows down beyond the footlights, two or three rows of heads of people sitting in the front stalls. To his fancy these detached heads appeared to belong to an order of beings quite distinct from those on the stage. He wondered if actors felt their audiences to be thus remote and aloof from themselves.

“We can push our way in at the other end

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—there's less of a crush there," he heard Dicky say to him. He followed his guide across the stage, through groups of conversing guests who had brought out their sandwiches and glasses from the throng, and came eventually to the table itself. Some one held out a bottle toward him, and he lifted a glass to be filled. From under some other stranger's arm he extricated a plate, containing something in gelatine, he knew not what. In straightening himself he pushed against a person unexpectedly close behind him.

Half turning, with the murmur of an apology upon his lips, his eyes encountered those of a lady, who seemed to know him, and to be smiling at him.

"How d'ye do?" this lady said to him. There could be no doubt about the cordiality of her tone. Her left hand was occupied with a champagne glass and a fan, but her right was being lifted to him, almost against his breast, in greeting. He gazed at her in smiling perplexity, the while he signed that both his own hands were filled.

"You don't know me from Adam," she said to him, cheerfully. "But I'm your cousin—Cora Torr, you know."

CHAPTER XV

"You've altered so much since I saw you! It was odds against my recognizing you at all," declared Cora, beaming forth into conversation before Christian had fairly grasped the significance of her identity.

"I should never have believed they would make such an Englishman out of you, in just these few months. Let's see—it was October, wasn't it? Yes, of course—the First." She showed her beautiful teeth in a flash of gaiety. "The pheasants weren't the only ones that got hit that day. But bygones are bygones. . . . And how do you like London? How do you find it compares with Paris? I always maintain that there's more real life here, if you know where to look for it. . . . But I am afraid you're not glad to see me."

"There you are wrong. I am glad to see you," Christian replied, with deliberation. He made his words good by thrusting his plate back upon the table and shaking her gloved hand. There was a frank smile in his eyes.

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“Get my glass filled again,” she suggested —“and your own too—and let’s get out of the way. These people push as if they had had nothing to eat since Christmas. Of all the hogs in evening clothes, the stage-supper hog is the worst. Well, and how have you been, all this time?”

They had moved across the stage to the entrance, and paused near it in a little nook of momentary isolation. Christian made conventional answer to her query, and to other remarks of hers calling for no earnest attention, the while he concentrated his thoughts upon the fact that they were actually standing here together, talking like old friends.

It was sufficiently surprising, this fact, but even more remarkable was the satisfaction he himself was getting from it. There was no room for doubt; he really enjoyed being with her. There was no special need to concern himself with what she was saying. She hardly paused for replies, and seemed not to mind in the least the automatic character of the few which came to her. He had only to smile a little, and nod, and let his eyes glow pleurably, and she went blithely on. The perception came suddenly to him that he had been sorry also for her. Indeed, now that he reflected upon it, had

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not hers been the most cruel misfortune of all? The memory of the drawn, agonized mask of a face she had shown, over the tea-table in the conservatory at Caermere, rose in his mind's vision. He looked up at the strips of canvas and lamps above, with half-closed eyes, recalling in reverie the details of this suffering face; then he turned abruptly to confront her, and observe afresh the happy contrast she presented to-night.

Cora was looking away for the instant, and apparently conveying by lifted eyebrows and shakes of the head a message of some sort to some person on the bustling stage unknown to him. He glanced instinctively in the direction of her signal, but gained no information—and indeed realized at once that he was not in search of any. Of course, she knew everybody here, and would be exchanging nods and smiles of recognition all the evening. It occurred to him to wonder if her husband, that Captain Edward of unpleasant memory, was on the stage, but he had the power to put the thought promptly out of his mind. It was only Cora that he was interested in, and that he wanted to talk with. And here she was, once more looking into his face, and restoring by her smile his almost jocund pleasure in the situation.

He still maintained the rôle of listener,

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but it grew increasingly clear to him that when his turn came he would have a good deal to say, and that he would say it well. He had never spoken on familiar terms with an actress before—and the experience put him wonderfully at his ease. He felt that he could say things to her; already he delighted in the assurance of her receptivity, her immunity from starched nonsense, her genial and comforting good fellowship. As he continued to look at her, and to smile, he remembered what people always said, or rather took for granted, about ladies on the stage. The consciousness shaped itself within him that she offered a timely and felicitous compromise—a sort of bridge between those formal, “gun-metal” women of society whom he desired never to see again, and those hapless, unblest creatures of the Empire.

Presently she took his arm, and they moved round to the stalls in front, and found seats a little apart from any one else. A large number of young ladies, in white or light-hued evening dresses, were seated about in the rows before them, and Cora pointed out this one and that among them to Christian. “That is Dolly Montessor—the dancer, you know—her photos are all the rage just now. The girl in pink, over there—just turning round

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—she is the one who sued young Concannon for breach of promise. You must remember. Her lawyers put the bailiffs in for what she owed them, after they'd taken everything the jury gave her, and she dressed the bailiffs in livery and had them wait at the table at a big supper she gave. The little thick-nosed dark man there—next but one to her—he drew a check for the supper and the bailiffs too. You see the small, thin girl with the tomato-colored hair—she didn't bring *her* suit into court—one isn't fox-headed for nothing. She settled outside at the last minute—the Lord Carmody case, you know—and no one's ever heard a whisper of any supper she ever gave. It isn't at all her line. She puts it all into South Africans; they say she's good for thirty thousand pounds, if she's got a penny. It isn't bad, you know, on a salary of six quid, and only the pantomime season at that. Oh, there's Peggy Wiltshire—just in the doorway. She's the most remarkable woman in England. How old would you think she was? Forty? Why, my dear man, she was billed as a star in the old original Black Crook—just about the time I was born. She can't be a minute under sixty. But look at her—the neck and shoulders of a girl! Isn't it amazing! Why, she was knocking about town when your

father was a youngster—and here she is still going strong.”

The tables were being cleared from the stage, and the fringe of gentlemen who remained hungry and thirsty was retiring slowly and with palpable reluctance toward the wings. Some sad-faced musicians emerged wearily from an unsuspected cave beneath the footlights, and exhibited their violins and flutes to the general gaze with an air of profound dejection. Their fiddle strings began to whine at one another, in a perfunctory and bad-tempered groping about for something they were expected to have in common. A stout man on the stage vigorously superintended the removal of the last table, and warned off with a comprehensive gesture the lingering remnant of unsated raveners; then, turning, he lifted his hand. On the instant, some score and more of the young ladies in white and pale pinks and blues and lavenders rose from their front stalls, and moved toward the stage door at the left. They pressed forward like a flock of sheep—and with faces as listlessly vacant as any pasture could afford. Christian observed their mechanical exit with a curling lip.

“If these are the renowned beauties, whose fascinations turn the heads of all the young

men about town," he confided to his companion, "then it says extremely little for the quality of what is inside those heads."

"Yes, isn't it extraordinary!" she mused at him, eyeing the bevy of celebrities with a ruminating glance. "This must be somewhere near the sixth or seventh lot of 'em that even I've seen passing through the turnstile, as you might say. Where do they all come from?—and good heavens! where do they all go to? It's a procession that never stops, you know. You'd think there was a policeman, keeping it moving. You have these girls here—well, they're the queens, just for the minute. They own the earth. Nothing in the world is too good for them. Very well: just behind them are some other girls, a few years younger. Goodness knows where they were to-night—in the back ranks of the ballets, perhaps, or doing their little turn at the Paragon or the Canterbury, or doing nothing at all—nothing but keeping their toes pointed in this direction. And they are treading close on the heels of these queens you see here; and behind *them* are girls of sixteen or so, and behind *them* the little chits of ten and twelve—and they're all pushing along—and in time each lot gets in front, out under the limelight, and has its little year on the

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throne—and then gets shoved off to make room for the next. You might have seen two-thirds of these men here ten years ago. But not the women. Oh, no! Only here and there one—an old stager like Polly Wiltshire—or a middle-aged stager like myself. But we're merely salt to the porridge."

"But do you not wish to dance?" he asked her. The orchestra had begun a waltz, and the young ladies from the front stalls, each now attached to a stiffly gyrating male figure, were circling about on the stage, with a floating, wave-like swing of their full skirts which revealed to those below in the stalls rhythmic glimpses of whisking feet and trim black ankles.

"I will dance with you with pleasure," she replied, promptly.

"Unfortunately"—he began with confusion—"it is ridiculous of me, but I never learned."

"Oh, then, we will sit here and talk," she insisted. "I truly don't want to dance. It's ever so much cooler and more comfortable here. One has to come to these things, you know—you have to show yourself or you're like the man who fell out of the balloon—simply not in it. But they're all alike—all deadly stupid unless you're young and want to

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kick your legs about—or unless you find some one you're particularly glad to see."

Christian did not seek to evade the implication of the genial glance with which she pointed this last remark. "Yes, it is good of you to stay here with me," he declared. "Except you and my friend who brought me here—I thought I saw him dancing a moment ago—I don't know a soul. I have been saying to-day," he continued, settling down in his seat toward her, "that I make friends badly—I remain here in England almost a stranger."

"Why, I thought you went everywhere. I know I'm forever seeing your name in the 'Morning Post.' You spell it Tower, I notice."

"Oh, yes, I have been going everywhere—but going as one goes alone through a gallery of pictures. I do not bring out any friends with me."

She stole a swift glance at him, as she fanned herself. "You surprise me," she commented. "I should have thought everybody would be running after you."

"Do they? I am not conscious of it." He spoke wearily. "If they do, it does not interest me. They are not my kind of people. They take no hold whatever upon my sympathy. They make no appeal to the imagination."

"You could hardly say that about those ladies' skirts up there," she jocosely remarked. "I had no idea silk petticoats flapped so."

He was not to be diverted from his theme. "It is very funny about me," he went on. "I seem to make no friends among men, of my own age or any other. Of course there are two or three exceptions—but no more. And as for the majority of women, they attract me still less. Yet when, once in a great while, I do meet some one who really interests me, it is always a woman. These few women whom I have in mind—oh, I could count them on the fingers of one hand—they make a much deeper and more lasting impression on me than any man can make."

"I believe that frequently happens," she put in lightly. She did not seem to him to be following his thread of reasoning with conspicuous closeness, but her pleasant smile reassured him.

"I think I am most readily moved on the side of my compassion," he continued, intent upon the development of his self-analysis. "If I am sorry for the people, it is easier for me to like them—that is, if they are young and pretty women."

Cora laughed aloud at this, then lapsed

abruptly into thoughtfulness. "How do you mean?" she asked.

"To-night I went to the place of the—the promenade—the Empire, is it not? And the sight of the young women there—it terribly affected me. I wanted to shout out that they were all my sisters—that I would protect them all—that they should never be forced by poverty and want to face that miserable humiliation again." She looked at him, her lips parted over the beautiful teeth, a certain blankness of non-comprehension in the beautiful eyes. As she slowly grasped the drift of his words, the eyes and lips joined in a reserved and baffling smile. "You're a nice boy," she decided, "but you're tremendously young. Those girls are lazy, greedy, good-for-nothing hussies. They wouldn't do honest work for a living if it was brought to them on a silver salver. They haven't an idea in their empty painted heads except to wheedle or steal money from drunken fools. They're nothing but—what d'ye call 'em?—parasites. I'd put 'em all on the treadmill, if I had my way."

Christian sat up a little, and she was alert in noting the signs of disaffection on his mobile face. "Nevertheless, there is a great sorrow and a great shame in it all," he said, gravely.

“Oh, that I admit,” she declared, making busy work with her fan. “Of course! Perhaps I spoke more sharply than I meant. Every one is sorry for the poor creatures—but—but I confess I’m sorrier still for the girls who have to work like slaves for the barest necessities of life. Why, my dress-maker’s girls, two of ’em—poor little half-starved sisters who may come at nine or ten o’clock at night to deliver things, or try something on—they get twenty-five shillings a week between them. That’s what gets on *my* nerve.”

He preserved silence for a time, then suddenly sat upright and faced her. A new light shone in his eyes. “I am the dullest person on earth,” he protested. “All this time I have not thought of it. I want to ask you a thousand things about your sister. Did you not know?—She is my oldest friend in England.”

Cora drew a long breath, and held up her fan for a protracted and attentive inspection. “Oh, yes—you mean Frank,” she said, tentatively.

“Frank? Is that her name? She works. She has a machine à écrire—a typewriter it is called. You must tell me about her! Is she very well? And where is she to be found? How shall I go about it to recall

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myself to her?" As there came no immediate response, he put his further meditations into dreamy words: "She spoke the first kind words to me, here in England. I bade farewell to France and the old hard life, in her company. It was she who pointed with her finger for me to have my first look at England—the little, rose-colored island in the green water, with the purple clouds above it. It seemed that we were very close together—on that one day. And I was so full of the thought of seeing her very soon again! And that was September—and now it is very nearly May! . . . But you have not told me! Where is it that she is to be found? Where does she live?"

"She lives at home with my people," Cora replied, still with reflective deliberation. It was with a visible effort that she shook off the preoccupied air into which she had lapsed. "But you don't want to go there—it's out of the world—red-busses and green-busses and a tram and that sort of thing. But she has an office now of her own; that's where you'd find her most easily. Bless me if I know where it is—it's between the Strand and the Embankment, but I never can remember which is Norfolk Street and which Arundel Street—and really I'm not sure she's on either. But my brother is

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here. I'll ask him, presently. And so you know Frank?"

"Ah, yes, but you know her better still," said Christian, softly, nestling again into the corner of his chair nearest her. "I wanted you to tell me about her."

"Oh, well—but what is there to tell?" she made answer, vaguely. "She is a good girl; she's frightfully clever; she works very hard, and gives most of her money to her mamma; she's successful, too, because she's got a shop of her own, at last—and—and—that's about all, isn't it? You know, we're not by way of seeing much of each other. There's no quarrel, of course—not the least in the world—but I'm too frivolous to be in her class at all. I dare say it's my fault—I ought to go and look her up. That's what I will do, too, one of these days. But—you mustn't misunderstand me—she's an awfully good girl, that is, of course, if you like that sort of girl. And she's pretty, too, don't you think?"

"Yes, I think so," affirmed Christian, almost with solemnity. "What time would she come to her office—in the morning, I mean?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" laughed Cora. "At some ghastly hour, when they have breakfast, I believe, in cabmen's shelters, and the

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streets haven't been swept. I know it only by hearsay. I've never stopped up quite as late as that, you know. But you see something like it, driving round by Covent Garden on your way home from a late dance, to see the flowers. Have you ever done that?"

Christian shook his head. The idea attracted him, apparently. "At what hour is it?" he asked, with interest.

"Oh, four or five or something like that. It's really the prettiest sight you ever saw. I used to go often, at this time of year, and take home a cabload of flowers. But I am getting too old now—and too serious-minded. The mother of a family—you know."

Christian looked at his watch. "It has occurred to me"—he suggested, hesitatingly—"it is now after two—perhaps we could make a party to go this morning. The dancing will not stop earlier, will it?"

On the stage nothing seemed further from any mind than stopping. There was some complicated kind of set dance in progress, which at the moment involved the spectacle of some score of couples, hands all joined, romping madly around in a gigantic ring. The dresses whirled more wildly than ever; the men crooked their legs and hung outward from the circle as they went, stamping

their feet and laughing boisterously. Christian's eyes singled out one young man who seemed to be making most noise of all—and then he perceived that it was Dicky Westland.

“Perhaps it might be arranged,” Cora replied, after consideration, and with a side-long eye upon her companion. “I will go behind for a moment, and find my brother, and see what he says. No, you stop here. I will come back again.”

So many people were moving about with entire individual freedom, that he offered no objection to her departure. She pushed her way confidently yet affably past the others in the row, and disappeared at the stage door. He had no clues by which to follow her in fancy after that. Once he thought he distinguished her at the back of the stage—but for the rest it was her sister rather than the friendly Cora who engaged his thoughts. The idea that he was to see her again, quite without delay, seemed to illuminate his whole mind.

In the labyrinth of shunted scenery behind the back-curtain, and along the narrow corridors of dressing-rooms, now devoted to varying hospitable uses, Cora prosecuted what was for a time a fruitless search.

“Where are the gentlemen getting their

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drinks?" she asked at last of a cloak-room attendant, and the answer simplified her task. Downstairs, at the door of the manager's room, she was lucky enough to hit upon Major Pirie. "Tell Eddy that I want him, will you, old man," she said, nodding with assurance toward the crowded, smoky little interior, "and if that brother of mine is in there, I want to see him for a minute, too."

The brother came out first—a slender, overdressed youth, with a face which suggested a cheap and inferior copy of Cora's. It had the self-complacency without the high spirits—the comeliness of line without the delicacy of texture and charm of color. He was obviously young in years, but he regarded her through the eyes of an elderly and wearied person.

"Hello," he said, amiably enough. "Goin' to take Eddy home? He won't be the worse for a friendly lead. Oh, he's all right, though, up to now. He's got rippin' odds against Perambulator from Hoskins, seventy to three, you know, in fivers. Try and get him to let me in on the bet, will you? I offered to take half of it, the minute the bet was made—but he didn't answer me. You can work it, if you try, old girl."

"What's Frank's address—her office, I

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mean?" she put in abruptly. "Got a pencil? Go and get one from somebody. Thirty-two A, you say? Thanks! Now tell Eddy to come out."

"But what's up? What do you want with Frank? Anything I can tell her?"

"Never you mind! And don't lisp a word to her, or to Eddy or to any one else. If it comes off, it'll be a beano for the lot of us."

"Right you are," he assented, with a glimmer of animation. "But say, you won't forget about the Hoskins bet, will you? If I could even have a third of it! I could do with some odd sovereigns just now, and no mistake."

"Sh-h! Here he comes. You run away now, d'ye see; I want to talk with Eddy."

Captain Edward emerged from the haze of cigarette smoke which veiled the throng within the manager's room. "Well?" he demanded, with a kind of sulky eagerness.

"I haven't told him you were here," Cora began, under her breath, drawing her husband aside down the passage. "It didn't seem to come into the talk. He thinks I'm here with Tom."

Edward looked down upon his wife, with a slow, ponderous glance of mingled hope and uneasiness. He pulled at his small

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yellow mustache, and aimlessly jingled some keys in his pocket.

"You've had nearly two hours with him, you know," he protested, doubtfully.

"*Don't* I know it!" she ejaculated, holding up her hands in mock pain at the retrospect. "Good God! If I had a thousand pounds to show for it, I'd say it was the hardest earned money *I* ever handled."

"Yes, but you haven't got anything to show—so far's I can make out," he commented with gloom. "You didn't mention my name at all, eh? But that was what you particularly set out to do, I thought."

"Well, you thought wrong," she responded briskly. "I set out to do what was wisest under the circumstances, and I've done it. I've got an inkling of a game to be played"—she let her eyes twinkle at him as she made this tantalizing little pause—"a game, you old goose, worth seven hundred thousand times anything you ever thought of."

The ex-hussar regarded her fixedly, the while he pondered her words. "I don't think I'm very keen about games," he remarked at last, with obvious suspicion in his tone. "A married woman always gets the worst of games, in the long run."

She grinned affectionate contempt up at

him. "Don't be such a duffer, Eddy!" she remonstrated with him. "If I had a notion of that sort—do you suppose I'd come and give it away to you? What rot you talk!"

"Yes—but what *is* your game?" he demanded, doggedly.

"I won't tell you!" She spoke with great apparent decision. "You'd blab it all over the place. You can no more keep a secret than you can keep a ten-pound note."

"Oh, I say, Cora," he urged, in grieved protestation. "You know I'm a regular balley oyster, where a thing has to be kept dark. You'd better tell me, you know. It'll keep me from—imaginin' things."

The wife smiled. "It's only a plant I've got in my mind," she explained, after consideration. "What's the matter with my naming a wife for him, eh?"

Edward, upon reflection, pouted his lips. "Probably you'd come a cropper over it, in the first place," he objected, slowly, "and then even if you did name the winner, she'd probably welsh us out of our winnings—and besides, what do we want of his marrying at all. The longer he puts off getting married, the less the odds against us gets. I should think even a woman could see that."

Cora permitted herself a frank yawn. "I'll explain it to you to-morrow," she said.

“And now I must go back to my Juggins for a few minutes. I’ll come and fetch you when I’m ready to go.”

“I don’t fancy it much, you know,” he urged upon her as she turned. He took a step toward her, and put his hand on her arm. “If your brother Tom was any good”—he began, with a hard growl in his voice—“by God, I’d have half a mind to talk with him about *my* plan. Old Pirie’d be no use—but if Tom had the sense and the nerve—why, we’d—”

She had held his eye with a steady, comprehending glance, under the embarrassment of which his speech faltered and then lapsed altogether. “No, the less either you or Tom have to do with your plan the better. Go in now, and take a plain soda, and wait for me! You’ve got no plan, mind you. You’ve simply been dreaming about it. Do you hear? You never had a plan! You can’t have one!”

She spoke with significant authority, and he deferred to it with a sullen upward wag of the head. “All right,” he muttered curtly, and turned on his heel.

“Plain soda, mind!” she called after him, and without waiting for an answer, ran briskly up the steps toward the stage.

Captain Edward’s plain soda had become a

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remote and almost wholly effaced memory by the time his wife again summoned him from the manager's room.

"We'll cut this now, if you don't mind," she remarked, in her most casual tone. "I'm as tired as if I'd danced every minute." She had put on her wraps, and her small, pretty face, framed by the white down of her hood, seemed to his scrutiny to wear an expression of increased contentment.

"Anything fresh?" he asked, as they went in search of his coat and hat.

"Yes—fresh is the word," she replied, with simulated nonchalance. "Fresh, fresher, freshest—as we used to say at school."

"Wha' is it?" he inquired, when they were within touch of the open air. The music was still audible behind them, broken by faint, intermittent echoes of stamping feet and laughing voices.

"I'll tell you about it in the morning," she answered listlessly. "I hope to heaven you've got a cab-fare."

"Yes, tha's all right," said Edward, waving his stick toward the rank in the dark middle distance of the street. "Whyn't you tell me all about it?"

"Oh, you wouldn't get onto it now," she replied. But later, in the hansom, the desire

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to unburden her mind achieved the mastery.

"Are you awake?" she demanded, and went on: "He's not a bad sort, that boy, you know."

"Damn him!" said Edward, breathing heavily.

"I rather like him myself," she continued. "He's a bit slow to talk to, and he's fresher than Devonshire cream, but there isn't a drop of the Johnnie in him. He's as clean as my little girl."

"Damn him," repeated her husband, but in a milder and even argumentative tone.

"He's a proper bundle of nerves, that youngster," she mused, as if talking to herself. "And whatever those nerves of his tell him to do, he'll do it. And I'd lay odds he's goin' to surprise us all. He's got something boilin' in his mind—something that's just struck him to-night—I could see that. Oh, if I was a man!—I'd get out of this hansom now, and I'd follow that lad, and I'd get hold of him somehow, and I'd bend him any way I chose—*that* would be something like!—but then again, you take him some other way, and he's as stubborn as a moke. But I like him, all the same." She turned toward her husband, and lifted her voice a little. "I like him so much, I'm thinkin' of havin' him for a brother-in-law."

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“Strornary thing,” commented Edward, earnestly, “no mar’er where I start from, whenever I get t’ the Circus, I get the hiccups.”

Cora put her head back against the cushions, and closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

Christian discovered that he was not sorry to be alone. Cora's company had been amusing and vivifying, no doubt, but it was even better now to have his own thoughts. He observed with relief that others in the stalls were smoking; tobacco as a rule had not very much meaning for him, but now he lit a large cigar from the dinner-case in his pocket, and stretching himself in his chair, proceeded to enjoy it. He kept his glance, in an indolent fashion, upon the stage, but his mind roamed far and wide.

Cora, in returning to explain that it would not be possible for her to stay till the time for Covent Garden, had ingenuously sat on for nearly another hour, cheering him with her lively prattle. She asked him many questions about himself, his diversions, his tastes, his relations with Lord Julius and Emanuel. He wondered now if these queries had been quite as artless as they seemed at the time. There rose up before him, in retrospect, certain occasional phases of her manner which suggested something

furtive. She had watched the stage, and the doorway leading from it, with a kind of detached uneasiness on which he now languidly speculated. It occurred to him again to wonder if her husband was really in the building. Christian found himself thinking of this cousin of his almost with compassion. Poor devil! Was his fate not even more tragic than that of the others who were merely dead? He regretted now that he had not asked Cora point-blank as to his presence. His mood was so tolerant to-night that even the unforgivable insult to his father lost its sharp outlines, and became only a hasty phrase, the creature of imperative provocation.

In her final leave-taking, Cora had genially proffered her services if he desired to know any or all of the young ladies—and he had begged to be excused. Dicky Westland came down to the stalls later on, and shamefacedly linked a similar offer to his apologies for his prolonged neglect of his guest. But Christian protested that he was enjoying himself thoroughly. He was never less sleepy in his life; he did not want a drink; he would not dream of wishing to go until his friend was entirely ready. “You cannot realize,” he concluded, with his persuasive smile, “how strange and interesting this all is to me.”

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But when Dicky had returned again to the stage, Christian paid less attention than ever to the diverting spectacle. His thoughts reverted obstinately to Captain Edward—and to that portion of the family of which he was the congenital type. Was not that really the sort of man who should have the title? There seemed a cloud of negative reasons, but were these not sentimental abstractions? Should the duke not be a rough, hard sportsman, a man with a passion for horses and dogs and gunpowder saturating his veins? One who loved the country for its rude, toilsome out-of-door sports, and who liked best in town the primitive amusements of the natural man? He figured Edward in his mind's eye most readily as puffing and cursing over a rat-hole with his terriers—or as watching with a shine of steel in his blue eyes the blood-stained progress of a prize-fight. And truly, were these not the things that a duke of Glastonbury of right belonged to?

He could not think of Lord Julius and of Emanuel as being Torrs at all. The older man had the physical inheritance of the family, it was true, but he was almost as much estranged from its ideals as that extraordinary son of his. They both were grotesquely out of the picture of English

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aristocratic life, whether in country or town. And he himself—how absolutely he also was out of the picture!

The immensity of the position which his grandfather's death would devolve upon him had been present in his mind, it seemed sleeping as well as waking, for half a year. At the outset he had thrilled at the prospect; sometimes still he was able to reassure himself about it, and to profess to himself confidence that when the emergency came, he would be equal to it. But more often, in these latter days, the outlook depressed him. Of course nothing grievous would happen to him, in any event. He would be assured of an excellent living to the end of his days, with an exceptional amount of social deference from those about him, and relative freedom to do what he liked. He could marry and rear a family of lords and ladies; he could have his speeches in the House of Lords or elsewhere printed in the "Times"; if he looked about in America, he could secure a bride with perhaps millions to her dower. There was, in any case, the reasonable likelihood that he would be, to some extent, the heir of Lord Julius and Emanuel, in the latter part of his life. Thus he could go on, when he set himself to the task, piling up reasons why he ought to view the future

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with buoyant serenity—to count himself among the happiest of men.

But then—was 'his not all self-deception? Did he not know in his heart that he was not happy?—that this gilded and ornate career awaiting him really repelled all his finer senses? To-night as he followed his thoughts behind the transparent screen of whisking dresses and jolting figures upon which his outer vision rested, the impulse to escape the whole thing rose strong within him. Already he had sworn that he would no longer weary himself with the meaningless and distasteful routine of social obligations in London. Why should he not plunge boldly forward beyond that, and say that he would make no further sacrifices of any sort to the conventions of mediocrity?

He lit another cigar and, rising, walked about a little by himself at the side of the stalls, his hands deep in his pockets, his brows knitted in formative introspection.

First of all, it was clear that Emanuel's hopes about his taking up the System were doomed. It was not in him to assume such a part. He had not the capacity for such work; even if he had, he lacked both the tremendous driving energy and the enthusiasm.

But when Emanuel learned this, then he

would be angry, and he would cover over no more money to that account at the bank. Eh bien! It couldn't be helped. Christian recalled that he had still at that blessed bank more than sixty thousand francs!—truly a prodigious sum, when one thought of it soberly. The question whether this sum ought not to be given back to Emanuel, under certain circumstances, seemed to have settled itself. When it had first occurred to him that afternoon, it had suggested a good many moral difficulties. But it was really simplicity itself, as he considered it now. There were all those lean and poverty-stricken years of his youth and childhood to be remembered—and, stretching back beyond that, those other years of his father's exile before he was born—nearly forty in all. The intelligent thing was to regard the three thousand pounds as a sort of restitution fund, to be spread out over the whole of that long period. Viewed in this light, the annual fraction of it was a paltry matter. Besides, Emanuel had expressly declared that no conditions whatever were attached to the money. Christian saw that he could make his mind quite easy on that score.

So then, there were sixty thousand francs! With that he might live admirably, even luxuriously, on the Continent, until his

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grandfather's death. That event would of course alter everything. There would then come automatically to him—no matter where he was or what he did—a certain fixed income, which he understood to be probably over rather than under seventy-five thousand francs a year. This—still on the Continent—would be almost incredible wealth! There was really no limit to the soul-satisfying possibilities it opened before him. He would have a yacht on the Mediterranean; he would have a little chateau in the marvelous green depths of the Styrian Mountains—of which a boyhood friend had told him with such tender reverence of memory. He would see Innsbruck and Moscow, and, if he liked, even Samarkand and China. Why, he could go round the world in his yacht, if he chose—to remote spice islands and tropical seas! He could be a duke when, and as much, as it pleased him to be one. Instead of being the slave to his position and title, he would make them minister to him. He would do original things—realize his own inner fancies and predilections. If the whim seized him to climb Mount Ararat, or to cross the Sahara with a caravan of his own servants—that he would do. But above all things—now and henceforth forever, he would be a free man! He

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laughed grimly as he thought how slight was the actual difference between the life of pauper bondage he had led up to last October, and the existence which polite England and London had imposed upon him ever since. The second set of chains were of precious metal—that was all. Well, hereafter there would be no fetters of any description!

“I’m quite ready to go now, old man, if you are,” Dicky Westland said at some belated stage of this reverie. He had approached without being seen by his friend, and he had to pull at Christian’s sleeve to attract his attention. “I fancy you’ve been walking in your sleep,” he laughed, in comment upon this.

Christian shook himself, and, blinking at Dicky, protested that he had never been more wide awake in his life. “I go only if you’re entirely ready,” he said. “Don’t dream of leaving on my account. I have been extremely interested, I assure you.”

“Every fellow has his own notions of enjoyment,” reflected Westland, with drowsy philosophy, as they went up the stairs toward the stage. “I tried to explain your point of view to some of the girls up here, but I’m not sure they quite grasped it. They were dying to have me bring you up

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and make you dance, you know. By George, I had a job to keep Dolly Montessor from coming down and fetching you, off her own bat."

"How should they know or care about me?" asked Christian. "I didn't expect to be pointed out."

"My dear man," retorted Dicky, sleepily, "no one pointed you out. They all know you by sight as well as they do George Edwardes. It isn't too late, still, you know—if you really would like to be introduced."

Christian shook his head with resolution, as they halted at the wings. "Truly, no!" he repeated. "But I should like a glass of wine and a sandwich, if we can get past the stage. I'm not an atom sleepy, but I'm hungry and thirsty."

On their way through a narrow, shadowed defile of huge canvas-stretched frames of deal, they passed two young men, one much taller than the other, who had their heads bent together in some low-voiced, private conversation. Christian glanced at them casually, and was struck with the notion that they observed him in turn, and exchanged comment upon his approach. He looked at them with a keener scrutiny as he went by—and it seemed to him that there was something familiar in the face of the larger man

—who indeed looked away upon the instant their eyes met.

“Did you see those men?” he asked Westland, in an undertone, a moment later. “Do you know them?”

“Those we just passed?” Dicky looked over his shoulder. “I don’t know the thin chap, but the other fellow is Gus Torr—why, of course—your cousin. Somehow, I never think of you as belonging to that lot—I mean, being related to them. Of course—that was his sister-in-law you were sitting with. Why did you ask if I knew him?”

“Nothing—I was not sure if it was he—I’ve seen him only once,” Christian replied, with an assumption of indifference. “I remember having noticed then how much he looked like his brother.”

“Yes—poor devils!” commented Dicky, as they entered the manager’s room. Apparently it was in his mind to say more, but the place was crowded, and the problem of getting through the throng to the food and drink monopolized his attention.

Some minutes later, while Christian stood in another corridor, waiting for his friend to bring their hats and coats from the mysteriously elusive spot where he had left them, he overheard the mention of his name. Two women’s voices, wholly unknown to him,

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came from behind an improvised partition of screens near at hand, with great distinctness.

One of them said: "He spells his name 'Tower,' you know. I understand the idea is to make people forget who his father was."

"Good job, too!" replied the other voice.

Christian turned abruptly, and strode off in the direction whither Dicky had disappeared. "After forty years!" he murmured hotly to himself. "After forty years!" and clenched his fists till the nails hurt his palms.

The two young men walked homeward, arm in arm, through silent streets over which the dawn was spreading its tentative first lights. It was colder than they had thought, and the morning air was at once misty and fresh. In Leicester Square the scent of lilacs came to them; beside the pale, undefined bulk of the squat statue they caught the lavender splash of color which was sister to the perfume.

"By Jove, it's spring!" said Dicky. He pointed out the flowers, and then, still drawing Christian's arm to turn his attention to the square, recalled to him as they moved that this was the oldtime haunt of foreigners in London. "Dickens's villain in 'Little

Dorrit,' you know—the fellow whose mustache went up and his nose went down—I never can remember his name—he lived here. In those days, all that sort of chap-pies lived here—the adventurers and jail-birds who had made their own countries too hot to hold them.”

Westland's insistence upon this theme had no purpose other than to divert Christian's attention while they passed the Empire. He was tired, and profoundly disinclined to any renewal of the discussion about the promenade. He encountered with vague surprise, therefore, the frowning glance which Christian, half halting, bent upon him. The young man's displeasure was marked, but Dicky for the life of him could not imagine why. He tightened his hold on the other's arm and quickened their pace.

But Christian, after a few yards, suddenly withdrew his arm altogether. “I do not like to walk so fast,” he said, with a sharp note in his voice.

Dicky regarded him with puzzled apprehension. “What's up, old man?” he asked, almost pleadingly. “Has anything gone wrong?”

Christian, still with knitted brows, parted his lips to speak. Then he seemed to reconsider his intention, and let his face soften as

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he paused. "No—nothing at all," he replied, after a moment. He smiled a little to reassure the other. "It was nothing at all," he repeated. "Only I am nervous and excited to-night—this morning, I should say—and my head is full of projects. It is twelve hours since you came to me—and the whole world has changed meanwhile. I see everything different. I am not altered to your eyes—but none the less, I am not at all, in any respect, the man you took to dine with you. You have not observed anything—but it is a revolution that has occurred under your very nose, Mr. Dicky Westland."

"I'm too sleepy to observe anything," the other declared. "I couldn't tell a revolution from a—from a hot-potato can."

The comparison had forced itself upon Westland's jaded mind through the medium of his weary eyes. There before them, by the curb at the corner, stood the dingy wheeled-oven of the streets, the sullen red glow of its lower door making a strange patch of fiery light upon the ragged trousers of the man in charge. He was a dirty and undersized creature, and he looked up at the two young gentlemen in evening dress with a speculative, yet hardly hopeful, eye.

Christian stopped short. "Ah, this is

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very good," he said, with a brightening face. "I have never eaten a potato from a can."

Dicky sighed, but resigned himself with only a languid protest: "You have to eat so much else besides the potato," he commented dolefully.

The man opened an upper door, and then drew from under the machine a twisted wad of old newspaper, which, being unwound, revealed a gray heap of salt. "How many, cap'n?" he demanded, briefly.

Christian had been glancing across the Circus meanwhile—to where, in the misty vagueness of dawn, Piccadilly opened between its tall, shapely corners, and beyond, the curved yellowish sweep of Regent Street began. The dim light revealed some lurking figures to his eyes.

"Can you call over those women?" he asked the potato-man.

A tall, fresh-faced young policeman came upon the group round the Criterion corner. Although the pounding of his thick boots on the pavement had been audible long before his appearance, he regarded them with the slightly dramatic air of one who has deftly surprised a group of conspirators. The potato-man looked from Christian to the officer and made no reply.

Christian drew some silver from his

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pocket, shaking off the restraining hand Westland tried to lay on his arm. "Is there any objection, constable," he inquired, "to my buying potatoes for those friends of ours over there? It is a cold morning."

The policeman's glance ranged from the white ties of the young gentlemen to the coins in Christian's palm. His official expression relaxed. "I dare say it'll do no 'arm, sir," he replied with courtesy. He even lent himself to the enterprise by stooping down and beating a certain number of strokes with his baton on the pavement."

"How many times did he strike?" Dicky made whispered inquiry. "That's a new dodge to me."

New or old, it was efficient. Forlorn shapes began to emerge from the shadows of the big streets opposite, and move forward across the empty open space. Others stole noiselessly in from the byways of Leicester Square. There were perhaps a dozen in all when the potato-man made his census—poorly dressed, fagged, bold-faced, furtive-eyed women. They spoke in monotonous, subdued tones among themselves. There were to be heard German, French, Belgian French, cockney English, and Lancashire English. Two of them pulled at the sleeve of the potato-man to make him hurry.

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Christian, regarding his motley guests, found himself neither touched nor entertained. They seemed as stupid as they were squalid. With a gesture of decision he gave the money to the policeman.

"Pay for it all," he directed, "and if more come, give them a look-in, too—and keep what is left for yourself."

"Now then, Frenchy!" broke in the constable, sharply. "Mind what you're at! Pass Germany the salt!" With an abrupt change to civility, he turned to Christian. "Right you are, sir!" he said.

Dicky laughed drowsily. "It's like the Concert of Europe," he declared. "Shall we go on?"

They moved down the broad pavement, again arm in arm, breathing in slowly the new, keen air, and observing in a silence which was full of tacit comment the beautiful termination of the street before them: the dark figures of the Crimean monument standing in grim relief against the morning light, the stately palace beyond, with its formal portals of club buildings, its embowered statues, its huge column towering ponderously above the pale green of spring in the park—all gray and cool and, as it were, thoughtfully solemn in the hush of daybreak.

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“Ah, yes—this wonderful London!” sighed Christian, as they halted at the Continental corner. He spread his hand to embrace the prospect before them. “How right you were! I have not learned to know it at all. But I begin now! If you will walk through the square with me—there is something I wish to say.”

This something did not get itself said till they halted within this somber, slate-colored square. Christian paused before a big, pretentious house of gloomy, and even forbidding aspect—a front of sooty stucco, with cornices of ashen-hued stone, and many windows masked with sullen brown shades.

“This was our town house a hundred years ago,” he said meditatively. “My father was born here. My grandfather sold it when the entail was broken. Until this afternoon, it was my fixed resolve to buy it back again. I said always to myself: ‘If I am to have a house in London, it must be this old one of ours in St. James’s.’ But that is all changed now. At least, it is no longer a resolve.”

Dicky gazed at him with sleepy eyes. “How do you mean?” he asked, perfunctorily.

“Wake up now, and I will tell you!” Christian, with a lingering glance, as of renuncia-

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tion, at the mansion, began to walk again. "This is it. You said you were eager to be some colonial official's secretary—to have three hundred pounds—and the yellow fever. To obtain this, you expend all your energies, you and your relations. Well, then—why will you not be my secretary instead? You shall have more than three hundred pounds—and no yellow fever."

Westland had roused himself, and looked inquiringly now into the other's face. "What do you need of a secretary?" he objected, half jestingly. "If you want to talk about it after you've come into the thing—I don't say that I shouldn't be glad to consider it. But the deuce of it is——"

"No—I wish it to begin now, this morning, this hour—this minute!" Christian spoke peremptorily.

Dicky, pondering, shook his head. "No, you mustn't insist on settling anything now," he decided. "It isn't regular, you know. If you—really—want to propose something immediate—why, I'll call and talk with you to-morrow—or, that is to say, this afternoon. But I couldn't possibly let you commit yourself to anything of that sort now."

Christian frowned at his friend. "You speak of what you will let me do!" he said.

“In your opinion—I see it!—you think I have not sober command of myself, am not responsible—is that it?”

“Nonsense! I’ve said nothing of the sort,” protested the other. “Of course, you’re perfectly all right—but we’re both tired and sleepy, and you’re not so accustomed to go home by daylight as I am—and it wouldn’t be at all the thing for me to close a bargain with you now. Can’t you see what I mean? I wouldn’t play three-penny ecarté with you at this hour in the morning—and I’m damned if I’m going to let you in for three hundred a year for the rest of my life. Shall I come round, say, at luncheon time?”

“I shall not be in,” said Christian, curtly. He looked at his companion, and then past him at the trees in the square, in vexed rumination. “What I have it in my mind to do”—he continued, vaguely, after a pause—“it is not a thing for delay. It is in my blood to do it at once. It was my impulse to make you my comrade in it—but of course, since you have your reservations and doubts, there need be nothing more said about it.”

The shrug of the shoulders which emphasized these last words nettled Westland, and at the same time helped him to repress his annoyance. It lent to the whole episode just

that savor of foreign eccentricity which appealed to the amiable tolerance of the islander.

"My dear man," he urged, gently, "I haven't the slightest notion what it is that you're so keen about—but whatever it is, do go home and sleep on it, and make up your mind calmly after breakfast. It's no good deciding important questions, and striking out new lines, and all that sort of thing, at this hour in the morning. Nobody ever does it, you know. It simply can't be done."

"Good-night!" said Christian, proffering his hand. "You are right; it is high time for those who are sleepy to go to bed. I won't drag you round to Duke Street."

Dicky looked at him doubtfully. "You do wrong to be angry, you know," he said.

"But that is your error—I am not in the least angry—I beg you to believe it," cried Christian. His eyes beamed genially in proof of his assertion, and he put heartiness into his voice. "For a minute I was disappointed—shall I say vexed?—but not any more. How should I quarrel with you for not beholding things through my eyes? To me, something is a giant; you perceive that it is a windmill. Eh bien! We do not convince each other—but surely we do not quarrel."

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“Oh, I am game enough to play Sancho to your Don,” expostulated Dicky, with a readiness which Christian had not looked for, “but I draw the line at starting out on an empty stomach, and when we’re too sleepy to stand. Well, what shall it be?” He took the hand offered him, and strove to signify by his cordial grasp that no trace of a misunderstanding remained. “Shall I look you up, say, at two o’clock?”

“I do not think I shall be there. Good-night!” responded Christian, and the two parted.

CHAPTER XVII

Christian climbed the stairs at Duke Street, and let himself into his apartments, with painstaking precautions against being overheard. There was an excess of zeal about Falkner which might easily impel him to present himself for service at even this most unseasonable hour.

The young man had still only formless notions of what he was going to do, but it was at least plain to him that Falkner was to have no part in the proceedings. He drew off his varnished boots as a further measure of security, and then, with more hesitation, removed his cloak and coat, and raised the inside blinds at the two windows. This sitting-room of his had rather pleased him formerly. He could recall having taken quite an affectionate interest in buying and arranging the rugs and pictures and book-cases with which he had supplemented the somewhat gaunt furnishing of his predecessor. But now, in this misty and reluctant light of the London morning, nothing seemed good to him as he looked about.

The pretty things of his own selection said no more to him than did the chattels he had taken over from a stranger. There was no spirit of home in them.

He moved noiselessly to the adjoining bedroom, and drew the curtains there as well, and glanced round. Here, too, he had the sense of beholding the casual appointments of a hotel chamber. Nothing made an appeal of intimacy to him. He reflected that in a day or two he should not be able to remember how his room looked—even if his memory attempted the fatuous task. Duke Street had been engraved on his cards for six months, but it had not made the faintest mark on his heart.

With an air of decision, he suddenly began to drag forth his clothes from the wardrobe and drawers, and spread them on the bed. In the tiny dressing-room beyond were piled his traveling bags, and these he brought out into the light. Upon consideration, however, the original impulse to take a good many things weakened and dwindled. To begin with, their secret removal was in no way practicable. Moreover, now that he thought of it, he did not want them. They would be simply encumbrances. He would take with him only the smallest handbag, with a change of linen and a few brushes.

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Finally, the conviction that even this must be a nuisance became clear to him, and he desisted from the random packing he had begun. Still moving about as silently as possible, he changed his ceremonial tie for one of every-day wear, and put on a suit of sober-colored tweeds, and his easiest brown boots. The transfer of his watch, some loose gold and the roll of notes from one set of pockets to another, completed his preparations in the bedchamber. He tiptoed out to the larger room, and there, upon reflection, wrote a few lines for Falkner's direction, saying merely that he was called away, and that matters were to go on as usual until he returned or sent further orders. He separated a banknote from the roll to place inside this note, but on second thoughts wrote a check instead, and sealing and directing the envelope, laid it in a conspicuous place on the table.

He noticed then, for the first time, that there were some letters from the evening post for him, neatly arranged on this table. He opened the nearest, and glanced at its contents: it was a note from his second cousin, Lady Milly Poynes, the fair-haired, fair-faced, fair-brained, fair-everything sister of Lord Lingfield, reminding him that she was depending upon his escort for the Private

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View of the Academy, and that the time for getting tickets was running very short. He laughed aloud at the conceit of the Royal Academy rising in his path as an obstacle at such a moment—and without more ado thrust this with the unopened letters into his pocket. Then, when he had made sure once more that he had his check-book, nothing remained to be done. He went softly forth, without so much as a thought of taking a farewell glance behind him, found a soft dark hat in the hallway and then closed the outer door with great care upon the whole Duke Street episode of his life.

“You are not to see me here again in a hurry,” he confided aloud to the banisters and steps, when he had descended to the first floor. Then he laughed to himself, and tripped gaily down the remaining flight.

There was no hesitation now in his mood. He walked briskly back through the square, and then down Waterloo Place, till he came to the Guards' Memorial. He moved round this to the front, and looked up at one of the three bronze Guardsmen with the confident air of familiarity. He knew this immutable, somber face under every shifting aspect of light and shadow; he had stared at the mantling greatcoat and the huge bearskin

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of this hero of his a hundred times. The very first day of his arrival in London he had made the acquaintance of this statue, and had started, dazed and fascinated, at the strange resemblance it suggested. Thus his boy-father must have looked, with the beard and the heavy dress of the Russian winter. The metal figure came to mean to him more than all London beside. In the sad, strong, silent countenance which gazed down upon him he read forever the tragedy that gripped his heartstrings. Forever Honor, standing aloft, held the laurel wreath poised high above the warrior's head—immovable in the air, never to descend to touch its mark. Christian had seen this wreath always through moist eyes.

This morning, for a wonder, no tearful impulse came to him as he looked upward. The impassive face was as gravely fine as ever, but its customary effect of pathos was lacking. There even seemed in its sightless eyes a latent perception of Christian's altered mood. He lifted his hat soberly and saluted the statue.

Toward the Strand now he made his way, walking blithely, and humming to himself. He could not forbear to smile at a policeman he passed in front of St. Martin's. Two elderly and much bewrapped cabmen stood

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stamping their feet beside a shelter, and they pointed toward their ridiculous old horses and battered growlers as he came along, with an air that moved him to glee. He gave them a shilling to divide, and went on, conscious of a novel delight in himself and in the world at large.

The big clock showed it to be half-past five. There was no blue in the sky, but the mist of daybreak was abating, and the air was milder. Not a living creature was visible along the naked length of the Strand. At the end, the beautiful spire of St. Mary's rose from the dim grays about its base, exquisite in tints and contour as an Alpine summit in the moment before sunrise.

A turning to the left opened to Christian, unexpectedly, a scene full of motion and color. He had not thought himself so near Covent Garden, but clearly this must be it. He walked up toward the busy scene of high-laden vans, big cart-horses and swarming porters, wondering why no sign of all this activity was manifest in the sleeping Strand below, barely a stone's throw distant. He saw the glowing banks of flowers within, as he approached, and made toward them, sighing already with pleasure at the promise they held out to him.

He might have read in the papers that it

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was a backward and a grudging April, this year, in the matter of flowers. But to Christian, no memory of the exuberant South suggested any rivalry with this wonderful show of northern blossoms. Tulips and daffodils, amaryllis and azaleas, rhododendrons, carnations, roses—he seemed to have imagined to himself nothing like this before. He spent over an hour among them, in the end making numerous purchases. At each stall he gave an address—always the same—and exacted the pledge of delivery at eight o'clock.

At last he could in reason buy nothing more, and he went out to look about him. He found the place where the market-men take drinks at all hours, and food and coffee when nature's sternest demands can be positively no longer disregarded—but it did not invite his appetite. Some further time he spent in gazing wondering at the vast walls of vegetables and fruit being tirelessly built up and pulled down again, pondering meanwhile the question whether he should breakfast before eight o'clock, or at some indefinitely later hour. He partially solved the problem at length by buying a small box of Algerian peaches, and eating them where he stood. Then some exceptionally fine bananas tempted him further, and

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he finished with a delicate little melon from Sicily.

How it carried him back to the days of his youth—this early morning fragrance of the fresh fruit! It was as if he were at Cannes again—only buoyant now, and happy, and oh, so free! And in his pocket he could feel whenever he liked the soft, munificent crackle of over four thousand francs! The sapphire Mediterranean had surely never been so lovely to his gaze as was now the dingy Strand below.

The laggard hour came round at last. He descended to Arundel Street, and discovered the house he wanted, and found just within the entrance two or three of the flower-laden porters awaiting his arrival. For the rest, the building seemed profoundly unoccupied. He led the way up to the third floor, and had the plants set down beside the locked door which bore the sign "Miss Bailey." Other similarly burdened porters made their appearance in turn, till the narrow hallway looked like a floral annex to the Garden itself.

He waited alone with his treasures for what seemed to him a very long time, then descended and stood at the street door till he was tired, then climbed the stairs again. The extraordinary quiet of the big building,

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filled with business offices as it was, puzzled him. He had no experience of early-morning London to warn him that English habits differed from those of the continent. It occurred to him that perhaps it was a holiday—conceivably one of those extraordinary interludes called Bank Holidays—and he essayed a perplexing computation in the calendar in the effort to settle this point.

Finally there began the sounds of steps, and the opening and closing of doors, below him. A tow-headed boy in buttons came up to his landing, stared in vacuous amazement at him and the flowers and passed on to the next floor. Noises of occupancy rose from the well of the staircase to bear him countenance, and suddenly a lift glided up past him in this well. He had not noticed the ropes or the iron caging before. He heard the slamming of the lift doors above, and the dark carriage followed on its smooth descent. Christian reproached himself for not having rung the bell and questioned the lift-man. He considered the feasibility of doing it now, but was deterred by the fear that the man would resent it. Then the lift came up again—and was stopping at his floor. There was a sharp note of girlish laughter on the instant of the halt, answered by a male guffaw.

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A slight, erect, active young woman emerged from the lift, her face alive with mirth of some unknown character. Behind her, in the obscurity, Christian saw for an instant the vanishing countenance of the liftman, grinning widely. This hilarity, somehow, struck in him an unsympathetic chord.

The young woman, still laughing, spread an uncomprehending glance over Christian and his flowers. She moved past him, key in hand, toward the door which he had been guarding, with a puzzled eye upon him meanwhile. With the key in the lock she turned and decided to speak.

"What might all this be—the Temple Flower Show or the Crystal Palace?" she asked, with banter in her tone.

"These are for Miss Bailey," said Christian, quite humbly.

"Must be some mistake," said the girl decisively. "Did she order them herself? Were you there at the time? Did you see her? Where do they come from?"

Christian advanced a little into the light. "She has not ordered them," he said, in his calmest voice. "I have not seen her for a long time. But I have brought them for her, and I think you may take it from me that they are hers."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she replied,

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lightly but with grace. "I didn't understand. Things are forever being brought here that belong somewhere else. Men are so stupid in finding their way about! Well—I suppose we must get them inside. That is your idea, isn't it?"

She spoke very rapidly, and with a kind of metallic snap in her tones. Christian answered her questions by a suave assenting gesture. "Miss Bailey is not likely to turn up much before half-past nine," she went on, as if he had made the inquiry. "She lives so far out, and just now we're not very busy. There's nothing doing in new plays at this time of the year, and the lady novelists are all getting their own typewriters. If you'll lend a hand, we'll carry the things in."

Between them they bore in the various pots, and the big bouquets loosely wrapped in blue paper. The girl led the way through a large working-room to a smaller apartment, fitted as an office but containing also a sofa and a tall gas cooking-stove—and here on desk and center-table, chairs and window-sill, they placed the flowers. Christian watched her as she deftly removed their paper wrappings. She had a comely, small face of aspect at once alert and masterful. The skin was peculiarly fair, with a tinge of rose in the cheeks so delicately modulated

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that he found it in rivalry with the "Mrs. Pauls" she was unpacking. Her light hair was drawn plainly down over the temples in a fashion which he felt was distinguished, but said to himself he did not like. Her shrewd eyes took calm cognizance of him from time to time.

"They are very beautiful indeed," she remarked with judicial approval, upon the completion of her task. Then, as upon an afterthought, she moved rapidly about, peering under the branches of the growing plants, and separating the cut flowers lightly with her hands. "There is no card anywhere, is there? I suppose you will want to leave a message? Here are pen and ink—if you wish to write anything."

"Thank you," Christian began, smilingly but with obvious hesitation. He looked at his watch. "If you don't mind—if you're quite sure I shan't be in the way—I think I should like to wait till Miss Bailey comes."

"Oh, you won't be in the way," the girl replied. She regarded him meditatively, with narrowed eyes. "I shouldn't dust this room in any event—since the flowers are here; but you mustn't come out into the big room—unless you want to get choked with blacks. Would you like a morning paper? I can send a boy out for one."

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“Thank you—you are very good—no,” Christian answered. “There are some books here—I shall amuse myself.”

The girl turned to leave him, and then on second thought moved over to the window and lifted the sash. “There’ll be no objection to your smoking if you like,” she informed him. Then she went out, closing the door behind her.

Christian walked to the window in turn, and looked down over the flowers to the narrow street below. It was full of young men in silk hats, toiling up the granite ascent like black ants. He reflected that they must be clerks and shopmen, going to their daily work from the Temple station or the Embankment. The suggestion of monotonous bondage which their swarming progress toward the wage-earning center gave forth, interested him. He yawned pleasantly at the thought of his own superb emancipation from duties and tasks of all descriptions.

He strolled over to the bookcase above the desk, and glanced at the volumes revealed through its glass doors. They seemed very serious books, indeed. “Economics of Socialism,” “Capitalist Production,” “The Ethics of Socialism,” “Towards Democracy”—so the titles ran that first met his eye. There

were other groups—mainly of history and the essayists—but everything was substantial. His glance sought in vain any light-some gleam of poetry or fiction. The legend on a thin red book, “Civilization: Its Cause and Cure,” whimsically caught his attention. He put his hand to the key in the bookcase door to get out the volume; then, hesitating, yawned, and looked over the shelves once more. There was nothing else—and really he desired to read nothing.

He would half recline in comfort upon the sofa instead, until his friend came. As a pleasing adjunct to this plan, he drew the table up close, and found room upon it, by crowding them together, for most of the flowers that had been bestowed elsewhere. He seated himself at his ease, with his head resting against the wall, and surveyed the plants and blossoms in affectionate admiration. It was delicious to think how naïve her surprise would be—how great her pleasure! Truly, since his discovery of his birthright, remarkable and varied as had been his experiences, he had done nothing else which afforded him a tithe of the satisfaction he felt now glowing in all his veins. Here, at last, by some curious and devious chance, he had stumbled upon the thing that was genuinely worth doing.

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He could hear the cheerful girl in the next room, whistling gently to herself as she moved the furniture about. There came presently the sound of other female voices, and then a sustained, vibrant rattle, quaintly accentuated like the ticking of a telegraph key, which he grew accustomed to, and even found pleasant to the ear.

He put his feet up on the edge of the sofa—and nestled downward till his head was upon it as well. A delicate yet pervasive fragrance from the table close beside him aroused his languid curiosity. Was it the perfume of carnations or of roses?

He closed his eyes the better to decide.

CHAPTER XVIII

In the outer room, Miss Connie Staples permitted herself numerous and varied speculations as to the identity and purposes of the young man with the flowers, the while she dusted the typewriters, distributed the copy for the morning's start and set the place in order. She had her sleeves rolled up, and had wound a big handkerchief about her hair; beneath this turban her forehead scored itself in lines of perplexed wonderment as to this curious early caller—but when two other girls arrived, she suffered them to put aside their things and begin work without so much as hinting at what had happened. A third girl, coming a little later, brought in a stray blossom which she had picked up in the corridor outside. She mentioned the fact, and even laid stress upon it, but got no syllable of explanation.

This was all simple enough, but at half-past nine the arrival of still another of the sex put Miss Connie's resources to an unexpected test.

A handsome, youngish woman, very well dressed indeed, appeared suddenly upon the

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threshold of the workroom, knocking upon the door and pushing it wide open at the same instant. She looked curiously about, and then point-blank into the face of the girl who came toward her. It was a glance of independent and impersonal criticism which the two exchanged, covering with instantaneous swiftness an infinitude of details as to dress, coiffure, complexion, figure, temperament and origin. Connie wondered if the new-comer was really quite a lady, long before she formulated an inquiring thought about her errand. Even as she finally looked this question of business, she decided that it was an actress with a play for the provinces, and asked herself if she did not seem to recognize the face. The visitor, for her part, saw that Connie's teeth were too uneven to be false, and that her waist was overlong, and that her hair was not thick enough to be worn flat over the temples, much less to justify so confident a manner. In all, something less than a second of time had elapsed.

"I want to see Miss Bailey—Miss Frank Bailey," explained the stranger, graciously.

Connie conveyed to her, with courteous brevity, the fact that Miss Bailey had not yet arrived. "Is it something that I can do?" she added.

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The other shook her head, and showed an affable thread of white between her fresh-hued lips. "No, I will wait for her," she answered, and threw a keen glance about the place. "That's her private room, isn't it?" she asked, nodding at the closed door to the right. "I will wait in there," she decided, in the same breath, and began moving toward it.

Connie alertly headed her off. "If you will kindly take a seat here—" she interposed, standing in front of her visitor.

"It's too noisy out here," remarked the other; "those horrid machines would give me a headache. That *is* her private room, isn't it?"

"Unfortunately," Connie began, lowering her voice, "the room belongs to another office. Or rather, I should say, it is locked. Miss Bailey will be here—with the key—very shortly now."

"Oh, it's all right—I'm her sister," explained the other, in no wise resenting the ineffectual fabrications. She pushed forward past the reluctant girl with a resolute step, and put her hand on the knob of the tabooed door. "Make your mind quite easy, my dear," she remarked over her shoulder, sinking her voice in turn in deference to the situation; "you've done all

that could be expected of you—and I'll tell her so."

Then, with a momentary gleam of good nature on her pretty face, which the short transparent veil she wore to her chin seemed to accentuate rather than mask, she opened the door, threw up her head with a swift, puzzled glance at what she saw, and then tiptoed gracefully into the room, closing the door with painstaking noiselessness behind her.

Miss Frances Bailey entered her office not many minutes later, her cheeks aglow with the morning air as the wheelwoman meets it. She nodded cheerfully to Connie, and beyond her to the girls at the machines, as her hand sought for a hat-pin at the back of her head.

"Any word from the Lyceum?" she asked. "And what does that Zambesi-travel manuscript make?"

Connie ignored industrial topics. "There are people waiting in there to see you," she announced, in low, significant tones.

The mistress was impressed by the suggestion of mystery. "People? What people?" she asked, knitting her brows.

"One of them says she's your sister. And the other is a young gentleman—he came first—and he brought—"

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“My sister?” interrupted Miss Bailey. “Cora! Something dreadful must have happened—for she never got out so early as this before in her life. Is she in mourning? Did she seem upset?”

“*Not* a bit of it!” said Connie, reassuringly. She added, following the other toward the private office: “I tried my best to keep her out here.”

“Why should you?” asked Frances, with wide-open eyes.

“Oh, well—you’ll see,” replied the girl, evasively. “I told you there was some one else in there.”

Frances opened the door—and Connie noted that she too lifted her head and stared a little, and then cautiously closed the door behind her. She pondered this as she returned to her machine, and she curled her thin lip when she took up the copies of the first act of an amateur’s romantic play, to underscore the business directions with red ink, and sew on brown paper covers. Intuition told her that a much better drama was afoot, here under her very nose.

Inside her office, Miss Bailey surrendered herself to frank astonishment at what she beheld.

Bestowed in obvious discomfort upon her sofa, behind an extraordinary bank of potted

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plants and bright, costly greenhouse flowers, was a young man fast asleep. Her eye took in as well her sister, who sat near the head of the sofa, but she could wait. The interest centered in this sleeping stranger, who made himself so much at home in the shelter of his remarkable floral barricade. She moved round the better to scrutinize his face, which was tilted up as if proudly held even in slumber. Upon examination she recognized the countenance; and in a swift moment of concentration tried to think what his presence might signify. Then she turned to her sister, and lifted her calm brows in mute inquiry.

“Oh, my dear—what splendid business!” whispered Cora, her glance beaming upward from the sofa to the standing figure. “And mind, Frank, I’m in it! I’m in it up to my neck! I sent him to you, dear.”

The girl looked down at them both, and deliberated before she spoke. “If you brought him here,” she said, “I think you’d better take him away again. I can let you out by this other door. Let us have no more publicity than necessary.”

“But you don’t in the least understand!” protested Cora, with her finger raised in an appeal for quiet tones.

“No, I don’t understand. I don’t want

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to understand," replied Frances coldly. "There's one thing *you* don't understand either, Cora: This is my typewriting office; it isn't a greenroom at all."

"Then it well might be," retorted the other, with a latent grin. "Anything greener than its owner I never saw. Now listen—don't be a silly cuckoo! I met the youngster last night—and I worked him up till he was mad to learn where you were to be found. I told him—and then I went home, and I couldn't sleep for thinkin' of you, dear—and so I turned out at some extraordinary hour this mornin'—it is mornin' by this time, isn't it?—and I came here, just to tell you that he was askin' after you—and I come in here—and lo! here's the bird on his little nest!—and see the flowers he's brought from Covent Garden for you!—and so I sit here like Patience on a monument, afraid to wink an eyelash, so's not to wake him till you come. That's what I've done for *you*, dear—and presently, if you don't mind, I'd like to hear what you'll do for me."

Frances put a knee upon the chair before her, and rested with her hands upon its back. She sighed a little, and bit her lips. A troubled look came into her gray eyes.

"You might as well say all you have to

say," she said, slowly. "I don't in the least see what you're up to—but then I never did."

"No, dear, you never did," responded Cora, smiling as if in pleased retrospect. "But that's no reason why I shouldn't be a good sister to you. If it's one's nature to be a good sister, why, then one will be—and there you are, don't you see? I take no credit to myself for it."

"Go on," said the other. The two women spoke in hushed whispers, and with each sentence stole glances of precaution toward the sleeper.

"Well, Frank, I look to you not to forget what I've done. I spent two or three very hard hours last night talkin' him round, and singin' your praises to him—and I put Covent Garden into his head, too—and here he is! And I kept Eddy and Gus off his back, too—they were frightfully keen to get at him—but I said no, and I held 'em to heel. It was all for you, dear. They might have queered the whole pitch, if I'd given 'em their heads. But now about myself. I'm tired, dead tired, of bein' poor. Of course we get a little something from Lord Julius. But Eddy—you know what Eddy is! No sooner does he pick himself up from Epsom than Ascot gives him a fair knock-

out, and if he lives through the Sandown Eclipse there's Goodwood waitin' for him with a facer. I can't understand it; other men seem to win sometimes—you'd think the unluckiest duffer would get a look-in once in a while—but no, he just gets hammered one meeting after another. And I'm tired of it, Frank! If I could only go back to work! But if I get an engagement, then Eddy will go playin' the goat—he's jealous of everybody about the place from the bandmaster down to the carpenter's boy—and that makes me unpopular—and there we are, don't you see! I'm worn out with it. But if I could have eight hundred a year, or even six hundred or five at a pinch—God knows, my wants are simple enough!—and have it paid to me personally, do you see—why, then, life would be worth livin'. Now, what do you say?"

Frances looked moodily down at her distinguished sister, her lips twisted in stormy amusement. "Why not say a thousand and be done with it?" she demanded between set teeth, after an ominous pause. "One would be as intelligent as the other. And oughtn't I to set your Eddy up with a racing stud while I'm about it? It's true that I have about twenty pounds a year for my own personal use, and Tom has a standing grievance that

I don't give even *that* to him—but don't let that interfere with your plans. Whatever you feel that you would like, just give it a name. Couldn't I lease one of the new Kaffir mansions in Park Lane for you? Or would you prefer something in Grosvenor Square?"

Cora gazed up with such intentness at her unnatural sister that a bright little tear came to shine at the corner of each eye. She put up her veil then, and breathed a cautious sigh. "I didn't expect this of you, dear," she said, submissively. "Of course it's the old story—La Cigale, and 'go-to-the-ant-thou-sluggard' and all that. I don't see myself why a typewriting machine should make one so fearfully stony-hearted; you get callouses on your fingers, I know, but you needn't get 'em on your sisterly affections, one would think. But however"—she wiped her eyes, drew down her veil and allowed a truculent note to sound in her voice—"however, if you won't play, why then neither will I. I've been at pains to put this youngster in your way, but it won't be much trouble to shunt him out again. You mustn't think you can walk on me indefinitely, Frank. I'm the best-natured woman in the world, but even I draw the line somewhere."

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“Draw it now then,” said the other, with stern promptitude. “Go away, and take your friend with you and let me get to my work. I don’t know what business either of you had coming here, at all.” As she spoke, she moved to the outer private door, and turned the key in the lock. “You can send for the flowers,” she added, “or I will have them taken over to Charing Cross Hospital—whichever you like.”

Cora rose, her veiled face luminous with a sudden inspiration. “You can’t quarrel with me, dear, no matter how hard you try.” She spoke in low, cooing tones—a triumph of sympathetic voice production. “You’re hard as nails, but I know you’re straight. I will trust my interests absolutely in your hands. I leave it to you to do the fair thing by me.”

“The fair thing?” echoed Frances, in dubious perplexity. She puzzled over the words and their elusive implication. “Your interests?” she repeated—and saw Cora move round her to the unlocked door, and open it—and still sought to comprehend what it was all about. Only when her sister, smiling cordially once more, bent forward without warning and pressed her veiled lips against her chin, and with a gentle “Good-bye, dear!” stepped into the shadows with-

out, did she recall the other features of the situation.

"Here!" she called, with nervous eagerness, yet keeping her voice down, "you're not to run off like this. Take your man with you."

"Softly, dear!" Cora enjoined her, from the dusk of the hallway. "Your young women wouldn't understand. No—I caught him for you, and I leave him in your hands. I'm not in the least afraid to trust it all to you. Bye-bye, dear."

Frances went out and glared down the staircase, with angry expostulation on her tongue's end. But there was nobody to talk to. She could hear only the brisk rustle of Cora's skirts on the stone steps, a floor below—and even that died away beneath the clatter of the machines inside.

Returning over the threshold, she paused, and looked impatiently at the flowers, and at the impassive, slumbering face beyond them. After a little, the lines of vexation began to melt from her brow. In a musing way, she put a hand behind her, and as if unconsciously closed and locked the hall door again. Then she moved to the table, picked up some of the loose blossoms and breathed in their fragrance, still keeping her thoughtful gaze upon the young man. She

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found the face much older and stronger than she remembered it—and in a spirit of fairness she said to herself that it seemed no whit less innocent. But then perhaps all sleeping faces looked innocent; she could recall that Cora's certainly did. Holding the carnations to her lips and nostrils, she examined in meditative detail the countenance before her—delicately modeled, dark, nervously high-spirited even in repose. Associations came back as she gazed—the tender eagerness of the lad, the wistful charm with which his fancy had invested England, the frank sweetness of the temperament he had disclosed to her. He had been like a flower himself on that mellow autumn day—as fresh and as goodly to the eye as these roses on the table. But a winter had intervened since then—and what gross disillusionments, what roughening and hardening and corroding experiences had he not encountered! You could not tell anything by a face in sleep; again she assured herself of that.

Why, when one came to think of it, it was enough that Cora had brought him—or sent him, it mattered not which. Whence had she dispatched him?—from some theatrical dance or late supper. It was true that he was not in evening dress—and the thought

gave her pause for a moment. But he had been at some place where those wretched cousins of his were present—for Cora had spoken of keeping both Eddy and Gus “off his back”—whatever that might mean. And it was Cora herself who had told him to go to Covent Garden and buy these flowers!

Frances, revolving these unpleasant reflections, discovered all at once that the young man, without betraying by any other motion his awakening, had opened his eyes and was looking placidly across the flowers into her face.

She caught a quick breath, and frowned slightly at him.

CHAPTER XIX

"I don't think I like your being here," Frances remarked to the young man after a brief frowning inspection. She spoke slowly, and with a deliberate gravity and evenness of tone.

Christian's wide-open eyes continued to gaze up at her with that disconcerting look which had in it both remote abstraction and something very intimately personal. His glance expressed a tender pleasure as it maintained itself against hers.

"Oh, but I like it so very much!" he murmured, with a pleading smile.

Then, by a sudden movement, he sat up, flushing in a novel embarrassment. "I beg you to pardon me," he urged, faltering over his words. "I was not wholly awake, I think; or I was trying to persuade myself that it was still a dream. Do not think me so rude, I pray you!"

She signified by a gesture and momentary facial relaxation that this particular detail of the situation need not detain them.

"But"—she began, in her stiffest and least

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amiable voice, and then hesitated. She put her knee again upon the chair, and, resting her hand on its back, looked dubiously at him. "I hardly know what to say," she started once more, and stopped altogether.

"Oh, but it is I who must say everything," he broke in, eagerly. "I am quite awake now—I see, of course, it is all absurd, meaningless in your eyes, till I explain it to you." He rose to his feet and put forth his hand as if to offer it in greeting. No responsive token being visible on her set face, or in her rigid posture, as she confronted him, he waved both hands in a deprecatory movement over the table laden with flowers between them. "These are my peace-offering," he said, with less confidence. "I hoped they would say some things for me—some things which I feel within me, and cannot easily put into speech. That is what I expected they would surely do. But"—he finished with dejection, after another glance into her face—"evidently they are as tonguetied as I am. I see it was not a happy thought in me to bring them—or to come myself!"

She had followed his words with rapt attentiveness—but at the end seemed to remember only one of them. "The 'thought,'" she said, coldly. "Yes, that is

what I do not understand. What was the thought?"

He regarded her with some perplexity. "What was the thought—my thought?" he repeated. "Oh—since it does not explain itself, what good is there in talking about it? Let us say that there was no 'thought' at all. I will make my compliments and apologies — and say good-morning — and nothing at all will have happened."

"No," she answered reflectively. "That would be stupid. You have been to expense, and evidently to some inconvenience as well, to do this thing. On second thoughts," she went on, with an apparent effort to modify the asperities of her tone and manner, "I dare say that I haven't behaved quite nicely to you. If you remember, I told you a long time ago that bad manners was a failing of mine."

"I remember every little word that you spoke," said Christian softly.

Frances hardened her voice on the instant. "But that doesn't help me to understand why—what this is all about."

He responded slowly, searching for his words as he went along. The rattle of machines in the next room for the first time came into the conversation, and forced him to lift his voice. "You were my last friend

in France—my first friend in England,” he began. “I said I would not forget you, and you have been always in my mind—always somewhere secure and fresh and sweet in my mind. It was only last night that I learned where I might find you. You will remember that when I begged you to tell me, you laughed and would not. I must not make you believe that I did not very soon find out your name or that I could not have learned your whereabouts much earlier. All I say is that I did not forget—and that last night, when the chance came naturally to me, I asked and learned what I desired to know. And then — why, then — this knowledge spread upward to be of more importance than all the other things I knew. I went home—but never to think of sleeping, but only to change my clothes and hasten out again, to get some new morning flowers for you, and to come to you at the earliest moment. I did not know that London rose so late—I arrived before the time, and, so it seems, waiting for your coming, I fell asleep. That is the entire story. You see it is not very complicated—it is by no means extraordinary.”

Frances had listened with a dreamy gentleness in her gray eyes. She started slightly when he stopped, and gave him a

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keen, cool glance. "The entire story?" she queried. "I think you have forgotten to mention that it was my sister who told you about me, and gave you my address."

Her prescience in no wise astonished Christian. Imagination had thrown round the Minerva-like figure which personified her in his thoughts, such a glamour of intellectual radiancy, that it seemed quite a natural thing for her to divine the obscure, and comprehend the mysterious. He smiled at her as he shrugged his shoulders. "It did not occur to me as important," he exclaimed. "It is true, however, that she told me. She did not know the address when I asked her, but later she procured it for me from her brother. It was at a supper at the Hanover Theater. Afterward there was dancing on the stage. I fear it would have been rather tiresome for me if I had not met your sister. She is a very friendly lady, and she talked a great deal to me."

"About me?" demanded Frances, sharply.

"Oh, no—about you only a few pleasant words; not more. It seems you do not meet very often."

He spoke with such evident frankness that she hesitated over the further inquiry her mind had framed. At last she put it in altered form. "Then you would not say

that she sent you here—that she told you to come—and to come by way of Covent Garden, and buy these flowers?” The question, as she uttered it, was full of significant suggestion about the nature of the reply desired. Its tone, too, carried the welcome hint of a softened mood, under the influence of which Christian’s face brightened with joy.

“Why, not at all!” he cried, lifting his voice gaily above the typewriters’ clatter. “She did speak of Covent Garden, and the show of flowers there in the early morning, but it was not in the least with reference to you. It was my own idea long after she had gone. Oh, no one would be more surprised than that good sister of yours to know that I am here!”

Frances, with a puzzling smile which ended in a long breath of relief, took up some of the roses and held them to her face.

“Sit down again,” she bade him, with a pleasant glow in the eyes regarding him over the blossoms; “sit down, and let us talk. Or does that noise bore you?”

“Oh, I am too glad!” he assured her, beamingly. “If it were cannon firing in the next room, it would be nothing to me.” Then, as he continued to gaze with delight at her, an inspiration came to him. “Or is

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it possible for you to come out? Would you walk a little while, perhaps on the Embankment?"

"I am not particularly busy this morning," she made indirect answer. Then a digression occurred to her. "But I am rather surprised," she observed, "to find that England hasn't made more changes in your speech. I would have expected a perfect Piccadilly accent, but you talk exactly as you did on the train and the boat."

He laughed and clapped his hands for glee. "It is wholly because I am with you again," he declared. "Everybody has said for months that the foreign traces had quite vanished from my tongue—but the first glimpse of you—ah! they come instantly back! It is the association of ideas, beyond doubt—that very sweet association," he added, with trembling softness, "of oh! such fond ideas."

She had taken up her hat. "We will go out for a little, if you like," she remarked rather abruptly.

"And I am altogether forgiven?" he demanded in high spirits, as he rose. "You consent to accept the flowers?"

"Heaven only knows what I shall do with them," she answered, with a grimace of mock despair. "But it was ever so nice of

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you to get them, and I thank you very much. Oh, I must tell Connie to sprinkle them before I go."

She moved to the inner door, and as she opened it turned. "Wouldn't you like to come and see the factory at work?" she inquired, and he joined her with alacrity. "It isn't much to see at the moment," she explained, as they entered the large room. "We have nine machines, but only four of them are needed just now. Until after the Jubilee, I'm afraid things will be very dull with publishers and playwrights. However, one must take the lean with the fat."

Christian looked somewhat nervously about him, while his friend stepped aside to confer with the girl whom he remembered from the early morning. Both this young lady and the three at their machines made a rapid, and as it seemed to him, perfunctory survey of their mistress's guest, and bent their attention upon their duties again as if his presence signified nothing whatever to them. He suspected that in reality they were plunged in furious speculation concerning him; and this embarrassed him so much that he turned and strolled back toward the open door and even entered the office before Frances rejoined him.

When she came back to him, she took from

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the table a couple of pale, half-opened tea-rose buds, gave one to him to fix in his lapel and pinned the other to the breast of her fawn-gray frock. "If you are ready," she said, smilingly, and led the way to the staircase. As she descended before him, he noted the intelligent simplicity of this dress she wore—how it fitted her as gracefully and as artistically as Poole ever fitted Dicky Westland. About her hat, the carriage of her head and shoulders, the free decision of her step, there was something individual which appealed directly to him—a charm which would not be duplicated by any other person in the world. He looked at his watch as he went down, and found with surprise that it was nearly eleven.

He stepped to her side at the street doorway, with a meaning gesture. "Do you remember," he said, gently—"on the boat you took my arm?"

"I think London is a little different," she answered, decisively enough, yet with the effect to his ears of unreserved camaraderie.

They walked slowly down to the end of the street. "Do you mind which way we go?" she asked him, and turned eastward. "I haven't seen the city in an age," she remarked, as if the choice needed explanation. Sauntering along, they found little to

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say to each other at the outset. What words they exchanged were about the mild, sunless sky of the London April, and the wonderful pencilings and rubbings of soot upon the silver-gray of London's stone walls. Learning that he was a stranger to the Temple, she led the way through the gate and lane, and then, by turnings which it surprised him to find her knowing so well, to the curious little church. The door in the sunken porch was ajar, and they went in. She pointed to the circle of freestone Crusaders looking complacently up from the floor at the Oriental dome which had caught their traveled fancy ages before, and it occurred to her to say: "Is it not interesting to you to think that there were Torrs who were friends and companions of these very Magnavilles and Mareschalls, six hundred years ago?"

He thrust out his lips a little. "I have not much interest in anything concerning the Torrs," he answered.

She looked up at him with curiosity, but offered no comment. They left the church, and she led him round to the spot where, amid the cracked old flags from forgotten graves, Oliver Goldsmith's tomb now finds itself. A crumbling wreath of natural flowers showed that some kindly soul had

remembered the date of the poet's death, three weeks before.

Christian displayed scarcely more interest here. "I have not read his 'Vicar of Wakefield,' " he confessed to her. "I had always the intention to do so, but it—it never came off."

"That brings me to one thing I wanted to ask you," she said, as they retraced their steps. "What books have you been reading—since you came to England? I am anxious to know?"

"Not many," he admitted with an attempted laugh which ended rather shamefacedly. "Reading did not fit itself very readily into my time. At Lord Chobham's I read in some old books, and at Emanuel's too, but it was all about our own people—the Barons' War, and the Wars of the Roses, and the Civil War. I know something about these and about the old families of the West, but not much else. I should have read more, I know, but there was really not much opportunity. But you—I saw at your office what serious books you read. It is what I should like to do, too—sometimes. But there has been no one to talk with about any kind of books."

They had come out again to the Embankment, and made their pace now even more

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deliberate. "I have been thinking a great deal about you, and your future, since we met," she remarked, after a pause. "It has made me wonder what you would do, when the opportunity came to you—and what it would be open for you to do. That is why I began reading the books that I take it you have in mind—but afterward I read them for their own value. At the beginning"—she went on slowly, studying the sky-line in an abstracted way as she walked—"at the beginning I thought I should see you again sometime, and I had the idea that I wanted to be able to advise—or no, not that, but to talk to you, and try to interest you in the right sort of things. But it did not take me long to see how foolish that was."

"No, no!" urged Christian; without, however, any convincing display of enthusiasm. "There is no one in the world from whom I will so gladly take advice as you."

She smiled fleetingly at him. "And there is no one in the world," she replied, "more firmly resolved not to offer you any."

"Ah, but if I beg it! You may not offer—but will you refuse to give?"

"What is the good?" she broke forth in a louder tone, speaking as if in annoyed reproof to herself. "No person can think

or feel or decide for another! It is nonsense to pretend otherwise. A man must think his own thoughts, follow his own nature! We can ask nothing finer of a man than to honestly be himself. I get so angry at all these ceaseless attempts to run people all into one mold, to make everybody like everybody else—and then, here I was, solemnly starting out to do the very trick myself!" She laughed in ironical self-depreciation at the thought

Christian drew closer to her side. "I have very many things to say to you," he began gravely. "But I am in one way sorry that we went into the churchyard, because it has made us melancholy, and I was going to tell it all to you in the highest good spirits. We were both laughing like merry children when we left your place—and now we are sad. I like Emanuel's idea—he will have no tombs to be seen upon his estate. Death will come there as elsewhere, without doubt, but he will not be allowed to remain hanging about, thrusting his ugly presence upon happy people each time they walk in the street. At Emanuel's there is cremation—and that is the end of it. That is the portion of his System which pleases me most. It is the best thing in it."

She looked into his face. "Then you are

not wildly in love with his whole System?" she asked.

"Me? I grieve to say not. It is no doubt very admirable indeed—but—how shall I say?—it does not appeal to me. You are displeased with me for confessing it—but—"

"Displeased?" she interrupted him, with a meaning laugh. "Nothing could displease me less!"

"Oh, you do not love the System?" he cried, with dancing eyes.

"I hate it!" she answered, briefly.

"Capital!" He halted, to shake her by the hand with gay effusion. "Let us abuse it together! You shall say it all, however, because I only dislike it, and cannot give any reasons why—but you will know them every one. Oh, this is splendid! I had the right instinct when I came to you! I have a great deal to tell you—but first you must tell me: what do you say about my cousin's System? I am burning to hear that."

It was impossible to evade the contagion of his sparkling face. She laughed in turn.

"Oh, it would be too long a story," she half protested. "But to put it briefly, this is my idea. Emanuel seems to me to be a magnificent character, with one extraordinary limitation. I think it must be a Jewish limitation—for I have seen it pointed out that they do

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not invent things. That is Emanuel's flaw; he has not an original thought in his head. He merely carries to a mathematical point of expansion and development the ready-made ideas which he finds accepted all about him. What you see in him is a triumph of the Semitic passion for working a problem out to its ultimate conclusion. When you consider it, what has he done? Merely discovered, by tremendous labor and energy, the smoothest possible working arrangement of the social system which his class regards as best for itself, and hence for all mankind—the system which exalts a chosen few, and keeps all the rest in subjection. My dear sir, things do not rise higher than their source! How did the Torrs come by their estates? By stealing the birthright of thousands of dumb human beasts of burden, and riveting the family collar round their necks with no more regard for their wishes or their rights than as if they had been so many puppies or colts. And what was the origin of the Ascarel fortune? The most frightful and blood-stained human slavery in the poisonous jungles of the Dutch East Indies—that, and an ancient family business of international usury, every dirty penny in which if you followed it far enough, meant the flaying-

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alive of a peasant, or the starvation of his little children. These are the things which your cousin inherits. He is fine enough to be ashamed of them, but he is not broad enough to repudiate them. He makes himself believe that they were wrong only in degree. He will admit that the Torrs were too brutal toward their serfs, the Ascarels too selfish with their millions. That is all. And he sets himself to proving that with the right kind of chief at their head these systems of theirs can be made not only respectable, but even profitable to the slaves as well as the master. He does not see that the systems themselves are crimes!"

"Yes, I am glad that I came to you," said Christian, in low, earnest tones, in the pause which followed. The girl, breathing deeply under the fervor of her mood, looked fixedly before her toward the copper-haze above Paul's dome. He watched the noble immobility of her profile and thrilled at its suggestion of strength.

"To do him justice," she went on, musingly, "he does not pretend that it is progress. He is honest, and he describes it as reaction—a long step backward. It is just that kind of honesty and devotion, plus wrong-headedness, which keeps us all at sixes and sevens. If we agree that there is

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no better-intentioned man alive than Emanuel—still he would do more harm than the most atrocious blackguard, if he had his way with the world. But fortunately, he will not have it. A vastly greater and loftier Jew has said that you cannot pour new wine into old bottles.”

They walked on for a little in silence. “Have you been to Emanuel’s place then?” Christian asked at last.

“No; I know it only from hearsay, and from his books. A woman novelist for whom I do work has been there, and she has told me a good deal about it. She is going to use it in a book, and would you believe it? she is crazy with enthusiasm about the whole thing. I tried to point out to her what she was doing, but you might as well talk to the east wind. The way women run after the hand that smites them, and beslaver it with kisses—that is the thing that enrages me most of all. Why, the very corner-stone of Emanuel’s System is the perpetual enslavement of women. I am always surprised, when I hear about his mediæval arrangements, that he hasn’t set up a ducking-stool for his women-folk. I’m sure it’s a pure oversight on his part. Well, what are you to expect when cultivated women like Mrs. Sessyl-Trant turn up as

frantic admirers of that sort of thing? However, thank goodness, women are not forever to be sold out by the fools of their own sex. It is impossible not to see that the tide has turned at last. There *is* a change—and I think something genuine and lasting is going to come out of it. I really think it!”

“Ah, that is what I feel,” put in Christian, with confused eagerness. “I have no clear thoughts about it, but it is my deep feeling that—that—what shall I say?—we are most at fault in the matter of the women.”

Frances pursued her thought, in frowning meditation. “It is the new professional class, who earn their own living, who will help us out. These women, who have come through the mill of self-responsibility, will not accept the old nonsense invented for them, and imposed upon them by the women parasites. The younger women who take care of themselves have all begun to ask questions: ‘Why should I do this?’ ‘Why shouldn’t I do that?’ ‘And whose business but my own is it if I do the other?’ Unfortunately, they are too ready to accept the first answer that comes to them. Oh, that is the woeful trouble! Men have slowly built up for themselves a good deal of machinery by which they can find out what is true. I

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don't say they are not continually deceived, or that they invariably recognize the truth when they see it, but still they have certain facilities for protecting themselves against falsehoods. But women have practically none at all. They are systematically lied to from their cradle to their grave. They read so hard!—they are *the* consumers of novels, religious books, weekly newspapers, magazines, and the rest of it—but never a word of actual truth is allowed to reach them out of it all. Wherever they turn to inquire about themselves, about their rights and their duties in this world that they have been born into, they encounter this vast, unbroken conspiracy of liars. That is the gravest of all the disadvantages they labor under. Why, take even the 'New Woman' fiction of a few years ago. There was a great hullabaloo raised over certain novels; at last, they cried, the truth was being revealed by women, for women, of women. But what nonsense! It turned out not to be the truth at all, but only the old falsehood, disguised in hysterics and some shocking bad manners. There seems no escape for women anywhere. They are lied to by their parents, their parsons, their doctors, their authors—and of course they lie to one another. They have a whole debased currency of insincer-

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ities and flattering falsehoods which they pass among themselves, keeping straight faces all the while as if it were honest money.—But as I said, I think a change is coming. However, don't let's talk any more about it. I get too angry!"

"I like you to be angry—only not with me," commented Christian with a sprightly smile. Then he added, more gravely, "Oh, I can see how the women who work will make a change. It was very curious to me to see those girls at the machines in your office. It was one of them who let me in, before you came. She was quite different from any of the English women I have been meeting. One saw that she had thoughts of her own—an atmosphere of her own. I should not like to tell lies to her; I think she would detect them more rapidly than I could get them out."

"Oh, Connie," laughed Frances. "Yes, she has a head on her shoulders. They are all fairly bright girls, and they get on together extremely well. It's quite their own idea to divide up the work equally among the lot, and when there is not much doing to take turns in working alternate days. I think it was rather fine of them."

"Ah, that is the class of women one would

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like to help," he declared. "That is what I will devote myself to."

"But it is the class which prefers to help itself," she explained quietly. "I see no way in which you could 'help' them, as you call it. They don't want any help. Men in their position might take tips, but these girls won't." As he received the rebuff in silence, she changed the subject. "I am meeting now some other young women who would interest you. They are doing newspaper work—and doing it on its merits, too, and not by the favoritism of editors and proprietors—and one or two evenings a week we all get together at my office and talk things over. Sometimes there are as many as twenty of us, including my girls. In a year or two, perhaps it will run to a club-room of our own. I don't know that I told you—I am getting into newspaper work myself. If I saw how to combine it with my office business, I could have a place on a regular daily staff. I'm puzzling a good deal to find some way of making the two things go together."

"Oh, I envy you!" broke in Christian, impulsively. "You have work to do! You are interested in your work! You find in it not only occupation, but the opportunities of being useful to others, and of making

your life, and other people's lives, worth living. But think of me! I have nothing in the wide world to do, except wait for a very strong old man to die. And when he dies, then still I have nothing to do worth doing. Don't you see that it is the most miserable of existences? I am filled with disgust for it. I cannot bear it another day. And that is what I was going to tell you. I have decided to leave it all—and go away."

Frances paused for a moment to scrutinize, with slightly narrowed eyes, the excited face he turned to her. "How will going away improve matters?" she asked him, upon reflection.

He put out his lips, and shrugged his shoulders. "At least I shall be a free man," he affirmed.

Unconsciously she imitated his gesture in turn: "It does not follow that a deserter is necessarily a free man."

He flushed and winced visibly under the words, and turned away biting his lips. Then, the vexation clearing from his face, he wheeled again, and regarded her with calm gravity.

"There is no one else who could say that to me and not injure me," he answered, simply. "But that is the characteristic of you—when you say such a thing to me, then

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it becomes a thing that should have been said. Yet perhaps it is not the final word, after all. Ask yourself what it is that I am deserting! Consider whether I should give up or gain something. Here in England it is possible for me to be one of two things—the conventional person of position like all the others, or the exceptional kind of being which Emanuel desires to make of me. I have been at school for half a year learning what it is that society in general expects a man in my situation to do. Now that I have learned it, frankly it makes me sick at heart. But then I have been at another school for a month, observing and studying what it is that Emanuel wishes me to undertake. We have agreed that that is not to be thought of, either. Then what am I to do?"

"But how does running away solve the difficulty?" She put the question to him with gentle persistency.

"Ah, but, you see," he rejoined, argumentatively, "it is not alone a moral difficulty. There are practical questions, too. When I announce to Emanuel that I reject his plans for my future, then I am left to myself to be that most ridiculous of objects—a man with a great station and no money to keep it up. That is what I must be here in England. But in other countries, that

will not be the case. There will always be enough money for me to live like a prince upon—so long as I travel about, in my own yacht if I like, or reside simply and happily in the beautiful places of the earth, here and there, as the fancy possesses me. Thus I can put to use the prestige of my title, when it is of advantage to do so—but only in so far as it is needful at the moment—and at the same time it does not become a burden to me in any degree. Now think carefully of this—is it not the wisest course for me?”

She seemed not to pause for thought at all. “Oh, that depends upon how you define wisdom,” she replied, promptly. “There is the wisdom of the serpent, but fortunately there are many other kinds. No, I must say, you haven’t convinced me in the least. However, you mustn’t think that is of importance. You are under no obligation to convince me, surely!”

“Ah, but that is everything to me,” he insisted. “There are reasons—which I wish to explain to you.”

He could not keep a new meaning out of the glance with which he enforced this assurance. They had strolled round to Ludgate Circus, and come to a halt on the corner, with their backs turned upon a window full of droll phrenological charts and

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symbols. He consulted his watch once more. "I breakfasted so lightly, and so early," he said—"it is not luncheon time quite, but that will give us a table to ourselves. You will come across with me, will you not? There are truly important things which have not been said—which I much wish to say."

After a moment's reflection she nodded her assent.

CHAPTER XX

Christian and Frances ate their luncheon in an upper chamber, close to a kind of balcony window, which gave upon one of the city's most crowded thoroughfares. An unceasing and uniform uproar—overridden from time to time by the superior tumult of a passing railway train on a bridge near by—rose from this indefatigable street. They had the room to themselves; the portentous din magnified the effect of the solitude in which they regarded each other, crumbling the bread on the table absent-mindedly, and waiting for the inspiration of speech.

“When I get back,” the girl said at last with a smile, “the racket of my typewriters will seem like the murmur of a gentle breeze down a leafy country lane.”

They laughed—but they had discovered it was not so hard to make oneself heard as they had supposed. Their voices intuitively found a level which served their personal needs, yet did not incommode the waiters yawning at the head of the stairway outside.

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"Have you taken to the bicycle?" she was moved in sheer irrelevance to ask him. When he shook his head, she went on: "It is a wonderful thing for women. It has done more for them in three years, than all the progressive intellectual movements of civilization did in three hundred. We all use them, coming to and from the office. We have to store them down in the area, now—but I am going to find a better place."

Christian rolled his bread crumbs into balls and stared at them in a brown study, from which this topic was powerless to arouse him.

"I wish," he said, finally—"I wish very much that I knew how to convince you. But I seem never to produce any impression upon you. You are unyielding to the touch. It is I who get molded and kneaded about whenever I come close to you. And I don't say that it is not for the best. Only—only now, you will not accept my own ideas of what I should do, and you will not tell me what your ideas are."

"I am not sure that I have any ideas," she assured him. "It is merely that, on general principles, I don't care for the people who settle difficulties by turning tail and running away from them."

"Very well," he began, as if an impor-

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tant premise had been accepted. "But as to my special case, I have stated what must be my position if I remain in England. To me it seems that it must be impossible—intolerable. But you have some different view, evidently. That is what I beg you to explain to me. If I am to remain in England, what is it your idea that I should do?"

She knitted her brows a little, and took time to her reply. "You seem to think so entirely of yourself," she said, slowly, "it is very hard to know what to say to you. I cannot put myself, you see, so completely in your place, as you are always able to do."

He opened his eyes wide, and informed their gaze with a surprised reproach. "There you are surely unjust to me," he urged, pleadingly. "I do not know any one who thinks more about other people than I do. One hesitates to say these things about oneself—but truly you are mistaken in this matter. In fact, I wonder sometimes if it is not a fault, a weakness in my nature, that I am so readily moved by the sufferings and wrongs of unhappy people. Whenever I see injustice, I am beside myself with a passion to set it right. I grow almost sick with indignation, and pity, when these things come before me. Last night, for example, at the Empire ——"

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Christian stopped abruptly, with the sudden consciousness that the ground was not clear before him. He saw that he was entirely without a clue as to what his companion's views on the subject might be. That was her peculiarity: he knew concerning her thoughts and inclinations only what she chose to reveal to him. It was beyond his power to predict what her attitude would be on any new topic. Looking at her thoughtful, serene-eyed face, it decidedly seemed to him that the Empire, as an ethical problem, might with advantage be passed by. He hesitated for a moment, in the friendly shelter of the street noise, and then gave another termination to his speech: "It puzzles me that you should have that view of my temperament."

"Ah, that is just it—you have put the word into my mouth. It is 'temperament' that you are thinking of—and about that you are perfectly right. Your temperament is as open to the impulses of the moment—kindly, generous, compassionate and all that—as a flower is to the bees. But character is another matter. What good do your fine momentary sentiments, these rapid noble emotions of yours, do you or anybody else? You experience them—and forget them. The only thing that abides permanently with

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you is consideration for your own personal affairs."

"This is all very unjust," he said, disconsolately. "I come to you for solace and friendship, and you turn upon me with beak and claws." He sighed, with the beginning of tears in his bright eyes, as he added: "There is more reason than ever, it seems to me, why I should go away from England! It is not kind to me!"

His doleful tone and mien drove her to swift repentance. "Oh, I have only been saying the disagreeable things first, to get them out of the way," she sought to reassure him. "There isn't another unpleasant word for you to hear, not one, I promise you."

"It is my opinion that there have been enough," he ventured to comment, with a rueful little smile. A measure of composure returned to him. "But if they must be said, I would rather they come from you than from any one else, for I think that you have also some pleasant thoughts about me."

She nodded her head several times in assent, regarding him with an amused twinkle in her eyes meanwhile. "Yes—the right kind of editor could make very interesting stuff indeed out of you," she said, and smiled almost gaily at his visible failure to comprehend her figure. "What I mean is—you are

too much sail, and too little boat. You drift before every new wind that blows. There is lacking that kind of balance—proportion—which gives stability. But, dear me, it is a thousand times better to be like that, than to have an excess of the other thing. The man of the solid qualities, without the imagination, simply sticks in the mud where he was born. But with you—if the right person chances to get hold of you, and brings the right influences steadily to bear upon you, then there is no telling what fine things you may not rise to.”

“You are that right person!”

He lifted his voice to utter these words, with the air of feeling them to be momentous. His eyes glowed as they reaffirmed the declaration to her inquiring glance. But she seemed to miss the gravity of both words and look.

“Oh, there you’re wrong,” she said, half jestingly. “I’m too bad tempered and quarrelsome to exert any proper influence over any one. Why, I should nag all the joy and high spirits out of you in no time at all. No—you need an equable and happy person, really very wise and strong and sensible, but above all with an easy, smooth disposition—such a person, for example, as Emanuel’s wife is described to be.”

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“No—I need no one but you!” he repeated with accentuated deliberation.

This time she appeared to feel something of his intention. She looked into the gaze he was bending upon her and then withdrew her eyes precipitately, and made a show of active interest in her food.

“I am asking you to think of joining your life to mine,” he went on, in low, yet very distinct tones. “You cannot know a hundredth part as well as I do, how profoundly I need such help as you can give. You are the one woman in the world who means strength as well as happiness to me. If you could only dream with what yearning I long always to lean upon you—to be supported by your fine, calm, sweet wisdom! To be upheld by you—to be nourished and guided by you—oh, that is the vision which I tremble with joy to think of! I am my own master for the first time to-day—I have taken my life into my own hands—and I lay it at your feet—dear lady—at your feet.”

She rose abruptly while his last words were in the air, and turning, moved to the window. She had contrived by a gesture to bid him not to follow, and he could only gaze in mingled apprehension and hope at her back, the while she stood professing to scrutinize the shifting throng below.

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The waiter brought in another dish, methodically rearranged the plates and went away again. To Christian's bitter disgust, two men entered and took seats at a table at the other end of the small room—and still she did not turn. He meditated calling her, or joining her on the pretense of announcing the cutlets—and only stared in nervous excitement instead.

Then, as suddenly as she had left him she returned, and resumed her chair as if nothing unusual had happened. His strenuous gaze swept her face for tokens of her mood—of her inclination or decision—but beyond a spot of vivid red on each smooth cheek, there was no sign of any sort. Her frank, calm gray eyes met his with unruffled directness; they had in them that suggestion of benignant tolerance which he had discerned there more than once before.

“You do not answer me!” he pleaded, after a few mouthfuls. As his back shielded the action from the strangers, he put forth a cautious hand to touch the nearest of hers, but she drew it gently away beyond his reach. They automatically adjusted their voices to the conditions created by the newcomers.

“There could be only one possible answer,” she told him, softly, almost

tenderly. "It is a very flattering dream—to me—but it is a mere empty dream, none the less. I hope you will not want to talk about it any more."

"But I swear that it is not empty at all!" he urged, in earnest tones. "Who has a right to say that it is a dream? I am my own master—so are you. We are of age—we are intelligent people. I deliberately come to you, and say to you that you are the one woman on earth whom I desire with all my heart for my wife. I open my mind to you. There is only the image of you inside it. You know my sincerity. You must feel how supreme is the place you have in my thoughts. It is the logical end toward which I have been walking ever since I first saw you! You are all that there is of true friendship, of true womanhood, for me! I put out my hands to you, I pray to you! And why will you not come to me, dear, dear Frank?"

There was a touch of pathos in the smile she gave him. "It isn't the least bit of good, I assure you," she made answer, in the confidential murmur that was necessary. "One can't talk here—but please let us speak of something else. Or can we not go now?"

He went on as if she had not spoken, his big, dark eyes challenging hers to an encounter which she evaded. "Do not

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think we need go away from England, if you want to stay; there will always be money enough—with your wisdom in controlling it. Perhaps we may even be able to restore Caermere. But if we are not, still it can be one of the noblest and most beautiful residences in England, when we learn together to understand its charm, and make it our home. Oh, when you see the magnificent hills and forests shutting it in on all sides—and the grim, fine old walls and towers of the castle itself! But there we need live only when we choose to do so—and whenever the mood comes to us, off we can roam to the Alps or Algiers, or the wonderful India which one always dreams of. And we shall sail in our own yacht and you shall be the queen there, as everywhere else. And all our lives we will spend in doing good to others: do you not see what extraordinary opportunities for helping those who need help you will have? Where now you are of service to one person, then you can assist a hundred! An army of grateful people will give thanks because of you—and I will always be the chief of them—your foremost slave, your most reverent worshiper! And then—think of the joy of a life in which no one has a share who is not pleasant and welcome to us! We will have no one near us who is

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not our friend. Oh, I have not told you: that is why, this very morning, I decided to leave it all, and to make a new life for myself, and to spend it wholly with my real friends. It is loneliness, heart and soul loneliness, that has driven me to revolt. And in my despair I come to you—and I say to you that it is friendship that I cannot live without, and you are my oldest friend, my dearest, truest, most precious friend, and I beg you to come with me and we will go through the world together, hand in hand——”

She interrupted him by pushing back her chair and half rising. “If you will excuse me now,” she said, nervously, “I think I must go. You mustn’t trouble to come—I will say good-bye here.”

He had risen as well, and now in trembling earnestness protested against her proposal. At the risk of attracting the attention of the strangers, he displayed such resentful opposition that she yielded. The waiter was summoned—and remained bowing in dazed meditation upon the magnitude of the change he had been bidden to keep for himself, after they had passed out and down the staircase.

She led the way at a hurried pace back across the Circus and to Blackfriars. At the

rounded beginning of the Embankment she paused, and for the first time spoke. "Really I would rather go back by myself," she told him. "It is only unhappiness to both of us—what you insist on talking about."

"But I do not think it is to be treated in this way," he declared with dignity. "If we speak of nothing else it is the highest and most solemn honor that a man can pay to any woman, that I have paid to you. I have the feeling that it should be more courteously dealt with."

"Yes, I know," she admitted, nodding her ready compunction. She tightened her lips and looked away from him toward the bridge, her brows drawn together in troubled lines. "I don't say the right thing to you—I know that better even than you do. You must not think I fail to appreciate it all—the honor, and the immense confidence, and all the rest of it. But when I have said that much—then I don't know in the least how to say the rest. Why can't we leave it unsaid altogether? I assure you, in all seriousness, that it can't be—and mayn't we leave it like that? Please!"

He regarded her with a patient yet proud sadness, waiting to speak till she had turned, and his glance caught hers. "I do not wish to become a nuisance to you," he said, his

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voice choking a little, "but I think it would be better if you said everything to me. Then I shall not put my mind on the rack, to try and imagine your reasons." He let his lip curl with a lingering ironical perception of the fantastic with which his tragedy was veined. "It is very sweet," he went on—"your consideration for my feelings. But I have heard so many plain truths to-day, I think my sensibilities are in good training now—they will not suffer for a few more." Suddenly, as if the sound of his voice had unnerved him, he seized her arm, and confronted her surprised gaze with a reddened and scowling face. "What are you afraid of?" he demanded hoarsely. "Why not say it? I heard it only last night! It is forty years old, it is true, but they have wonderful memories in England. You are the one whom I have held to be my dearest friend—but go on! Say it to me! A little thing like friendship does not prevent you from thinking it! Why, then, you should have the courage to speak it out!"

Dimly, while she stared in his distracted countenance, the meaning of the wild talk dawned upon her. With a startled exclamation, she dragged her arm from his clutch, and drew back a step. Trembling in her agitation, her gray eyes distended them-

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selves out of all likeness to their tranquil habit.

“Oh-h-h!” she murmured in dismay at him, and wrung her hands. “Oh-h! Stop! Stop! That is too horrible for you to think!”

Gaining coherence of thought and purpose, she moved impulsively to him, and in turn clasped her hand upon his arm. “Put that out of your mind!” she adjured him. “I could not look anybody in the face if you thought *that* of me. Oh, it is too terrible of you! How could you suppose that I could harbor such a thought? To blame you for something years before you were born!—to throw it into your face. And *me* of all people! Why, I have cried to myself at remembering what you said about your father when we first met—how your little-boy memory clung affectionately to the soldier-figure of him in the door-way! Look at me—I cry now to think of it! Why, it is the one thing about you that is sacred to me!—the one thing that you are perfect in—and then you imagine that I am capable of insulting you about it! Oh, heavens, why wouldn’t you leave me when I told you to?”

She threw his arm from her in a gust of physical impatience, but the glance with which, on the instant, she corrected this demonstration, was full of honest compas-

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sion. He groveled before this benign gaze, with bowed head and outstretched, pleading hands.

“Forgive me! Forgive me!” he groaned, brokenly. “I could not—at all—know what it was I said. I am too unhappy!”

“Well,” she began, with a vehement effort at calmness, “let us say good-bye here. There are some Germans watching us from the hotel windows. Or it is better perhaps—will you walk on past the school?” As they moved forward, she recovered more of her self-possession. “I hope you will be able to remember something pleasant out of our morning,” she said, and with a joyless laugh added, “but for the life of me, I don’t know what it can be. Or yes, you can remember when you woke up, and I stood and scolded you, from above the flowers. I pretended to bully you, but really all the while I was thinking how sweet of you the entire thing was. And later, too—oh, there were several intervals in which I behaved civilly to you for whole minutes at a time.”

He looked wistfully at her. Beneath the forced playfulness of her tone it seemed to him that something hopeful sounded. “Ah, dear friend,” he murmured, drawing close to her—“think!—think tenderly in my behalf! Ask yourself—your kindest self—if

I must be really driven away. Why is it that I may not stay? I plead with you as if it were for my life—and is it not indeed for my life?—my very life?”

“No—Christian,” she said, gravely, “it is not your life, nor anything like your life. You give big labels to your emotions, but in good time you will see that the things themselves are not so big, or so vital. And you mustn’t yield so readily to all these impulses to mope and despair and to think yourself ill used. You must try to make for yourself a thicker skin—and to view things more calmly. And I don’t want you to go away thinking hard things of me. Is it true that I always nag you—there is something in you which calls out all the bully in me—but I wish you would think of me as your friend. It gives me great pleasure when you speak of me as your oldest friend in England—for I have always liked you, and I am interested in you, and—”

“And why will you not marry me?” He interposed the question bluntly, and with a directness which gave it the effect of an obstacle in her path, isolated but impassable.

She halted, and studied the pavement in consideration of her reply. When she looked up, it was with the veiled elation of a disputant who has his counter-stroke well in

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hand. "You said to-day that you had become your own master, and that you were a free man, with your life in your own hands. Very well. I also am my own master, and I am a free woman. My life is exclusively my own personal property, to live as I choose to live it. I value my liberty quite as highly as if I were a man. It does not suit me to merge any part of it in something else. There could be many other reasons given, no doubt, but they would be merely individual variations of this one chief reason—that I am a free woman, and intend to remain a free woman. I know what I want to do in the world, and I am going to try to do it, always my own way, always my own master."

He regarded her thoughtfully, bowing his head in token of comprehension. "But if —," he began, and then checked himself, with a gesture of pained submission.

"There are no 'ifs,'" she said, with resolute calmness, and held out her hand to him. Her control of the situation was undisputed. "We say good-bye, now—and we are friends—good friends. I—I thank you—for everything!"

He stood looking at her as she walked away—a sedately graceful figure, erect and light of step, receding from him under the

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pallid green shelter of the young trees. Musingly, he held up the hand which still preserved the sense of that farewell contact with hers—and upon a sudden impulse put it to his lips and kissed it. Something in the action wrought an instantaneous change in his thoughts. All at once it was apparent to him that many things which should have been said to her he had left unsaid. In truth, it seemed upon reflection that he had said and done everything wrong. The notion of running after her flamed up in him for a moment. She was still in sight—he could distinguish her in the distance, stopping to buy a paper from a boy near the Temple station. But then the memory of her unanswerable, irrevocable “No” swept back upon him—and with a long sigh he turned and strode in the other direction.

Frances, hastening mechanically toward her office, found relief from the oppressive confusion of her thoughts in the fortuitous spectacle of two small newsboys fighting in the gutter just at the end of the Temple Gardens. For the first time in her life, the sight aroused nothing within her save a pleased if unscientific interest. She paused, and almost smilingly observed the contest. She found something amusingly grotesque in

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the pseudo-Titanic rage on these baby faces. The dramatic fury of the embattled infants was in such ridiculous disproportion to the feather-weight blows they exchanged! She found herself chuckling aloud at some incongruous comparison which rose in her mind.

Then, as the combatants parted, apparently for no better reason than the general volatility of youth, she remembered that she had it in mind to look at the "Star." One of her friends, Mary Leach, had sent to that paper some days before an article on "Shopgirls' Dormitories," and she was interested in watching for its appearance. It happened that one of the boys had a "Star." Acting upon some obscure whim, she gave them each a penny, quite in the manner of a distributor of prizes for conspicuous merit—and grinned to herself at the thought when she had turned her back on them and moved on.

There was no sign of what she sought on the front page. Opening the sheet, her eye fell, as it were, upon a news paragraph in a middle column:

"Death of the Oldest Duke.—The Shrewsbury correspondent of the 'Exchange Telegraph' announces the death at Caermere

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Castle, at an early hour this morning, of the Duke of Glastonbury. His Grace, who was in his ninetieth year, had until last summer enjoyed the most vigorous health, and only now succumbs to the prostration then occasioned by the group of domestic bereavements which at the time created such a sensation. The deceased nobleman, who for the great part of his prolonged life, was one of the best known sportsmen in Shropshire, succeeded his father as eighth duke in his minority, and had been in possession of the title for no less than seventeen years when Her Majesty ascended the throne, thus constituting a record which is believed to be without parallel in the annals of the peerage. His successor is stated by Whitaker's Almanac to be his grandson, Mr. Christian Tower, but the current editions of Burke, Debrett and others do not mention this gentleman, whose claims, it would appear, have but recently been admitted by the family."

Frances read it all, as she stood at the corner, with a curious sense of mental sluggishness. Her attention failing to follow one of the sentences, she went back, and laboriously traced its entire tortuous course, only to find that it meant no more than it had at first.

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It seemed a long time before she connected the intelligence on the printed page with the realities of actual life. Then she turned swiftly, and strained her eyes in the wild hope of discovering Christian still on the Embankment. She even took a few hurried steps, as if to follow and overtake him—but stopped short, confronted by the utter futility of such an enterprise.

Then, walking slowly, her mind a maze of wondering thoughts, she went her way.

CHAPTER XXI

Christian strolled aimlessly about for a long time in the closely packed congeries of streets, little and big, behind St. Paul's. It happened to be all new ground to him, and something novel was welcome to his troubled and restless mind. He loitered from one window to another, examining their contents gravely; at the old book stalls he took down numbers of volumes and looked laboriously through them, as if conducting an urgent search for something.

His jumbled thoughts were a burden to him. He could get nothing coherent from them. It was not even clear to his perception whether he was really as dejected and disconsolate as he ought to be.

He had only recently been plunged into despairing depths of sadness, and it was fitting that he should still be racked with anguish. Yet there was no actual pain—there was not even a dogged insensibility to the frivolous distractions of the moment. He became exceedingly interested in an old copy of Boutell, for example, and hunted

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eagerly through the multitude of heraldic cuts to see if the white bull on a green ground of the Torrs was among them. His disappointment at not finding it was so keen that for the instant it superseded his abiding grief. His discovery of this fact entertained him; he was almost capable of laughing in amusement at it. Then, in self-condemnation, he sought to call up before his mental vision the picture of Frances, as she had looked when they had said good-bye. The image would not come distinctly. Her face eluded him; he could only see her walking away, instead, under the feeble green of the young trees. None the less, he said deliberately to himself that he was unhappy beyond the doom of most men, and that the hope had gone out of his life.

The day had turned out unexpectedly warm. In the middle of his shapeless musings, the ornate sign of a Munich brewery on a cool, shaded doorway suddenly attracted him. The dusky, restful emptiness of the place inside seemed ideally to fit his mood. He went in, and seated himself with a long sigh of satisfaction at one of the tables. Here, in this mellow quiet, over the refreshing contents of the big, covered stone mug, he could think peacefully and to advantage. He lit a cigar, and leaning back

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in comfort, gave the signal to his thoughts to arrange and concentrate themselves.

What should he do next? Yes—that was far more to the point than mooning over the irrevocable past. He had left Duke Street with hardly any plan beyond not returning thither. Luggage of some sort he would have to have—changes of linen and the like, and the necessary articles of the toilet. It was his intention to buy these as the need of them arose—and the character of his purchases would also depend a good deal, of course, upon the decision he should come to concerning his movements. He had said that he would leave England—and now he asked himself whether there was anything to prevent his departure that very evening. One of the deepest charms of travel must be to start off on the instant, upon the bidding of the immediate whim, and descend upon your destination before there has been time to cheapen it by thinking about it. Why should he not eat the morrow's breakfast in the Hague—and dine at Amsterdam? Similarly, he could within twenty-four hours be watching the marriage of Mosel and Rhine at Coblenz—or gazing upon the wide, wet, white sands of the Norman shore from the towering battlements of St. Michel. A hundred storied towns, vaguely pictured in

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his imagination, beckoned to him from across the Channel. Upon reflection, it seemed to him that Holland offered the most wooing invitation. He asked the waiter for Bradshaw, and noted the salient points of the itinerary from Queenborough.

It was now three o'clock. There was plenty of time for all purchases, and a leisurely dinner before going to Victoria. It occurred to him that the dinner must be very good—a luxurious kind of farewell repast.

He would make a memorandum now of the things he ought to buy here in London. Holland was by all accounts a dear place—and moreover he had heard that the Dutch customs examination was by no means troublesome. It would be more intelligent to complete practically his outfit here. He took out a pencil, and began feeling in his coat-pocket for a bit of paper. The hand brought out, beside Lady Milly's note about the Private View, three or four unopened letters. He had entirely forgotten their existence—and stared at them now in puzzled indecision. It was not a sensible thing, or a fair thing either, to tear up and destroy unread the message which some one else had been at pains to transcribe for you. But on the other hand, these missives belonged to

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the stupid and intolerable life in Duke Street, with which he had definitely parted company. It might even be said, in one sense, that he was not the person to whom they were addressed.

By some whimsical freak of the brain, he suddenly asked himself whether he should not go to Greece instead of Holland, and enlist as a volunteer in the war against the Turks. He became on the instant immersed in adventurous military speculations. He had not fallen into the English habit of following the daily papers with regularity, and he was conscious of no responsibility whatever toward the events of the world at large, as Reuter and the correspondents chronicled them. Something of this new war in Thessaly, however, he had perforce read and heard. Of the circumstances and politics surrounding this latest eruption of the Eastern Question he knew little more than would any of the young Frenchmen of education among whom he had spent his youth. But in an obscure way, he comprehended that good people in Western Europe always sympathized with the Christian as against the Moslem. It seemed that some generous-minded young Englishmen were already translating this sympathy into action; somewhere he had seen an account

of a party of volunteers leaving London for Athens, and being cheered by their friends at the station. Now that he thought of it, the paper in which he had read the report had ridiculed the affair as an undesirable kind of a joke—but the impulse of the volunteers seemed fine to him, none the less.

There ought to be some martial blood in his veins; the soldier-figure of his father rose before him in affirmation of the idea.

But no—what nonsense it was! If ever there had been a youth bred and narrowed to the walks of peace, he was that young person. He who had never struck another human being in his life, that he could remember—what would such a tame sheep be doing in the open field, against the unknown, ferocious Osmanli Turk? The gross absurdity of the picture flared upon him, momentarily—and then the whole notion of armed adventure had vanished from his mind.

His attention reverted to the letters—and now it seemed quite a matter of course that he should open them. The first three were of no importance. The fourth he regarded with wide-open eyes, after he had grasped the identity of the writer. He read it over slowly, more than once:

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“27A ASHLEY GARDENS, S. W., Monday.

“My Dear Mr. Christian Tower: I have taken this little place in town for the time being, and I shall be glad to see you when you are this way. To-morrow, Tuesday, is a day when I shall not be at home to other people—if you have nothing better to do.

“Yours very sincerely,

“EDITH CRESSAGE.”

Nothing better to do? Christian's thoughts lingered rather blankly upon the phrase—until all at once he perceived that there could not possibly be anything better to do. He rose with decision, hurriedly gulped what remained of his second pot of beer, paid his bill and marched out with the air of a man with a mission.

In the hansom, he read the letter still again, and leaned backward to see as much as possible of himself in the little mirror at the side. His chin could not be described as closely shaven, and his garments were certainly not those of the afternoon caller. The resource of stopping at Duke Street occurred to him—but no! that would be too foolish. The whole significance of the day would be abolished, wiped out, by such a fatuous step. And he repeated to himself that it *was* a day of supreme significance. By comparison with the proceedings and experiences of this long and crowded day,

the rest of his life seemed colorless indeed. And what was of most importance in it, he declared to himself, was not its external happenings, but the fine and novel posture of his liberated mind toward them. He was for the first time actually a free man. His enfranchisement had not been thrown at him by outsiders; it proceeded from within him—the product of his own individuality.

That was what people would discern in him hereafter—a complete and self-sufficient personality. He would no longer be pointed out and classified as somebody's grandson—somebody's cousin or grand-nephew. The world would recognize him as being himself. He felt assured, for example, upon reflection that Lady Cressage would not dream of questioning the fashion of the clothes in which he came to see her. She would perceive at once that he had developed beyond the silly pupillary stage of subordination to his coat and hat. She was so clever and sympathetic a woman, he felt intuitively, that these symbols of his emancipated condition would delight her. It was true, he saw again from the mirror that his collar might be a little whiter; his cuffs, too, had lost their earlier glow of starched freshness. But these were trifles to serious minds. And besides, was it not all in the family?

There was a momentary block at the corner of Parliament Street, and here a newsboy thrust a fourth edition upon Christian with such an effect of authority that he found a penny and took the paper. It was the "Westminster Gazette," and when he had looked upon the second page for a possible drawing by Gould, and had skimmed the column of desultory gossip on the last page, which always seemed to his alien conceptions of journalism to be the kind of matter he liked in a newspaper, he laid the sheet on his knee, and resumed his idle reverie. To his great surprise the cabman's shouts through the roof were necessary to awaken him at Ashley Gardens. He shook himself, laughingly explained that he had been up all night as he paid his fare, and ascended the steps of 27A, paper in hand.

The servant seemed prepared for his coming, for upon giving his name in response to her somewhat meaning inquiry, she led him in at once. He sat waiting for a few moments in a small and conveniently appointed drawing-room, and then stood up, at the rustle of rapid skirts which announced Lady Cressage in the half-open doorway.

She entered with outstretched hand, and a radiant welcome upon her face.

Christian noted that beyond the hand there

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was a forearm, shapely and cream-hued, disclosed by the lace of her flowing sleeve. There were billows of this lace, and of some fragile, light fabric which seemed sister to it, enveloping the lady, yet her tall, graceful figure was in some indefinable way molded to the eye beneath them all. The pale hair was as he had first seen it, loosely drawn across her temples; there were warm shadows in it which he had not thought to see. The face, too, had some unexpected phase, here in the subdued light of the curtained room. There was a sense of rosi-ness in the rounded flesh, a certain reposeful elation in the regard of the blue eyes, which put quite at fault the image of harrowed restlessness and nerves he had retained from Caermere. It was in an illuminating second that he saw all this, and perceived that she was very beautiful, and flushed with the deep consciousness that she read his thoughts like big print.

“It was the greatest cheek in the world—my summoning you like this,” she said, as they shook hands. “Yes—sit here. Put your hat and paper on the sofa. This is my only reception room—but we might have a little more light.”

She moved to the window, to pull back the curtains, and then about the room,

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lightly rearranging some of the chairs and trinkets—all with a buoyant daintiness of motion which inexpressibly charmed him. “These are not my things, you know,” she explained over her shoulder. “I am not trying in the least to live up to them, either. I take the place, furnished, for three months, from the widow of an Indian officer. You would think she would have some Indian things—but it might have all come direct from Tottenham Court Road. It’s impossible to get the slightest sensation of being at home, here. One could really extract more domesticity out of four bare cottage walls. Or no, what am I saying?”—she had returned, and sinking into the low chair opposite him, pointed her words with a frank smile into his face—“it *is* a bit like home—to see you here!”

“I am very glad to be here,” he assured her, nodding his unfeigned pleasure. “But it seemed as if you would never tell me I might come.”

“Oh, I was worried to death. There were all sorts of things to see about when I first came up,” she explained with animation. “And I had the feeling that I didn’t want you to come till I had smoothed some of my wrinkles out, and had achieved a certain control over my nerves. It was not fair to

myself—the view you had of me at Caermere.”

The view of her that was afforded him here brought a glow of admiration to his eyes.

“To think of your being my cousin!” he said, with some remote echo in his own voice of the surprise which he recalled in Dicky Westland’s tone. It seemed wonderful indeed as he looked at her, and smiled. He shook his head presently, in response to her question whether he had any recent news from Caermere, and continued to observe her with a rapt sense of the miraculous being embodied before his eyes.

“But the duke is very low indeed,” she told him in a hushed voice. “I had it yesterday from—from one of the household.”

The tidings barely affected him. That side of his mind was still fast in the rut of last night’s mutiny.

“I have quite decided to go away,” he announced, calmly. “I get no good out of the life here. It does not suit me. Whatever comes to me, why, that I shall accept, but to use it in my own way, living my own life. Now that I am a free man, it astonishes me that I did not rebel long ago.”

“Rebel—against what?” she asked him, with a kind of confidential candor which put him even more at his ease.

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“Oh, against everything,” he smiled back at her. “This existence that they arranged for me—it is like being embalmed and wrapped in mummy-cloths. Personally I do not survive a thousand years—but I am but one link in a long chain of respectable people who have lived like that, without living at all, for many thousands. It is being buried alive. Why, you will see what I mean—a man is a creature different from other human creatures. He has an individual nature of his own. His tastes, his inclinations, his impulses and ideas, are not quite like those of the people about him. He would be happy to follow these according to his own wishes. But then everybody seizes upon him and says: ‘No, you must be and do just like the rest. You will be noticed and disliked if you indulge in even the slightest variation. These are the coats you are to wear, and the hats and caps and neckties. This is Duke Street, which you must live in. This is the hour to get up, this is the hour to make calls, this is the corner of your card to turn down, this is the list of people at whose houses you must dine, these are your friends ready-made for you out of a book.’ And truly what is it all?—utter, utter emptiness. You are really not alive at all! You have no more personal sensation

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of your own existence than an insect. It is all this that I rebel against."

She reclined a little in her chair, and covered him with a meditative gaze. "I know the feeling," she commented thoughtfully. "I used to have sharp spasms of it—oh, ages ago—whenever a shopwoman showed me something, and said, 'This is very much worn just now,' or, 'We are selling a great deal of this.' Then I would not have that particular thing if I died for it. But do you really feel so earnestly about it?" She put the question in deference to a gesture by which he had signified the inadequacy of her comparison. "Ah, the real life, as you call it, is a more complicated thing than one fancies."

"But that is precisely the point," with vivacity. "I have thought much about that. Is it not the artificial life which is complicated instead? Do we not confound the two? If you consider it, what can be more simple than the natural life of a man? If an astronomer, for example, has a difficult problem to work out, he first busies himself in discovering and putting aside all the things which seem to be factors in it but really are not. One by one he gets rid of them, until at last he has the naked equation before him—and then a result is possible. But with us, it

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seems that we go quite the other way about it. We take the problem of life—which is extraordinarily simple to begin with—and we pile upon it and around it thousands of outside rules and conventions and traditions, and we confuse it with other thousands of prejudices, and insincerities, and old mistakes that no one has had the industry to examine—and then we look with embarrassment at what we have done, and shake our heads, and say that the problem is too hard, that it passes the wisdom of man to solve it.”

“I wish you joy of solving it,” she remarked, after another reflective survey of his face. “I am sure I wish some one would do it. But you spoke of going away. How would that help matters?”

The recurrence of the question startled him. He looked at her with lifted head, recalling swiftly meanwhile the tone in which Frances had uttered those same words. A blurred, imperfect retrospect of the morning's events and talks passed fleetingly across his mind—and its progress disquieted him. Some tokens of perturbation on his face seemed to warn her, for she went on without waiting for an answer.

“I am not surprised to find you feeling like this,” she said. “It is quite the effect that I imagined London would produce upon

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you. I have no right to say so, perhaps, but it seemed to me from the start that it was being badly managed—I mean the way you were sent here by yourself, and given nothing to do except follow about where Lord Lingfield led. It is not what I should have done—but the truth is that Emanuel knows nothing at all about the characters and temperaments of human beings. If men agree with him, he thinks they are good men, and if they disagree with him, they are bad men—or at least not worth thinking about at all.”

“I had quite resolved not to commit myself to his System,” Christian informed her, “even before I made up my mind to—to take other steps.”

His closing euphemism seemed to attract her attention. “What is it you intend to do?” she asked of him, softly. She sat upright again, with an air of friendly curiosity.

In the face of this query, he discovered that his intentions were by no means so clear to himself as they had been. “It is still rather in the air,” he said vaguely. “But we talk always of myself! Tell me, instead, about yourself! It is an infinitely more pleasing subject. You are here in London for only three months? And you are alone here?”

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She smiled in an indefinite fashion, and leaned back in her chair. "Ought I to have a chaperon? I dare say. But there is no room for her here. The flat accommodates just one solitary elderly lady and here you behold her. Oh, I am a hundred years old, I assure you!"

He could only wave his hand at her in genial deprecation. "Oh, who is younger than you?" he murmured.

She sighed. "By the almanac I am four-and-twenty," she went on, with a new note of gentle melancholy. "But by my own feelings, I seem to have been left over from the reign of William the Fourth. And really, it is not my own feelings alone—when I go out, I observe that very old men take me down to dinner, and talk to me precisely as if I were a contemporary of theirs."

"When we were together at Caermere," interposed Christian, "you confessed to me that you were not happy—and it was my great delight to pledge myself that if ever there was anything I could do—"

"Oh, there is nothing at all," she interrupted him to declare. "My case will not come up. It has all been settled. The accounts, or settlements—or whatever you call them—have been made up, and my share

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of my husband's share of his father's interest in *his* father's estate has been ascertained. I have six hundred a year for life. It is a mild and decorous competence. I do not complain. It will keep a genteel roof over my head here in London, or a small house and a pony-trap in the country. It will run to a month at a pension in the cheaper parts of Switzerland, or perhaps even to a lodging and a bath-chair at Brighton, when it is not quite the season. Oh, I shall get on very well indeed—at all events," she added with a touch of bitterness, "much better than I deserve to do."

Christian lifted his brows in protesting inquiry. "You always speak in that tone of yourself! It pains me to hear you. I cannot think of any one who deserves the kindness and friendly good offices of fortune more than you."

Lady Cressage gave an uncertain little laugh. "You are too generous-minded—too innocent. You do not know. Me? My dear friend—I have committed the unpardonable sin! I humiliated and degraded myself to win a great prize in the world's lottery—and I did not bring it off. That is my offense. If I had won the trick—why, they would be burning incense before me! But I lost instead—and they leave me quite by

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myself to digest my own disgust. I don't talk about it—I have never said as much to any living soul as I am saying to you—I don't know why I am telling you—”

“Is there any one else who would listen with such sympathy?” Christian heard himself interjecting.

“But it is too cruel,” continued Lady Cressage, “too shameful a story! I was not happy at home. It was nobody's fault in particular; I don't know that we were more evil-tempered and selfish among ourselves than most other middle-class households with four hundred a year, and three daughters to marry off. I was the youngest, and I had the sort of good looks which were in fashion at the moment, and mamma worked very hard for me—pretending to idolize me before people though we yapped at each other like fox-terriers in private—and I was lucky in making friends—and so I went swimming out on the top of the wave that season, the most envied poor fool of a girl in London. And when Cressage wanted to marry me—I was dizzy with the immensity of what seemed to be offered me. My parents were mad with pride and ecstasy. Everybody around me pretended a kind of holy joy at my triumph. I give you my word!—never so much as a whisper came to

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my ears of any shadow of a reason why I should hesitate—why I should think a second time! Do you see? There was not an honest person—a single woman or a man with decency enough to warn an ignorant girl of her danger—within reach of me anywhere. They all kept as silent as the grave—with that lying grin of congratulation on their mean faces—and they led me to be married to the beast!”

She had sat erect in her chair as she spoke, and now she rose to her feet, motioning him not to get up as she did so. She took a restless step or two, her shoulders trembling with excitement, and her hands clenched. “Ah-h! I will never forgive them the longest day of my life!” she called out.

Then, with a determined shake of her head, she seemed to master herself. Standing before a small mirror in the panel of a cabinet against the wall, she busied her beautiful hands in correcting the slight disorder of her hair. When she turned to him, it was with a faint, tremulous smile surmounting the signs of stress and agitation upon her face. She sank into the chair again, with a long-drawn breath of resignation.

“But it isn’t nice to abuse the dead,” she remarked, striving after an effect of judicial

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fairness in her voice. "I didn't mean to speak like that. And for that matter, why should I speak at all of him? One doesn't blame a wolf for man-eating. You execrate instead the people who deliberately throw a helpless human being to the wolf. I even say to myself that I have no quarrel with Cressage. He was as God made him—if the thought isn't blasphemous. He was a great, overgrown, bullying, blubbering, ignorant boy, who never got beyond the morals of the stables and kennels, and the standards of taste of the servants' hall. One could hardly call him vicious; that is to say, he did not deliberately set out to cause suffering. He did not do anything on deliberation. He acted just as his rudimentary set of barbaric impulses prompted him to act. Some of these impulses would have been regarded as virtues in a more intelligent man. For example, he was wildly, insanely jealous of me. It took the most impossible and vulgar forms, it is true, but still——"

"Oh, need we talk of him?" It was with almost a groan of supplication that Christian stopped her. "He is too unpleasant to think about. Nothing that I had heard of him before made me sorry that he was dead—but this—it is too painful. But now you are a free woman—you see your path well

before you, to travel as you choose. And what will you do?"

She sighed and threw up her hands with a gesture of contemptuous indifference. "What does any English lady with six hundred a year do? Devote her energies to seeing that she gets—let me see, what is the sum?—to seeing that she gets twelve thousand shillings' worth of respectable discomfort, and secures reasonable opportunities for making those about her uncomfortable also. Oh, I don't in the least know what I shall do. The truth is," she added, with a sad smile, "I have lived alone with my dislikes so long, and I have nourished and watered them so carefully, that now they fill my whole garden. They have quite choked out the flowers of existence—these thick, rank, powerful weeds. And I haven't the energy—perhaps I haven't even the desire—to pull them up. They seem appropriate, somehow—they belong to the desolation that has been made of my life."

Christian bent forward, and made a movement as if to take one of the hands which lay dejectedly in her lap. He did not do this, but touched a projecting bit of lace upon one of the flounces of her gown, and twisted it absent-mindedly in his fingers instead.

"You are still unhappy!" he said reproach-

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fully, his eyes glowing with the intensity of his tender compassion. "I do not forgive myself for my inability to be of help to you. It is incredible that there is not something I can do."

"But you are going away," she reminded him, in a soft monotone. "You have your own unpleasantnesses to think of—and you are occupied with plans for rearranging your life on new lines. I only hope that you will find the happiness you are setting out in search of. But then men can always get what they want, if they are only sufficiently in earnest about it."

"It is not entirely settled that I shall go away," said Christian. He twisted the lace in the reverse direction, and hesitated over his further words. "That was only one of several alternatives. I am clear only about my resolve to make a stand—to break away. But if I remained here in England—in London?"—He looked with mingled trepidation and inquiry into her face. "If I did not go abroad—is there anything I could do?"

She regarded with attentiveness the hand which was playing havoc with her flounce—and it straightway desisted. She continued to study the little screwed-up cone of lace, in meditative silence. At last she shook her head. "You must not give it another

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thought," she said, but with no touch of dictation in her musing tone. Her eyes dwelt upon him with a remote and ruminating gaze. "I belong to a past generation. My chances in the lottery are all exhausted—things of the past. You must not bother about me. And I think you ought to give up those ideas of yours about breaking away, as you call it. London hasn't been made pleasant for you, simply because the wrong people have gone the wrong way about it to arrange matters for you. But there are extremely nice people among the set you know, if you once understood them. With your position, you can command any kind of associations you wish to have. After it is all said and done, I think England has its full share of cultivated and refined people of intelligence. I have not seen much of the Continent, but I do not believe that it possesses any superiority over us in that respect."

"But in your own case," urged Christian, somewhat hazily; "you said that there were no honest people about you to warn you—though you were in the best society. That is my feeling—that you do not get the truth from them. They do not lie to you—but they are silent about the truth."

"Is it different elsewhere?" she asked,

gravely. "Is not the young girl sold everywhere? Do you think that marriage is a more sacred and ethereal thing among the great families of France or Austria or Germany than it is with us? I have heard differently."

"Oh, we are all equally uncivilized about women," he admitted. "I feel very strongly about that. But you, who have such knowledge and such clear opinions—would you not love to do something to alter this injustice to women? The thought has been much in my mind, of late." He paused to reflect in fleeting wonderment upon the fact that only this morning he had been absorbed in it. "And my meaning is," he stumbled on, "there is nothing I would rather devote my life to than the task of making existence easier and broader and more free for young women. Could there be any finer work than that? I know that it appeals to you."

She looked at him with an element of doubt in her glance. "Nothing appeals very much to me—and I'm afraid my sex least of all. I do not like them, to tell the truth. I never get over the surprised disgust of waking up in the morning and finding that I am one of them. But this is rather wandering from the point, isn't it? I was urging you

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to give over the notion of making a demonstration. You have waited thus long; be content to wait just a little longer. My private belief is that the Duke will not live the week out."

Still, the assurance seemed to suggest nothing to him. "But if he dies," he protested, "how then will I be different? I am lonely—I am like a forlorn man escaped on a raft from a shipwreck—I eat my heart out in friendless solitude. And if I have a great title—why, then I shall be more alone than ever. It is that way with such men—I have seen that they hold themselves aloof—and others do not come freely near them. It frightens me—the thought of living without friends. I say to you solemnly that I would give it all—the position, the authority and dignity, the estates, Caermere, everything—for the assurance of one warm, human heart answering in every beat to mine! Has friendship perished out of the world, then? Or has it never existed, except in the books?"

Her beauty had never been so manifest to him, as now while he gazed at her, and she did not speak. There seemed the faint, delicate hint of a tenderness in the classical lines of the face that he had not seen before. It was as if his appeal had brought forth some latent aptitude of romance, to mellow

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the direct glance of her eyes, and soften in some subtle way the whole charm of her presence. A new magic was visible in her loveliness—and the sense that his words had conjured it into being thrilled him with a wistful pride. No woman had thus moved him heretofore. The perception that she was plastic to his mental touch—that this flower-like marvel of comeliness and grace, of exquisite tastes and pure dignity of soul, could be swayed by his suggestion, would vibrate at the tone of his voice—awed him as if he were confronted by a miracle. His breath came and went under a dull consciousness of pain—which was yet more like pleasure. A bell sounded somewhere within the house, and its brief crystal resonance seemed somehow to clarify the ferment of his thoughts. All at once, as by the flooding of sunlight into a darkened labyrinth, his mind was clear to him. He knew what he wanted—nay, what all the years had been leading him up to desire.

With his gaze maintained upon her face—timidly yet with rapturous intentness, as if fearful of breaking the spell—he rose to his feet, and stood over her. A confusion of unspoken words trembled on his lips, as her slow glance lifted itself to his.

“It was like the pleasantry of a beautiful,

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roguish little girl"—he began, smiling nervously down at her—"your saying that you belonged to a generation earlier than mine. Do you think I do not know my generation? And am I blind, that I do not see what is most precious in it? This is what——"

An extraordinary outburst of disputing voices, in the little hallway close at hand, broke in upon his words. He stopped, stared inquiringly at Lady Cressage, and beheld her rise, frowning and hard-eyed, and step toward the door. A vague sense of the familiar came to him from the louder of the accents outside.

The door was opened, and the domestic, red-faced, and spluttering with wrath, began some stammered explanation to her mistress. What she sought to say did not appear, for on the instant the door was pushed farther back, and a veiled lady took up her energetic stand upon the threshold.

"Don't blame her," this lady cried, in high, rapid tones. "I forced my way in—something told me that you were at home. And when you hear my news——"

"Oh, since you are here"—Lady Cressage began, coldly. "But, really, Mrs. Torr——"

"Oh, no—call me Cora!" the other interrupted, vivaciously.

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She went further, and bustling her arms against Edith's shoulders, purported to kiss her on both cheeks. Then, drawing back her head, she went on: "My dear, the duke died at two this morning! It's in all the papers. But what isn't in any of the papers is that the heir is missing. It's a very curious story. Mr. Westland here"—by her gesture it seemed that Dicky was behind her in the hallway—"went to Duke Street this noon, and found Christian's man in great alarm. The youngster had bolted, leaving a note saying merely that he was called away. Mr. Westland then hunted me up, and we started out, for I had a kind of clue, don't you see. I knew where he was at ten o'clock this forenoon—and we drove to Arundel Street, and there we found——"

Christian hurriedly stepped forward. "Oh, I think you may take it that I am not lost," he called out, revealing himself to the astonished Cora. For the moment the chief thing in his mind was satisfaction at having interrupted her disclosures about Arundel Street.

Then, as other thoughts crowded in upon him, he straightened his shoulders and lifted his chin. "It's all right," he said, with a reassuring wave of the hand toward the womenfolk of his family.

PART IV



CHAPTER XXII

On the morning of the funeral, six days later, Christian rose very early, and took coffee in his library shortly after seven. Then, lighting a cigarette, he resumed work upon several drawers full of papers, open on the big table, where it had been left off the previous evening. The details of the task seemed already familiar to him. He scanned one document after another with an informed eye, and put it in its proper pile without hesitation. He made notes suggested by the contents of each, on the pad before him, with a quill pen and corrected the vagaries of this unaccustomed implement, in the matter of blots and inadequate lines, with painstaking patience. There were steel nibs in abundance, and two gold stylographic pens, but he clung resolutely to the embarrassing feather.

After a time he rested from his labors, and rang the bell beside his desk; almost upon

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the instant Falkner appeared in the doorway.

"If Mr. Westland is up," said Christian, "you may ask him to join me here."

"Yes, Your Grace," the smooth-voiced, soft-mannered man replied, and vanished.

The young duke rose, yawned slightly and moved to the window nearest him. It opened, upon examination, and he stepped out on a narrow balcony of stone which skirted the front of the square tower he had quitted. The outlook seemed to be to the northeast, for a patch of sunshine lay upon the outer edge of the balcony at the right. Breathing in delightedly the fresh May-morning air, he gazed upon the bold prospect of hills receding in lifted terraces high against the remote sky-line. He had not seen just this view from Caermere before—and he said to himself that it was finer than all the others. Above each lateral stretch of purplish-gray granite, to the farthest distance, there ran a band of cool green foliage—the inexpressibly tender green of young birch trees; their thin, chalk-white stems were revealed in delicate tracery against indefinable sylvan shadows.

Through the early stillness, he could hear the faint murmur of the Devor, gurgling in the depths of the ravine between him and the nearest hill. "To-morrow," he thought,

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“will begin the true life! All this will be my home—mine! mine! and before anybody is up in the morning I will be down where that river of black water runs, and fish in the deep pools for trout.”

Some one touched his elbow. He turned with a quick nod and smile to greet Dicky Westland. “I am up ages before you, you see,” he said genially. “It was barely daylight when I woke—and I suffered tortures trying to remain in bed even till six. Oh, this is wonderful out here!”

“Awfully jolly place, all round,” commented Dicky. He blinked to exorcise the spirit of sleep and gazed at the prospect with determined enthusiasm. “I haven’t looked about much, but I’ve found out one thing already. There’s a ghost in my room—and I think he must have been a professional pedestrian in life.”

“Splendid!” cried Christian, gaily. “Have you had coffee—or it is tea you people drink, isn’t it? Then shall we get to work? I want the papers out of the way before Emanuel comes. They will all be here between nine and ten. I wanted to send carriages to Craven Arms, but it seemed there were not horses enough, so hired traps are to be brought up from the station.”

“Do you know who are coming?”

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“Lord Julius, and Emanuel and his wife; the captain and his wife and brother; Lord Chobham, and Lord Lingfield—I don’t know if any of their women will come—and Lady Cressage. Then there are some solicitors, and perhaps some old acquaintances of my grandfather’s. At all events, Welldon has ordered four carriages and a break. There is to be breakfast at ten, and I shall be glad when it is all over—when everything is over. Do you know?—I have never been to a funeral in my life—and I rather funk it.”

“Oh, they’re not so bad as you always think they’re going to be,” said the secretary, consolingly. “The main thing is the gloves. I never could understand it—but black gloves are invariably about two sizes smaller than ordinary colors. You want to look out for that. But I dare say your man is up to the trick—he looks a knowing party, does Falkner.”

“I fancy I shall give him back to Emanuel,” remarked Christian, thoughtfully. “He is an excellent servant, but he reminds me too much of Duke Street. Did you notice the old butler yesterday afternoon?—he stood at the head of the steps to meet us—that is old Barlow. I have a great affection for him. I shall have him valet me, I think.”

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"Isn't he rather venerable for the job?" suggested the other. "And wouldn't it be rather a come-down for a head butler? They're awfully keen about their distinctions among themselves, you know."

Christian smiled with placidity. "I think that the man whom I pick out to be nearest me will feel that he has the best place in the household. I shall be very much surprised indeed if that isn't Barlow's view. And of course he will have his subordinates. But now let us take Welldon's statement for the last half of '95, and the two halves of '96. Then we can get to the mine. Unless I am greatly mistaken, that is most important. I find that the mining company's lease falls in early next year. And won't you ring the bell and have Welldon sent up when he comes?"

Upon mature reflection Christian decided not to descend to meet his guests at breakfast. When he had dismissed the estate agent, Welldon, after a prolonged and very comprehensive interview, he announced this decision to Westland. "You must go down and receive them in my place," he said.

"I will say that you have a cold," suggested Dicky.

"By no means," returned Christian, promptly.

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“It is not necessary to enter into details. You receive them—that is all. I have spoken with Barlow; he knows what to do with them in the matter of rooms and so on. I am breakfasting here. And afterward—say at eleven o’clock—I will see some of them here. There is an hour to spare then, before we go to the church. I am not clear about this—which ones to see first. There is that stupid reading of the will after we get back——”

“By George! do they do that still?” interrupted Dicky. “I know they did in Trollope and George Eliot—but I thought it had gone out.”

“It is kept up in old families,” replied Christian, simply. “In this case it is a pure formality, of course. There is no mystery whatever. The will was made in 1859, after the entail was broken, and merely bequeaths everything in general terms to the heir-at-law. My grandfather covenanted, at the same time, to Lord Julius to make no subsequent will save by his advice and consent—so that there can be no complications of any kind. I am thinking whether it would be better to see Lord Julius and Emanuel before the reading of this will or after. Really it makes no difference—perhaps it is better to get it over with. Yes—

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say to them that I beg they will come to me here at eleven. You might bring them up and then leave us together—or no, they know the way. Let them come up by themselves.”

Through the open window there came the grinding sound of wheels upon the gravel of the drive, around at the east front. At a gesture from the other, Dicky hurried away.

Left to himself, Christian wandered again to the casement, and regarded the spacious view with renewed interest. Falkner entered presently, bearing a large tray, and spread some covered dishes upon a cloth on the library table.

“How many carriages have come?” the master asked from his place at the window.

“Four, Your Grace—and a break with some wreaths and Lord Chobham’s man and a maid—I think it is Lady Cressage’s maid.”

“Who has come—outside the family?”

“Three gentlemen, Your Grace—one of them is Mr. Soman. Barlow thinks they are all solicitors.”

Christian mused briefly upon the presence of Lord Julius’s man of business. Since that first evening of his on English soil, at Brighton, he had not seen this Mr. Soman. He remembered nothing of him, indeed, save his green eyes. And now that he

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thought of it, even this was not a personal recollection. It was the remark of the girl on the boat, about his having green eyes, which stuck in his memory. He smiled, as he looked idly out on the hills.

The girl on the boat! Was it not strange that his mind should have applied to her this distant and chilling designation? Only a few days ago—it would not be a week till to-morrow—she had seemed to him the most important person in the world. A vision of his future had possessed him, in which she alone had a definite share. How remote it seemed—and how curious!

He recalled, quite impersonally, what he had heard in one way or another about her family. Her father was some sort of underling in the general post office—a clerk or accountant, or something of the kind. There was a son—of course, that would be the brother Cora had spoken of—and the ambition of the family had expended itself in sending this boy to a public school, and to the university. The family had made great sacrifices to do this—and apparently these had been wasted. He had the distinct impression of having been told that the son was a worthless fellow. How often that occurred in England—that everything was done for the son, and nothing at all for the

daughters! Then in fairness he reflected that it was even worse in France. Yes, but somehow Frenchwomen had a talent for doing for themselves. They were cleverer than their brothers—more helpful, resourceful—in spite of the fact that the brothers had monopolized the advantages. Images of capable, managing Frenchwomen he had known rose before his mind's eye; he saw them again accomplishing wonders of work, diligent, wise, sensible, understanding everything that was said or done. Yet, oddly enough, these very paragons of feminine capacity had a fatal unfeminine defect; they did not know how to bring up their sons. Upon that side they were incredibly weak and silly; it was impossible to prevent their making pampered fools of their boys.

Suddenly his vagrant fancies were concentrated upon the question of how Frances Bailey would bring up a boy—a son of her own. It was an absurd query to have raised itself in his mind—and he put it away from him with promptitude. There remained, however, a kind of mental protest lodged on her behalf among his thoughts. He perceived that in his ruminations he had done her an injustice. She was not inferior in capability or courage to any of the self-

sufficient Frenchwomen he had been thinking of, and in the matter of intellectual attainments was she not immeasurably superior to them all? The translucent calm of her mind—penetrating, far-reaching, equable as the starlight—how queer that it should be coupled with such a bad temper! She always quarreled with him, and bullied him, when they were together. Even when she was exhibiting to him the sunniest aspects of her mood, there was always a latent defiance of him underneath, ready to spring forth at a word. He remembered how, at the close of their first meeting, she had refused to tell him her name. He saw now that this obstinacy of hers had annoyed him more than he had imagined. For an instant it assumed almost the character of a grievance—but then his attention fastened itself at random upon the remarkable fact that he had seen her only twice in his life. Upon reflection, this did seem very strange indeed. But it was the fact—and in the process of readjusting his impressions of the past six months to fit with it, the figure of her receded in his mind, grew less as she moved away under a canopy of dull yellowish-green, which vaguely identified itself with the trees on the Embankment. She dwindled thus till he thought of her again,

with a dim impulse of insistence upon the phrase, as the girl on the boat. The transition to thoughts of other things gave his mind no sort of trouble.

He pondered some of these other things—formlessly and light-heartedly—while he stood at the library table, and picked morsels here and there from the dishes laid for him. His absence of appetite he referred tacitly to the warmth of the day, as it was sunnily developing itself outside. Here on this shaded side of the castle, it was cool enough, but there was the languor of spring in the air. He scrutinized this new library of his afresh. Until Barlow had opened it for him, shortly after his arrival yesterday, it could not have been used for years. Most of its appointments had a very ancient look; no doubt they must date back at least to the seventh Duke's time. It was incredible that his grandfather, the eighth Duke, should have been inspired to furnish a library. There were many shelves of apparently very old books as well, but there was also a vast deal of later rubbish—stock and sporting annuals, veterinary treatises, county directories and the like—which he would lose no time in putting out. He saw already how delightful a room could be made of it. It had the crowning merit of

being connected with the suite of apartments he had chosen for his own. From the door at the side, opposite the fine old fireplace, one entered the antechamber to his dressing-room. This gave to the library an intimate character, upon which he reflected with pleasure. Here he would come, secure from interruption, and spend among his books the choicest and most fruitful hours of his leisure. It was plain to him that henceforth he would do a great deal of reading, and perhaps—why not?—of writing too.

There was a rap upon the door, and then Falkner, opening it, announced Lord Julius and his son. They came in together, diffusing an impalpable effect of constraint. The elder man seemed in Christian's eyes bigger than ever; his white beard spread over the broad chest like a vine run wild. Emanuel, who lapsed in the wake of his father, was unexpectedly small by comparison. The shadows, where the two stood, emphasized the angular peculiarities of his bald head. His thin face took an effect of sallow pallor from his black clothes. Already he had his black gloves in his hands.

Christian stepped forward to meet them—and was suddenly conscious of the necessity for an apology. "I did not come down," he murmured, as he shook hands with a grave

smile—"I am not quite master of myself yet. It is still strange to me. But come to the window, and let us sit down."

They followed him, and took the chairs he pushed out for them. He perched himself on the corner of the big table, and lightly stroked the glazed boot of the foot which was not on the floor. "I am glad to hear that Kathleen has come," he said to his cousin. "I hope she is very well."

"Extremely so," replied Emanuel. Then, upon reflection, he added, "We had hoped that you would come to us, on your way down from London."

"There was so much to do in town," explained Christian, hazily. "My grandfather's lawyers came up at once from Shrewsbury, and it was necessary to see a good deal of them—and then there were the tailors and outfitters. It was all I could do to get away yesterday morning. And of course—by that time I was needed here." He turned to the other. "And you are very well, Uncle Julius?"

"I am well," said the elder man, with what Christian suspected for the instant to be significant brevity. The father and son had exchanged a look, as well, which seemed to have a meaning beyond his comprehension. But then he forgot these momentary doubts

in the interest of the discovery that there were tears in his great-uncle's eyes.

Lord Julius unaffectedly got out a handkerchief, and wiped them away. He looked up at the young man as through a mist. "I never dreamed that I should feel it so much," he said, huskily. "I am amazed at myself—and then ashamed at my amazement—but Kit's death has somehow put me about and upset me to a tremendous extent. There was thirteen years between us—but when you get to be an old man, that seems no more than as many weeks. And Emanuel"—he addressed his son with the solemnity befitting a revelation—"I am an old man."

Emanuel frowned a little in his abstracted fashion. "You are less old than any other man of your years in England," he protested.

Christian, listening, somehow found no conviction in these reassuring words. It dawned upon him suddenly that Lord Julius had in truth aged a great deal. The perception of this disarranged the speech he had in his mind.

"There are a thousand things to be talked over," he began, with an eye upon Emanuel, "but I do not know if this is quite the opportune time. I wished to lose no time in seeing you both, of course—but you will not

be hurrying away. No doubt there will be a better opportunity."

"I don't think it will be found that there is so very much to say," remarked Emanuel. A gentle but persistent melancholy seemed to pervade his tone.

"There is the complication"—Christian began again, and hesitated. "That is to say—you know even better and more fully than I do, to what a great extent I am in your hands. And there the complication, as I said, arises. I have been working very hard on the figures—with the lawyers in London, and here since I arrived—but before we touch those at all, I ought to tell you frankly, Emanuel: I do not see my way to meeting the conditions which you suggested to me last autumn, when we met first."

Emanuel seemed in no wise perturbed by the announcement. His nervous face maintained its unmoved gravity. "It was never anything more than a pious hope that you would," he commented. "I may add," he went on, "that even this hope cannot be said to have survived your first visit. Otherwise, I should have tried to have you see London under different auspices—through different eyes."

The calmness with which the decision he had regarded as so momentous met accept-

ance disconcerted Christian. He had mentally prepared for the defense of his hostile attitude toward the System—and, lo! not a syllable of challenge was forthcoming.

“But there remains, all the same, the principal difficulty,” he said, thinking hard upon his words. “It does not lessen my obligations to you as my chief creditors.” He looked from one to the other, as if in uncertainty as to which was the master mind. “You have both been very open with me. You have told me why it was that you devoted a large fortune to buying up the mortgages on the estate which is now mine—and to lending always more money upon it—until now the interest eats up the income like a visitation of locusts. But my knowledge of the motives does not help me. And you must not think, either,” his confidence was returning now, and with it a better control over his phrases—“that I am begging for help. I look the situation in the face, and I do not feel that I am afraid of it. I see already many ways in which I can make a better fight of it than my grandfather made.”

Lord Julius held up a hand. “Is there not a misconception there?” he asked, pleasantly enough. “A fight involves antagonists—and I intervened in poor Kit’s affairs as a protector, not as an assailant.”

Christian stood erect, and knitted his brows in puzzled thought upon both the manner and the matter of these words.

“But it is still the same,” he persisted. “You were his good friend—as I know you are mine—or hope very sincerely that you are—but none the less you were his overwhelmingly big creditor, as now you are mine. If one is greatly in debt, then one struggles to get out. It is in that sense that I meant the word ‘fight.’ And, to repeat, I see many ways of making progress. I find that Welldon is not exclusively my man. He is the agent of three other estates as well, because we could not pay him enough here for all of his services. That I will alter at once. I find that we have no mineral bailiff. The company at Coalbrook has paid such royalties as it pleased, without check of any sort. We have the right to examine their books, but it has never been exercised. Next week my secretary and Welldon go to Coalbrook. I find that the company’s lease of twenty-one years expires next February. Eh bien! It will be strange if I do not get ten thousand pounds hereafter, where less than four has come in hitherto. My lawyers already know of capitalists who desire to bid for the new lease—and the estimate of increase is theirs, not mine. But these are

details. I mention them to you only to show you that I am not afraid. But anxious, I do not deny that I am. I have not been bred to these things—and I may easily make mistakes. It would take a great load off my mind if—if, in some measure, you would be my advisers as well as my creditors.”

“Why should you ever have doubted that?” asked Emanuel, in a tone of somber kindness.

“Ah, but I do not mean advice about the management of the estate,” put in Christian, with an over-eager instinct of self-defense. “I do not shrink from taking that completely on my own shoulders. I would not trouble you with anything of that sort. But of larger matters——”

“There is one large matter,” interrupted Lord Julius, speaking with great deliberation, “which I find outweighing all others in my mind. It is not new to my mind—but to-day it pushes everything else aside. It is the thought of the family itself. I have told you this before—let me say it to you again. Everything that I have done—every penny that I have laid out—has been with this one end in view—the family. Yet this morning I have been thinking of it—and I am frightened. While poor old Kit lingered along, it was not so easy to grasp it, somehow

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—but his going off makes it glaring. There are too few of us. I am alone in my generation—and so is Emanuel in his—and so are you in yours, save for those rowdy simpletons Eddy and Gus. And beyond you, there is only that little girl baby of Cora Bayard's! I want you to marry, Christian. I want to see sons of yours growing up here at Caermere—hearty, fine boys to carry the name of Torr along. That I am really in earnest about. By comparison with it, nothing else on earth matters—for us.”

“Oh, I shall marry,” Christian replied, in smiling seriousness. “Of course, that is the obvious thing to be done. And now”—he looked at his watch—“it is time for me to dress. It is arranged that you and Emanuel and Kathleen drive to the church in the carriage with me. It is not quite orthodox precedence, I know, but I could not bear to—to have it otherwise. And we will think no more about those other matters until to-morrow.”

“Other matters,” repeated Lord Julius, and exchanged a look with his son as they rose. “My dear Christian, there are no other matters.”

“No—not till to-morrow,” answered Christian, with a doubtful smile. “But then I am afraid there are a good many.”

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Emanuel filled in the pause. "Mr. Soman has brought all the papers," he said, with a flitting return to his lighter manner. "It is my father's meaning that the mortgages are extinguished."

Christian gazed from one to the other with a face full of stupefaction. His knees shook and sought to bend under him. Tremblingly he essayed to speak—and his lips would make no sound.

Lord Julius laid his big hand on the young man's shoulder—and Christian, dimly recalling the effect of this touch in the days when he had first known it, thrilled at the novel restfulness it somehow now conferred.

"Only show me a son of yours," said the old man, with tender gravity. "Let me see an heir before I die."

Without further words, the two left him. Christian, staring at the shadowed door through which they had vanished, remained standing. His confused brain quailed in the presence of thoughts more stupendous than the ancient hills outside.

CHAPTER XXIII

Several thousand people caught that day their first curious glimpse of the new master of Caermere. At the most there were but a handful of aged persons, in the throng clustered along the sides of the road winding down from the Castle to the partially restored medieval collegiate church in the valley, who could remember any other duke than the one being borne now to lie among his fathers. The fact that these venerable folk, without exception, were in the enjoyment of a day's holiday from the workhouse, might have interested a philosopher, had it been pressed upon his attention.

Quite two hundred horsemen, mounted in their own saddles on their own beasts, rode in the long procession which descended from Caermere toward the close of the noon hour. Clad in decent black for the greater part, with old silk hats or other formal and somber headgear, they jogged sedately in unison as the curbed horses stepped with caution down the hill. Their browned and large-featured faces wore a uniform mask of solemnity—distinguished chiefly by a reso-

lute contraction of brows and lips, and eyes triumphantly cleared of all traces of speculation. They looked down, as they passed, upon the humbler dalesmen and laborers of the hillsides, and their womenfolk and swarming children, with an impassive, opacated gaze.

On the green, before the little covered gateway to the churchyard, dull murmurs spread through this cortege, propelled side-long from mouths which scorned to open; the main principles of a proposed evolution came slowly, in some mysterious way, to be comprehended among them: after almost less backing and pushing into one another than might have been expected, they perceived themselves emerging into an orderly arrangement, by which they lined the two sides of the carriage-way crossing the green. They regarded each other across this significant strip of gravel with a gloomy stolidity of pride: the West Salop Yeomanry could scarcely have done it better. Then another rustle of whispered sounds along their ranks toward the church—and the civic side of their demonstration came uppermost. With a tightened left hand upon the reins, they removed their hats, and held them so that they could most readily read the names of the makers inside.

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The carriages bearing the family of Torr, preceded by the curtained hearse, and followed by a considerable number of broughams and closed landaus recognizable as the property of the neighboring gentry, moved silently forward along this lane of uncovered horsemen. The distant swelling moan of the organ floated on the May air, in effect a comment upon the fact that the tolling of the bell in the tower had ceased.

The intermittent noise of carriage-doors being sharply shut, and of wheels getting out of the way, proceeded from the head of the procession at the gate—and tenants and other undistinguished people on foot began to press forward between the ranks. The horsemen, with furtive glances to right and left, put on their hats again, and let the restive animals stretch their muscles in the path. A few, dismounting, and giving their bridles over to boys, joined those who were moving toward the church. The majority, drawing their horses aside into groups formed at random, and incessantly shifting, lent their intellects, and in some restrained measure their tongues, to communion upon the one great problem of the day:—would the new Duke set the Hunt on its legs again?

The question was so intimately connected with their tenderest emotions and convic-

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tions, that no one liked to speak of it thoughtlessly or upon hasty impulse. Even those who doubted most, shrank from hearing the prophecies of evil they felt prone to utter. Men who nourished almost buoyant hopes still hesitated to create a confidence which must be so precarious. While the faint sustained recitative of the priest in the church could be heard, insistent and disturbing like the monotone of a distant insect, and then the sounds of the organ once more, and of singing, fell upon the sunlit green, the horsemen spoke cautiously about the hounds. Even before Lord Porlock's death, things had not been what they should have been. The pack was even then, as one might say, falling between two stools. The Torrs hadn't the money to keep the thing up properly themselves, but they showed their teeth savagely the minute mention was made of getting in some outside help. But since Porlock's death—well, the condition of affairs had been too painful for words. The horsemen shook their heads in dumb eloquence upon this tragic interval. The Kennels had lapsed into a state hardly to be thought of, much less discussed. There had been no puppy-walk. Were there any young dogs at all? And, just heavens! if there were, what must they be like!

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And yet the country-side, outraged as it felt itself to be in its finest feelings, beheld itself helpless. The old Duke—but really this was not just the time and place for saying what they felt about the old Duke. They glanced uneasily toward the church when this theme suggested itself, and nodded with meaning to one another. It could be taken for granted that there were no illusions among them concerning *him*. But what about the new man? Eyes brightened, lips quivered in beseeching inquiry, at the mention of this omnipotent stranger. What was he like? Had anybody heard anything that Welldon had said about him? It seemed that he was French bred, and that, considered by itself, might easily involve the worst. But then, was there not a story that he had ridden to the hounds in Derbyshire? Perhaps the younger generation of Frenchmen were better fellows than their fathers—but then, there was the reported fact that the Duke of Orleans fell off his horse and broke his leg whenever he tried to ride. Sir George had been informed in Paris that he would have been King of France by this time if he had been able to stick in a saddle. Yet, when one thought of it, did not this very fact indicate a fine new public sentiment in France, on the subject of horse-

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manship—and perhaps even of sport in general?

Christian, at the door of the church, had thought most of clenching his teeth, and straining his upper-arms against his sides, to keep from trembling. He had not pictured himself, beforehand, as entering this burial place of his ancestors alone. Yet, in the churchyard, that was how the matter arranged itself. His first idea had been to lead, with Kathleen on his arm—but she had said her place was with Emanuel instead. Then the alternative of walking arm-in-arm with Lord Julius had seemed to him even more appropriate—but this too, in the confused constraint of the moment, had gone wrong. Stealing an anxious half-glance over his shoulder, he discovered that Lord Julius had placed himself at Kathleen's other side. The slight gesture of appealing invitation which he ventured upon did not catch the old man's eye. There was nothing for it but to stand alone.

To be the strange, unsupported central figure in such a pageant unnerved him. He stood tremulously behind the pall—a burden draped with a great purple embroidered cloth, and borne upon the shoulders of eight peasant-laborers from the estate—and noted fleetingly that, so stunted and mean of

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stature were these poor hinds, he looked with ease above them, over their load, into the faces of the two priests advancing down the walk toward him.

These persons, an elderly, dark man, with a red hood folded upon his shoulders, and a thin-faced fair young man, seemed to return the gaze with meaning. He caught himself feeling that their eyes deferred to him; yes, if they had bowed to the ground, the effect of their abasement before him could not have been more palpable. Looking perfunctorily across the chasm of death, their glances sought to make interest with the living. He hated them both on the instant. As they wheeled, and by their measured steps forward drew slowly in their wake the bearers of the pall, the chant of the elder—"I am the Resurrection and the Life"—came vaguely to his ears, and found them hostile.

The interior of the old church—dim, cool, cloistral—was larger than Christian had assumed from its outer aspect. Many people were present, crowded close in the pews nearest the door—and strangely enough, it was his perception that these were chiefly women, of some unlabeled class which at least was not his own, that brought to him of a sudden self-command. He followed the bier up the aisle to its resting-place before

the rail, took tacit cognizance of the place indicated to him by some man in professional black, and stood aside to let Kathleen pass in before him, all with a restored equanimity in which he was himself much interested. Through the reading of the Psalm and the Epistle he gave but the most vagrant attention to their words. The priests read badly, for one thing; the whining artificiality of their elocution annoyed and repelled him. But still more, his thoughts were diverted by the suggestiveness of everything about him.

Especially, the size of the funeral gathering, and of the mounted and wheeled procession, had impressed him. There need be no pretense that affection or esteem for the dead man had brought out, from the sparsely populated country round about, this great multitude. Precisely for that reason, it became a majestic fact. The burial of a Duke of Glastonbury had nothing to do with personal qualities or reputation. It was like the passing away of a monarch. People who cared nothing for the individual were stirred and appealed to by the vicissitudes of an institution. Inset upon the walls around him were marble tablets, and more archaic canopies of stone over little carved effigies of kneeling figures; beyond, at the sides of

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the chancel, he could see the dark, rectangular elevations of the tombs, capped by recumbent mail-clad statues, with here and there a gleam of gilt or scarlet retained from their ancient ornamentation; even as he had walked slowly up the aisle, his downcast eyes had noticed the chiseled heraldry of stones beneath his feet. Everywhere about him was the historic impact of the Torrs. Their ashes were here—their banners and shields and tilting-helmets, their symbolical quarterings of the best arms of the West, their own proudest device of all. Their white bull on the green ground was familiar in England long before the broom-corn of the Angevins had been thought of. The clerkly pun on Tor and Taurus was as like as not older than the English language itself. All this made something mightier, more imposing and enduring, than any edifice to be reared by man alone. It was only in part human, this structure of the family. The everlasting hills were a part of it, the dark ranges of forests, the spirits and legends of the ancient Marches.

“In the morning it is green, and groweth up; but in the evening it is cut down, dried up and withered,” droned the young clergyman.

But if man seemed to count for but little in this tremendous, forceful aggregation of

tradition and custom, yet again he might be all in all. The tall old man under the purple pall, there—it was easy to think contemptuously of him. Christian recalled, in a kind of affrighted musing, that one view of his grandfather that he had had. The disgust with which he had heard the stupid, violent words from those aged lips revived within him—then changed to wonder. Was it not, after all, the principle of strength which most affected men's minds? There had been discernible in that grandfather of his a certain sort of strength—dull, unintelligent, sinister, half-barbarous, but still strength. Was it not that which had brought forth the two hundred horsemen? And if this one element of strength—yes, you might call it brute strength—were lacking, then would all the other fine qualities in the world avail to hold the impalpable, intangible combination together?

“ ‘*He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.*’ ” It was the old parson who was reading now. “ ‘*For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.*’ ”

Yes, even in this Protestant religion to which he had passively become committed, force was the real ideal! Christian's wandering mind fastened itself for a moment upon the ensuing words of the lesson, but got

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nothing from their confusing reiterations. He lapsed into reverie again, then started abruptly with the sudden perception that everybody in the church behind him must be looking at him. In the pew immediately behind, there would be Captain Edward and his wife, and Augustine; in the one behind that Lady Cressage, Lord Chobham and his son; beyond them scores and scores of others seated in rows, and then a throng in the aisle and the doorway—all purporting to think of the dead, but fixing their eyes none the less on the living. And it was not alone in the church, but through the neighborhood, for miles round about: when men spoke of the old Duke who was gone, their minds would in truth be dwelling upon the new Duke who was come. A thrill ran through his veins as the words spelled themselves out before his inner vision. The new Duke! He seemed never to have comprehended what it meant before.

No; and till this moment no genuine realization had come to him of this added meaning—this towering superstructure which the message of Julius and Emanuel had reared. It was only now that he hit upon the proper mental focus with which to contemplate this amazing thing. Not only was he a territorial ruler, one of the great

nobles of Europe, but he was the master of wealth almost beyond counting as well!

Those nearest to him were rising now, and he, obeying imperative impulses within him, lifted himself proudly to his feet. While the air throbbed with deep-voiced organ notes, in the pause which here ensued, his gaze rested upon the pall before him. There was a sense of transfiguration in the spectacle. The purple mantle became imperial Tyrian to his eyes—and something which was almost tenderness, almost reverence, yearned within him toward that silent, incased figure hidden beneath it. The mystic, omnipotent tie of blood gripped his heart.

With a collected sidelong look he surveyed the profiles of Emanuel and Lord Julius to his left. Theirs were the lineaments of princes. As if he had eyes in the back of his head, he beheld Edward and Augustine, as fancy revealed them standing in the pew behind him. Tall, slim, athletic, fair—the figures his imagination made of them appealed to the new patriarchal spirit in his heart. Perhaps they were not wholly nice, these young men, but they also were princes, and they were of his race, and no one should persecute them, or despitefully use them.

The uncouth little bearers of the dead had come forward again, and taken up their

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burden. In a small lady-chapel, extending from the transept at the left, the interment was to take place, and thither Christian now followed the pall, leading the menfolk of his family and the male guests of position who attached themselves to the group. Thus some score of black-clad figures clustered round the oblong opening in the old stone floor, and Christian, standing at its head, glanced impassively over the undefined throng of spectators gathered at the doorway.

“*‘Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery,’*” proclaimed the younger priest, with a sudden outburst of high-pitched, nasal tones which pierced the unexpectant ear. “*‘He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.’*”

Christian, watching abstractedly the impersonal wedge of faces at the door, all at once caught his breath in a sharp spasm of bewildered amazement. The little book he had been holding fell from his hands, balanced on its edge for an instant and toppled over into the dark vault below. He seemed unconscious of the incident—but stared fixedly, with parted lips and astonished eyes, at the image of something he had seen outside of the chapel. The thing itself had

apparently vanished. He perceived vaguely that people were looking at him—and with a determined effort regained control of his face and bearing. The puzzling thought that it might have been an illusion—that perhaps he had seen nothing at all—brought mingled confusion and solace to his mind. He put his hand to the open book which Lord Julius at his side held toward him, and pretended to look at it.

The coffin, now bereft of its purple covering, had been lowered to its final place. One of the bearers, standing over the cavity, crumbled dry earth from his tanned and clumsy fingers, and it fell with a faint rattle upon some resonant, unseen surface.

The phrase, “*Our dear brother, here departed,*” stuck out with awkward obtrusiveness from among the words of the priest. “*Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,*” the sing-song went on. Then they were repeating the Lord’s Prayer together in a buzzing, fitful murmur. There were other prayers—and then Christian read in the faces of those about him that the ceremony was finished. Accepting the suggestion of Lord Julius’s movement, he also bent over, and looked blankly down into the obscurity of the vault. But when he lifted his head again, it was to throw a more

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searching and strenuous glance than ever over the knot of people outside the door. And yes!—he had not been deceived. He distinctly saw the face again, and with lightning swiftness verified its features. Beyond a shadow of doubt it was Frances Bailey whom he beheld, mysteriously present in this most unlikely of places.

He withdrew his eyes and did not look that way again. The question whether she knew that he had recognized her, occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else, as he returned at the head of his followers to the body of the church. It still possessed his thoughts when he had joined the family group of chief mourners, loosely collecting itself in the aisle before the front pews, in waiting for the summons to the carriages. To some one he ought to speak at once, and for the moment his eye rested speculatively upon Cora. He identified her confidently, not only by her husband's proximity, but by the fact that her mourning veil was much thicker and longer than any of the others. Some unshaped consideration, however, restrained him, and on a swift second thought he turned to Kathleen.

"I want you to look," he whispered to her, inclining his head—"on the other side of the church, just in a line between the second

pillar and the white-bearded figure in the window—there is a tall young woman, with the gray and black hat. Do you see her? In a kind of way she belongs to us—she is Cora's sister, but I'm afraid if Cora asked her, she would not come to the Castle."

"Yes—once you talked to me about her," Kathleen reminded him.

"Well, will you do this for me?" he continued, in an eager murmur. "Go to her, and make sure that she promises to come up with the rest. It would be unforgivable—if we let her go away."

He had an uneasy feeling that Mrs. Emanuel's veil did not prevent her shrewd glance from reading him through and through—but he did not seek to dissemble the breath of relief with which he heard her assent.

CHAPTER XXIV

"It was not a very easy task," Kathleen found opportunity to say to Christian, half an hour later, as the family were assembling in his library. They stood together by the window nearest the table, and watched the embarrassed deportment of Lord Lingfield under the conversational attentions of Cora, as they talked in low tones.

"But she is here in the Castle: that is the principal thing." He did not shrink now from the implication of his words.

"Yes, she finally consented to come," explained the other. "I told her that you insisted upon it—and then—then I used some persuasion of my own."

"I thank you, Kathleen," he said, simply.

"It seems that she is to write an account of the funeral for some London newspaper. She said frankly, however, that that of itself did not account for her coming. It will pay her expenses—so she said—but the paper would not have sent her specially. And there is no doubt about it—she was really annoyed at being discovered."

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The solicitors from Shrewsbury, entering the room now, gave at once an official air to everything. The elder of them, with oppressive formality, drew a formidable parchment from a bag held by his junior, and bowed elaborately to Christian. Then, as if he had received some mandate to do so from His Grace, he untied the tape, and cleared his throat. Those who had been seated, rose to their feet.

The will came to them unaltered from 1859—and contained, wrapped in a surprising deal of pompous verbiage, a solitary kernel of essential fact. No legatee was mentioned save an impersonal being called the heir-at-law. The absolutism of dynastic rule contemplated no distribution or division of power. This slender, dark-eyed young man, standing with head inclined and a nervous hand upon the table, had not come into being until long after that will was made, and for other long years thereafter his very existence had been unknown to the family at large. Yet, as the lawyer's reading ended, there he stood before their gaze, the unquestioned autocrat.

"This may be the best time to say it." Christian straightened himself, and addressed his family for the first time, with a grave smile, and a voice which was behaving itself

better than he feared it would. "There are no minor bequests, owing to the circumstances under which the will was drawn, but I have taken it upon myself to supply such omissions, in this matter, as shall commend themselves to my consideration. Upon this subject we may speak among ourselves at our leisure, later on." With distinguished self-possession he looked at his watch. "I think luncheon is at two."

There followed here an unrehearsed, and seemingly unpremeditated, episode. Lord Julius advanced with impressive gravity across the little open space, and taking the hand which Christian impulsively extended to him, bent over it in a formal and courtly bow. When Emanuel, following his father, did the same, it was within the consciousness of all that they had become committed to a new ceremonial rite. Kathleen, coming behind her husband, gave her cheek to be kissed by the young chief of her adopted clan—and this action translated itself into a precedent as well.

Edward and Augustine, after the hesitation of an awkward instant, came forward together, and in their turn, with a flushed stiffness of deportment, made their salutation to the head of the house. To them, conjointly, Christian said something in a

whisper. He kissed Cora upon each cheek, with a faint smile in his eyes at her preference for the foreign method. His remoter cousins, the Earl of Chobham and Lord Lingfield, passed before him, and he vaguely noted the reservation expressed in their lifeless palms and frigid half-bow. They seemed to wish to differentiate themselves from the others—to express to him the Pickwickian character of their homage. They were not Torrs; they did not salaam to him as their over-lord. They had a rival dynasty of their own, and their appearance here involved nothing but the seemly courtesy of distant relationship. He perceived in a dim way that this was what their manner was saying to him—but it scarcely diverted his attention. His glance and his thoughts passed over their heads, to fasten upon the remaining figure.

Lady Cressage, unlike the other two women, had retained the bonnet and heavy veil of mourning. The latter she held drawn aside with a black-gloved hand as she approached. It flashed suddenly across Christian's brain that the year of her mourning for her own dead was not over—yet in her own house she wore gay laces and light colors. But it was unkind to remember this—and senseless, too. He strove to revivify,

instead, the great compassionate impulse which formerly she had stirred within him. A pallid shadow of it was all that he could conjure up—and in the chill of this shadow he touched her white temple with his lips, and she moved away. There lingered in his mind a curious, passive conflict of memories as to whether their eyes had met or not. Then this yielded place to the impression some detached organ of perception had formed for him, that in that somber setting of crape her face had looked too small for the rest of her figure.

Then, as the whole subject melted from his mind, he turned toward the two young men who, upon his whispered request, had remained in the library after the departure of the others. He looked at his watch, and beckoned them forward with a friendly wave of his hand.

“Pray come and sit down,” he said, with affability upon the surface of his tone. “We have a quarter of an hour, and I felt that it could not be put to better use than in relieving your minds a little—or trying to do so. Let me begin by saying that I do not think I have met either of you before. In fact, now that I reflect, I am sure that we have not met before. I am glad to see you both.”

The two brothers had drawn near, and settled uneasily into the very chairs which Lord Julius and Emanuel had occupied some hours before. Again Christian half seated himself upon the corner of the table, but this time he swung his leg lightly as he surveyed his guests. It flattered his prophetic judgment to note that Augustine seemed the first to apprehend the meaning of his words, but that Edward, upon pondering them, appeared the more impressed by their magnanimity. Between them, as they regarded him and each other doubtfully, the family likeness was more striking than ever. Christian remembered having heard somewhere that their father, Lord Edward, had been a dark man, as a Torr should be. Their flaxen hair and dull blue eyes must come from that unmentionable mother of theirs, who was living in indefinite obscurity—if she was living at all—upon the blackmail Julius paid her for not using the family name. The thought somehow put an added gentleness into his voice.

“How old are you—Eddy?” he asked, forcing himself into the use of the diminutive as a necessary part of the patriarchal rôle he had assumed.

“Nine-and-twenty in October,” answered the Captain, poutingly. It seemed on the

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tip of his tongue to add something else, but he did not.

“There’s two years and a month between us,” remarked Augustine, with more buoyancy.

“And you’ve been out of the army for five years,” pursued Christian. “It seems that you became a Captain very early. Would there be any chance of your taking it up again, where you left off?”

Edward shook his head. “It couldn’t be done twice. I got it by a lucky fluke—a friend of my father’s, you know. But they’re deuced stiff now,” he answered. “You have to do exams and things. An old johnnie asks you what bounds Peru on the northeast, and if you can’t remember just at the minute, why, you get chucked. Out you go, d’ye see?”

“What is your idea, then? What would you like to do?”

Captain Edward knitted his scanty, pale brows over this question, and regarded the prospect through the window in frowning perplexity. “Oh, almost anything,” he remarked at last, vacuously.

Christian permitted himself the comment of a smiling sniff. “Think it over,” he said, and directed his glance at the younger brother. “You’re in Parliament,” he ob-

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served, with a slight difference in tone. "I'm not sure that I quite understand. What is it that attracts you in a—in a Parliamentary career?"

Augustine lifted his pale, scanty brows in surprise. The right kind of answer did not come readily to him. "Well," he began with hesitation—"there was that seat in Cheshire where we still had a good bit of land—and Julius didn't object—and I had an idea it would help me in the City." He recovered confidence as he went on. "But it is pretty well played out now. I came in too late. The Kaffir boom spoiled the whole show. Five years ago an M. P. could pick and choose; I knew fellows who were on twenty boards at a time, and big blocks of stock were flying about them like—like hailstones. But you can't do that now. M. P.'s are as cheap as dirt; they won't have 'em at any price. A fellow hardly makes his cab-fares in the City nowadays. And even if you get the very best inside tips, brokers have got so fearfully nasty about your margins being covered——"

"Oh, well," interposed Christian, "it isn't necessary that we should go into all that. I do not like to hear about the City. If you get money for yourself there, you have taken it away from somebody else. I would rather

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that people of our name kept away from such things."

"If you come to that, everybody's money is taken from somebody else," said Edward, unexpectedly entering the conversation. His brother checked him with a monitory hand on his arm. "No, you don't understand," Augustine warned him. "I quite see what the Duke means."

"If you see what I mean," returned Christian, quietly, "perhaps you will follow the rest that I have to say: Do you care very much about remaining in Parliament?"

Augustine's face reflected an eager mental effort to get at his august interlocutor's meaning. "Well—that's so hard to say," he began, anxiously. "There are points about it, of course—but then—when you look at it in another way, why of course——"

"My idea is this," Christian interposed once more. "I hope you won't mind my saying it—but there seems to me something rather ridiculous about your being in the House. Parliament ought not to be treated as a joke, or a convenience. It is a place for men who will work hard in the service of the country, and who have the tastes and the information and the judgment and the patriotic devotion to make their work of value to their country. I dare say that there

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are members who do not entirely measure up to this standard, but after all there *is* a standard, and I do not like to be a party to lowering it. England has claims upon us Torrs; it deserves something better at our hands than that. So I think I would like you to consider the idea of resigning your seat—or at least, dropping out at the end of this Parliament. Or no—that would be waiting too long. You would better think of retiring now.”

“Do you mean that *I* am to stand for the seat, instead?” asked Edward, looking up with awakened interest.

Christian stared, then sighed smilingly and shook his head.

“No, that doesn’t seem to have been in my mind,” he replied with gentleness. He contemplated the elder brother afresh.

“Have you thought yet what you would like to do?” he asked again, almost with geniality.

“How d’ye mean ‘do’?” inquired Edward, with a mutinous note in his voice. “Is it something about a business? If you ask me straight, I’m not so fearfully keen about ‘doin’ ’ anything. No fellow wants to do things, if he can rub along without.”

Christian found himself repressing a gay chuckle with effort. He had not dreamed

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he should like this one of his kinsmen so much.

“No—no; you shall not do things,” he promised him, with a sparkling eye. “That would be too bad.”

Captain Edward turned in his chair, and recrossed his legs. “It’s a trifle awkward, all this, you know,” he declared, with an impatient scowl. “It doesn’t suit me to be made game of. You’ve got the whip hand, and you can give me things or not, as you like, and I’ve got to be civil and take what you offer, because I can’t help myself—but damn me if I like to be chaffed into the bargain! I wouldn’t do it to you, d’ye see, if it was the other way about.”

Christian’s face lapsed into instant gravity. A fleeting speculation as to that problematical reversal of positions rose in his mind, but he put it away. “Ah, you mustn’t think that,” he urged, with serious tones. “No, Cousin Edward, this is what I want to say to you.” And then, all unbidden, the things he really wished to say, yet which he had not thought of before, ranged themselves in his mind.

“Listen to me,” he went on. “You have been a soldier. You were a soldier when you were a very young man. Now, you had an uncle who was also a soldier when he was

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a mere youth—a very loyal and distinguished soldier, too. He died a soldier when he was in his fortieth year—far away from his family, from his wife and son, and much farther away still from the place and country of his birth. Once, in his youth, he was mixed up in an unpleasant and even disgraceful affair. How much to blame he personally was—that I do not know. It was very long ago—and he was so young a man—really I refuse to consider the question. I could insist to myself that he was innocent—if I felt that it mattered at all, one way or the other—and if I did not feel that by doing so, somehow he would not be then so real a figure to me as he is now. And he is very real to me; he has been so all my life.”

He paused, with a momentary break in his voice, to blink the tears from his eyes. It was not ducal, but he put the back of his hand to his cheeks, and dried them.

“I show you how it affects me,” he continued, simply. “No matter what he did in some stupid hour in London, he was a brave soldier before that, and after that. He fought for many losing causes; he died fighting for one which was most hopeless of all. I am proud that I am his son. I am proud for you, that you are his nephew. And something has occurred to me that I

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think you will like to do—for me and for him. When I stood to-day over our vault—where we are all buried—it cut me to the heart to remember that one of us lies alone, a great way off—in a strange land by himself. I propose to you that you go to Spain for me—it is at Seo de Urgel, in the mountain country of the Catalans—and that you find his grave, and that you bring him back here to sleep with his people. He would not return in his lifetime—but I think he would be pleased with us for bringing him back now.”

Edward had looked fixedly up at his cousin, then glanced away, then allowed his blank gaze to return, the while these words were being spoken. It was impossible to gather from his reddened, immobile face, now, any notion of their effect upon him. But after a moment's pause, he rose to his feet, squared his shoulders and put out his hand to Christian.

“Quite right; I'll go,” he said, abruptly.

The two men shook hands, with a sense of magnetic communion which could have amazed no one more than themselves. Then, under a recurring consciousness of embarrassed constraint, they turned away from each other, and Edward wandered off awkwardly toward the door.

"Oh—a moment more," called Christian, with a step in his cousin's direction. Then on second thoughts he added: "Or shall we let that wait? I will see you again—some time to-day or to-morrow. Yes—leave me now for a minute with your brother."

When the door had closed upon Edward, Christian turned slowly to Augustine, and, as he leaned once more against the table, regarded him with a ruminating scrutiny.

"I am puzzled about you," he remarked, thoughtfully.

Augustine returned the gaze with visible perturbation.

"I think," pursued Christian, "that it rather annoys me that you don't tell me to puzzle and be damned."

The other took the words with a grimace, and an unhappy little laugh. He, too, rose to his feet. "I funk'd it," he said with rueful candor.

"Well, don't funk things with me," Christian advised him, with a testiness of which, upon the instant, he was ashamed. "Look here," he continued, less brusquely, "I could take it from your brother that he did not want to do things. That fits him: he is not the kind of man to apply himself in that way. But I have the feeling that you are different. There ought to be performance

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—capacity—of some sort in you, if I could only get to know what it is. You are only my age. Isn't there something that particularly appeals to you?"

Augustine balanced himself meditatively upon his heels. "You say you bar the City"—he remarked with caution. "Would you have any objection to Johannesburg? It's not what it was, by any means, but it's bound to pick up again. I might do myself very well there—with a proper start."

"But you are thinking always of money!" broke in Christian, sharply once again. "Suppose that there was no question of money—suppose, what shall I say? that you had twelve hundred a year, secure to you without any effort of your own—what would you do then?"

This seemed very simple to Augustine. "I would do whatever you wanted me to do," he replied, with fervor.

Christian shrugged his shoulders, and dismissed him with a gesture. "We will speak again about it," he said coldly, and turned away.

Descending the great staircase a few minutes later, Christian entered the door which Barlow had been waiting to open for him—and made his first public appearance as the dispenser of Caermere's hospitality.

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The guests, after the old mid-day fashion of the place, were already for the most part gathered in the large dining-hall, and stood or sat in groups upon the side pierced by the tall windows. These guests did not dissemble the interest with which they from time to time directed glances across to the other side, where a long table, laid for luncheon, put in evidence a grateful profusion of cold joints and made-dishes.

A pleased rustle of expectancy greeted Christian's advent, but it seemed that this did not, for the moment at least, involve food and drink. He strolled over to the company, and, as he exchanged words here and there, kept an attentive eye busy in taking stock of its composition. There were some forty persons present, of whom three-fourths, apparently, were county people. A few casual presentations forced themselves upon him, but the names of the new acquaintances established no foothold in his memory. He smiled and murmured words which he hoped were seasonable—but all the while he was scanning the assemblage with a purpose of his own.

At last he came to Kathleen, and was able to have a private word in her ear. "I do not see her anywhere," he whispered.

"I could not prevail upon her to come in

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to lunch," she answered; "I imagine it is partly a question of clothes. But she is being looked out for. And afterward I will take charge of her again, if you like—though——"

The sentence remained unfinished, as she took the arm Christian offered her, at Barlow's eloquent approach.

CHAPTER XXV

During the progress of the luncheon, Christian found no opportunity for intimate conversation with Emanuel's wife. The elderly and ponderously verbose Lord Chobham sat upon her right; there was the thin-faced, exigent wife of some clerical person in gaiters—a rural dean, was it not?—full of dogmatic commonplaces, on his left. The other people did not seem to talk so much. The scene down the table—with so much black cloth offset garishly against the white linen in the daylight—presented an effect of funereal sobriety, curiously combined with a spontaneous reaction of the natural man against this effect. The guests ate steadily, and with energy; Christian noted with interest how freely they also drank. For himself, he could not achieve an appetite, but thirst was in the air. He lifted his glass bravely to Lord Julius, whose massive bulk and beard confronted him at the other end of the table—and then to others whose glance from time to time caught his.

Once he found the chance to murmur to

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Kathleen: "When this is over, I hope you will manage it so that I may speak with you."

She nodded slow assent, without looking at him. He, observing her profile, realized all at once that something was amiss with her. It came back to him now that a certain intensity of sadness had dwelt in the first glance they had exchanged that morning, upon meeting. At the time he had referred it to the general aspect of woe which people put on at funerals. He saw now that it was a grief personal to herself. And now that he thought of it, too, there had been much the same stricken look upon Emanuel's face. It was incredible that they should be thus devoured by grief at the fact of his grandfather's death. No one had liked that old man overmuch—but surely they least of all. The emotion of Lord Julius was more intelligible—and yet even this had a quality of broken dejection in it which seemed independent of Caermere's cause for mourning.

The disquieting conviction that these dearly beloved cousins of his—these ineffably tender and generous friends of his—were writhing under some trouble unknown to him, took more definite shape in his mind with each new glance that he stole at her.

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Once the thought sprang up that they might be unhappy because such a huge sum of money had been given to him, but on the instant he hated himself for being capable of formulating such a monstrous idea. The wondering solicitude which all this raised within him possessed his thoughts for the rest of the meal. He was consumed with impatience to get away so that he might question Kathleen about it.

Yet when at last he found himself beside her, standing before an old portrait in one of the chain of big rooms through which the liberated company had dispersed itself, this was just the question for which it seemed that no occasion would offer.

She began speaking to him at once. "The young lady—Miss Bailey, I should say—has gone for a walk—so Falkner learns from some of the women. They have the impression that she is coming back—but I don't know that I feel quite so sure about it."

Christian's face visibly lengthened. "It's very awkward," he said, with vague annoyance. "They do not arrange things in a very talented fashion, these people of mine."

"But what could they arrange?" she argued. An indefinable listlessness in her tone struck him. "It is a free country, you know, and this is the nineteenth century.

They cannot bodily capture a young woman and keep her in the Castle against her will. As I told you, I had difficulty in persuading her to come at all."

"Ah, what did you say to her?" he asked, eagerly.

"I can hardly tell you. She is not an ordinary person—and I know only that I tried not to say ordinary things to her. But what it was that I did say——" She broke off with an uncertain gesture, and a sigh.

"Ah, you saw that she was not ordinary!" said Christian, admiringly. "I should love dearly to hear what you really think of her—the impression that she makes upon you." Kathleen roused herself and turned to him. "Do you truly mean it, Christian?" she asked him, gravely.

"Do you blame me?" he rejoined, with uneasy indirection.

She pressed her lips together, and stared up at the picture with a troubled face. "I know so little of her," she protested. "You put too big a responsibility upon me. It is more than I am equal to."

With a sudden gust of self-reproach, he perceived afresh the marks of suffering in her countenance, and recalled his anxiety. "Take my arm," he said, softly, "and let us go on into the next room. There is a

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terrace there, I think. Forgive me for troubling you," he added, as they moved forward. "I ought to have seen that you are not well—that you have something on your mind."

She did not answer him immediately. "It is Emanuel who is not well," she said, after a pause.

Christian uttered a formless little exclamation of grieved astonishment. "Oh, it is nothing serious?" he whispered imploringly.

She shook her head in a doubtful way. "No, I think not—that is, not irrevocably. But he has worked too hard. He has broken down under the strain. We are going away for a long journey—to rest, and forget about the System."

He bent his head to look into her eyes—trusting his glance to say the things which his lips shrank from uttering. A window stood open, and they passed out upon a broad stone terrace, shaded and pleasant under a fresh breeze full of forest odors.

"Oh—the System"—he ventured to say, as they stood alone here, and she lifted her head to breathe in the revivifying air—"I felt always that it was too much for one man. The load was too great. It would crush the most powerful man on earth."

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She nodded reflective assent. "Oh, yes—I'm afraid I hated it," she confessed to him, in a murmur full of contrition.

"But he is going away now," urged Christian, hopefully. "You will have him to yourself—free from care, seeing strange and beautiful new places—as long as you like. Ah, then soon enough that gaiety of yours will return to you. Why, it is such a shock to me to think of you as sad, depressed—you who are by nature so full of joy and high spirits. Ah, but be sure they will all return to you! I make no doubt whatever of that. And Emanuel, too—he will get rested and strong, and be happy as he never was before—the dear fellow!"

She smiled at him in wan, affectionate fashion. "All the courage has gone out of me," she said. "Will it be coming back again? God knows!"

"But surely——" Christian began, with hearty confidence.

She interrupted him. "What I am fearful of—it is not so much his health, strictly speaking—but the terrible unsettling blow that all this means to him. It is like the death of a beautiful only child to the fondest of fathers. It tears his heart to pieces. He loved his work so devotedly—it was so wholly a part of his life—and to have to give it up!

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He says he is reconciled. Poor man, he tried with all his strength to make himself believe that he is. I catch him forcing a smile on his face when he sees me looking at him—and that is the hardest of all for me to bear. But I don't know"—she drew a long breath, and gazed with a wistful brightening in her eyes at the placid hills and sky—"it may work itself out for the best. As you say—when we get away alone together, ah, that is where love like ours will surely tell. I do wrong to harbor any doubts at all. When two people love each other as we do—ah, Christian, boy, there's nothing else in all the world to equal that!"

He inclined his head gravely, to mark his reverential sympathy with her mood.

"Ah, but you know nothing of it at all," she went on. "You're just a lad—and love is no more to be understood by instinct than any other great wisdom. Millions of people pass through life talking about love—and they would stare with surprise if you told them they never had had so much as a glimmer of the meaning of it. They use the name of love in all the matings of young couples—and there's hardly once in a thousand times that it isn't blasphemy to mention it. Do you know what most marriages are? Life-sentences! If you have means and

intelligence, you make your prison tolerable; you can get used to it, and even grow dependent upon it—but it is a prison still. The best-behaved convict eyes his warder with a cruel thought somewhere at the back of his mind. Do you remember—when you left us the first time, I begged you to be in no haste to marry?”

He bowed again. “Oh, yes, I remember it all,” he said, soberly.

“I have come to feel so strongly upon that subject,” she explained. “It seems to me more important than all others combined. It is the last thing in the world that should be decided upon an impulse, or a passing fancy—yet that is just what happens all about us. The books are greatly to blame for that. They talk as if only boys and girls knew what love meant. They flatter the young people, and turn their empty heads, with the notion that their idlest inclinations are very probably sacred emotions—which they may trust to burn brightly in a pure flame all their lives. The innocent simpletons rush to light this penny dip that is warranted to blaze eternally, and in a week or a month they are in utter darkness. We trembled lest you, coming so suddenly into a new life, should meet with that misfortune.”

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He smiled faintly at her. "You see, I have not," he commented.

She regarded him thoughtfully. "It is impossible to make rules for others in these matters," she observed, "but there is this thing to be said. True love must be built upon absolutely true friendship; there can be no other foundation for it. You will often see two men who are fond of each other. They delight in being together. Very often you cannot imagine what is the tie between them—and they would not be able to tell you. They just like to be together—even though they may not speak for hours, and may be as different in temperament as chalk and cheese. That is the essence of friendship—and you cannot have love without it. The man and the woman must have the all-powerful sense of ideal companionship between them. They must be able to say with truth to themselves that the world will always be richer to them together than apart. There may be many other elements in love, but there can be no love at all without this element. But you wonder why I am saying all this to you."

He made a deprecatory gesture of the hands. "I am always charmed when you talk to me. I have been remembering that

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dear home of yours, and how inexpressibly good you were to me. I prize that memory so fondly!"

She smiled with an approach to her old gaiety of manner. "You were like a son of our own to us. And so we think of you now—as if you were ours."

"And with what munificence you have treated me!" he exclaimed, fervently.

"And why not? For whom else would we be laying up our money? Oh, there was no difference of opinion about that. Months ago it was decided that when you came into Caermere you should come into everything."

"I feared that Emanuel would be angry—disappointed—at my not taking up his work—but truly I could not. It wouldn't be easy to explain to you—but——"

"No—let us not go into reasons. He had no feeling about it whatever. How should he? It would have been as reasonable to be vexed because the lenses of his spectacles did not fit your eyes. And Emanuel is reasonableness itself. No—the experiment was quite personal to himself. Without him, it could not have gone on at all. It will not go on now, when he leaves it to others. We make some little pretense that it will—but we know in our hearts that it won't. And there was a fatal fault in it. to

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begin with, that would have killed it sooner or later, in any case."

"I know what you mean," he interposed, with sensitive intuition. "There was no proper place in it for women. 'The very corner-stone of the System was the perpetual enslavement of women'—or rather, I should say"—he stumbled awkwardly as the sweeping form of the quotation revealed itself to him—"I should say, it did not provide women with the opportunities which— which——"

Kathleen also had her intuitions. "May I ask?—it sounds as if you were repeating a remark—was it Miss Bailey who said that about the corner-stone?"

Christian bit his lip and flushed confusedly. "Yes—I think those were her words," he confessed. "But you must remember," he added, eager to minimize the offense—"it was in the course of a long discussion on the whole subject, and she——"

"The dear girl!" said Kathleen, with a sigh of relief.

"Ah, but you would love her!" he cried, excitedly perceiving the significance of her words. "She has the noblest mind—calm and broad and serene—and so fine a nature—I know you would love her!"

Kathleen put a hand on his arm, with

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motherly directness. "But do *you* love her?" she asked.

To his own considerable surprise he hesitated. "I have that feeling of deep friendship that you described," he said, slowly. "The charm of being where she is is like nothing else to me. I cannot think that it would ever lose its force for me. I get the effect of drawing strength and breadth of thought and temper from her, when I am with her. I would rather spend my life with her for my companion than any other woman I have ever seen. That is what you mean, is it not?"

"Partly," she made enigmatic response. "But—now you mustn't answer me if I ask what I've no business to ask—but the suspicion came to me while you were speaking—I am right, am I not, in thinking that you have said all this to her?"

"Yes," he admitted with palpable reluctance, "and she would not listen to me. Only a few hours before I heard the news of my grandfather's death, I asked her to be my wife, and she refused. She seemed very resolute. And yet she has some of that same feeling of friendship for me. She said that she had always a deep interest in me. She had read books—very serious books—in order to be able to advise me, if the chance

ever came. All that bespeaks friendship, surely! And her coming here, to look on and still not be seen—you said yourself that she was distressed at being discovered—is not that the act of warm friendship?”

Kathleen pondered her reply. She looked away at the nearest hills across the river for some moments, with her gaze riveted fixedly as if in an absorption of interest. Without moving her head, she spoke at last: “You have a good deal to say about friendship. It is my fault—I introduced the word and insisted on it—but did you also lay such stress upon this ‘friendship’ to her?”

“You do not know her nature,” he assured her. “There is nothing weak or commonplace in it. One does not talk to her as to an ordinary woman—as you yourself said. I begged her to join her life to mine, and I put the plea on the highest possible grounds. All that I have repeated to you, and much more, I said to her—how great was my need of her, how lofty her character seemed to me, how all my life I should revere her, and gain strength and inspiration from being with her.”

“H—m,” said Kathleen.

“Do you mean—?” he began, regarding his companion wonderingly—“was that not enough? Remember the kind of woman

she is—proud of her independence, occupied with large thoughts, not to be appealed to by any but the highest motives—a creature who disdains the sentimental romances of inferior women—do you mean that there should have been something more? I do love her—and should I have told her so in so many words?”

“I’m afraid that’s our foible,” she made answer. On the face that she turned to him, something like the old merry light was shining. “You goose!” she scolded at him, genially.

His eyes sparkled up as with a light from her own. “Oh, I will make some excuse, and get away from these people, and find her,” he cried. “She will be returning, if not here, then to the inn, down below the church, don’t you think? There would be nothing out of the way in my riding down, would there? Or if I sent a man down with a letter, appealing to her not to go away—telling her why? There is no earthly reason why she should not stop here at the Castle. Her sister is here—why, of course, she belongs quite to the family party. How dull of me not to have thought of that! Of course, Cora can go and fetch her.”

“I think I would leave Cora out of it,” Kathleen advised him. “There is nothing

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that you cannot do better yourself. Come here! Do you see that patch of reddish stain on the hill there, above the poplars where the iron has colored the rock? Well, look to the right, on the ledge just a bit higher up—there is Miss Bailey. I have been watching her for some minutes. She has been round the hill; the path she is on will lead her to the Mere Copse—and to the heath beyond the orchards.”

His eyes had found the moving figure, microscopic yet unmistakable in the sunshine against the verdant face of the hill—and they dwelt upon it for a meditative moment.

Then he turned to Kathleen, and took her hand, and almost wrung it in his own. “Do let us go in!” he urged her, with exultant eagerness.

CHAPTER XXVI

Christian, professing to himself momentarily that the chance to get away from his guests was at hand, discovered that his escape, all the same, was no easy matter.

Kathleen had disappeared somewhere, and without her he seemed curiously helpless. He did not as yet know the house well enough to be sure about its exits. The result of one furtive attempt at flight was to find himself in the midst of a group of county people, who fell back courteously at his approach and, as if by design, let him become involved in a quite meaningless conversation with a purple-faced, bull-necked old gentleman whose name he could not remember. This person talked at tremendous length, producing his words in gurgling spasms; his voice was so husky and his manner so disconcerting—not to mention the peculiarities of the local dialect in which he spoke—that Christian could make literally nothing of his remarks. He maintained a vapid listener's-smile, the while his eyes roamed despondently about the room, and

what he could see of the next apartment, in search of some relief. If he could hit upon Dicky Westland—or even Edward or Augustine!

It became apparent to him, at last, that his interlocutor was discoursing on the subject of dogs. Of course—it would be about the Caermere hounds. On the grave faces of those about him, who stood near enough to hear the sounds of this mysterious monologue, he read signs that they considered themselves a party to it. It was on their behalf as well as his own that the old gentleman was haranguing him—and he swiftly perceived the necessity of paying better attention.

“The hounds—yes,” he said, after a little. “I have been making inquiries about them. I am advised that they cannot be kept up properly for less than four thousand five hundred a year.”

“Up to Lord Porlock’s death, we had something like twenty-four hundred pounds from the Castle, and we made a whip-round among ourselves,” the other replied, “for the rest. With corn what it is, and rents what they are, we’re all so poor now that it’ll be harder than ever to get subscriptions, but we’ll try to do our share if the Castle’ll meet us half-way.”

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Christian felt that he liked being referred to as "the Castle." Moreover, an idea suddenly took shape in his mind. "My uncle, Lord Porlock, was the Master," he said. "And before him my grandfather, I believe. But what has been done since Lord Porlock's death—about a new Master, I mean?"

Out of the complicated response made to this question he gathered vaguely that nothing had been done—that nothing could have been done.

"My cousin, Captain Torr, is a hunting man, I think." He threw out the question with some diffidence, and was vastly relieved to see the faces brighten about him.

"None better, by God!" affirmed the old gentleman, with vehemence, and there followed a glowing and spluttering eulogium of Edward's sportsmanlike qualities and achievements, in the middle of which Christian recalled that the speaker was Sir George Dence.

"I like the Mastership to continue in the family, Sir George," he replied, suavely proud of the decision he had leaped to. "I think I shall suggest to you that Captain Edward take the hounds, and that, for a time at least, you allow the Castle to be at the entire expense. At all events, you have

my annual subscription of five thousand pounds to begin upon."

He made a dignified half-bow in the silence which ensued, and boldly moved away. The murmur of amazed admiration which rose behind him was music in his ears.

Visions of possible escape rose for the moment before him. He walked with an air of resolution through the next room, trying to remember whither the corridor outside led—but at the doorway he stopped face to face with Lord Lingfield.

"Ah," said his cousin, amiably, "I did not know if I should see you again. I thought perhaps that you had gone to lie down. Funerals take it out of one so, don't they? My father is quite seedy since lunch, and poor Lady Cressage has the most wretched headache! I think myself she'd do better not to travel while it lasts, but she's anxious to get away, and so we're all off by the evening train."

"Oh, I didn't dream of your hurrying off like this," exclaimed Christian, sincerely enough. "But if you are set upon it—come, let's find your father. It will seem as if I had neglected him."

"He's in his room," explained Lord Lingfield, as they moved away together, "getting into some heavier clothes. The evenings

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are chilly here in the hills, and we're to start almost immediately, and take the long drive round through the forest. Lady Cressage has talked so much of it, and we've never seen it, you know."

"But this is all too bad!" urged Christian. "You rush away before I have had time to have a word with any of you. There is no urgent reason for such haste, is there now, really?"

"Lady Cressage seems anxious to go," answered the other, with a kind of significance in his solemn voice. "And of course—since she came with us——"

Christian stole a quick glance at his kinsman, and as swiftly looked away. "If she prefers it—of course," he commented with brevity.

"Do you think she is very strong?" asked Lord Lingfield. "I have a kind of fear, sometimes, that her health is not altogether robust. She seemed very pale to-day." There was a note of obvious solicitude in his voice.

"She has a headache," Christian reminded him.

"Yes, that would account for it, wouldn't it?" The young man was visibly relieved by this reflection. "They may say what they like," he went on, "she is the most

beautiful woman in London to-day, just as she was when she was married. Let me see—I am not sure that I ever knew her precise age. Do you happen to know?"

"She is four-and-twenty."

"Not more! I should have said six, or at least five. Hm-m! Four-and-twenty!" The reiteration, for some reason, seemed to afford him pleasure. "I am nearly thirty myself," he added meditatively, "and I'm practically sure of being in the next Government. Shall you go in much for politics, do you think? It wouldn't be of any great use to you, except the Garter, perhaps, and it's so fearfully slow waiting for that. My father had the promise of it as long ago as Lord John Russell's time, and it hasn't come off yet. But then that Home Rule business was so unfortunate—it sent us all over to the Tory side, where there were already more people waiting for things than there were things to go round. If I were you, I would keep very quiet for a year or two—not committing myself openly to either side. I can't help thinking there will be a break-up. It's a fearful bore to have only twenty or thirty people on one side and five hundred on the other. They won't stand it much longer. It doesn't make a fair distribution of things. Of course, I'm a

Unionist, but if I were in your shoes, I'd think it over very carefully. The Liberals haven't got a single Duke—and mind you, though people don't seem to notice it, it is a fact that a party practically never succeeds itself. The Liberals are bound to come in, sooner or later—and then, if you were their only Duke, why, you'd get your Garter shot at you out of a gun—so to speak. Of course, I mustn't be mentioned as saying this—but you think it over! And it needn't matter in the least—our being in different parties. We can help each other quite as well—indeed, sometimes I'm tempted to think even better. Of course, I dare say there won't be much that I can do for you—for the next two or three years, at least—except in the way of advice, and tips, and that sort of thing—but there may be a number of matters that you can help me in.”

Christian nodded wearily—with a nervous thought upon the time being wasted. “I am not likely to forget your kindness—or our family ties,” he said, consciously evasive.

“You never saw Cressage, of course; awful beast!” remarked the other, with an irrelevancy which still struck the listener as having a certain method in it. “It makes a man furious to think what she must have suffered with him. And a mere child, too,

when she was married. Only four-and-twenty now! These early marriages are a great mistake. Of course, when a man gets to be nearly thirty, and there is a family and property and so on to be handed along, why, then marriage becomes a duty. That has always been my view. And I try invariably to do my duty, as I see it. I think a man ought to, you know."

Christian sighed, and restrained an impulse to look at his watch. They had sauntered forward into the central hallway; through the open door could be seen a carriage and pair drawn up before the steps. A rustle on the stairs behind him caught his ear, and turning, Christian beheld Lady Cressage descending toward him, with Lord Chobham looming, stately and severe, in the shadows above her.

Christian moved impulsively to her. "It was the greatest surprise to me—and disappointment, too—to hear that you were going like this," he declared, with outstretched hand.

She smiled feebly, and regarded him with a pensive consideration. Her heavy mourning of an earlier hour had been exchanged for a black garb less ostentatiously funereal, yet including the conventional widow's-fall, which he had not seen her wear before. The thought that here at Caermere, last

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autumn, she had not even worn a widow's-cap, rose in his mind. It carried with it a sense of remissness, of contumacy as against the great family which had endowed her with one of its names. But at least now she exhibited a consciousness that her husband was less than a year dead. And her pallid face was very beautiful in its frame of black—a delicately strong face, meditative, reserved, holding sadness in a proud restraint. "I am not very well," she said to him, in tones to reach his ear alone. "The crowd here depressed me. I could not bring myself to appear at luncheon. It seems better that I should go away."

"But it is such a fatiguing journey—for one who does not feel wholly up to it!" he urged upon her. "All these strangers will be going—I think some of them have gone already. I don't know what their rule is here about stopping after luncheon—but surely they must clear out very soon. Then we shall be quite by ourselves—so that if that is your only reason for going—why, I can't admit that it is a reason at all."

He paused, and strove to cover with a halting smile his sudden perception that they were not talking with candor to each other. There were things in her mind, things in his mind, which bore no relation

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to the words they uttered. She was looking at him musingly—and he felt that he could read in her glance, or perhaps gather from what there was not in her glance, that she would not go if he begged her with sufficient earnestness to remain. Nay, the conviction flashed vividly uppermost in his thoughts that even a tolerable simulation of this earnestness would be enough. It was as if a game were being played, in which he was not quite the master of his moves. In this mere instant of time, while they had stood facing each other, he had been able to reproduce the whole panorama of his contact with this beautiful woman. From that first memorable day when she had come into his wondering, distraught vision of the new life before him, to that other day but a week ago when he had stood trembling with passionate emotions in her presence, his mental pictures of her rose connectedly about him. They exerted a pressure upon his will. They left him no free agency in the matter. By all the chivalric, tenderly compassionate memories they evoked, he must bid her to remain.

“I am very sorry that you feel you must go,” was what he heard himself say instead.

“Good-bye,” she answered simply, and gave him her gloved hand with an impassive face. “Lord Chobham and Lord Ling-

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field are good enough to see me back to London again. We are driving round through the forest. Our people are to join us at the station with the luggage. Good-bye."

He accompanied the party out to the carriage door, despite some formal doubts about its being the proper thing to do. Both father and son made remarks to him, to which he seemed to himself to be making suitable answers, but what they were about he never knew. The tragedy of Edith's final departure from Caermere—she who had been the hostess here when he came; she who was to have worn the coronet on her lovely brow as the mistress of it all—seized upon his mind and harrowed it. A vehement self-reproach that his thoughts should have done her even momentary injustice stung him, as he beheld her seated in the carriage. She smiled at him—that wistful, subdued smile of the headache—and then, as the horses moved, his eyes were resting upon another smile instead—the beaming of fatuous content upon the countenance of Lord Lingfield, who sat facing her.

Christian, regarding this second cousin of his as the carriage receded from view, suddenly breathed a long sigh of relief.

All at once remembering many things, he

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wheeled with the impulse to run up the steps. Upon reflection, he ascended them sedately instead, and gave orders in the hall that Mr. Westland should be sent to him forthwith. Two or more groups of departing guests came upon him, while he stood irresolutely here, and he bade them farewell with formal gravity. The two parsons whom he had seen at the church were among them—attired now in black garments with curiously ugly little round, flat hats—and he noted with interest that their smirking deference now displeased him less than it had done in the morning. He perceived that his lungs were becoming accustomed to the atmosphere of adulation, and smiled tolerantly at himself. How long would it be, he wondered with idle amusement, before it would stifle him to breathe any other air?

Augustine had sauntered out from some unknown quarter into the hall, and Christian beckoned to him. A shapeless kind of suspicion, born of a resemblance now for the first time suggesting itself, had risen in his brain. He took the young man by the arm, and strolled aside with him.

“Am I wrong,” he asked carelessly, “or did I see you at the supper at the Hanover Theater? Let us see—it would be a week

ago to-night? I thought so. Why I asked—I was curious to know whom you were with. It was a young man; you were standing together between some scenery as I passed you.”

“Oh!” said Augustine, with visible reassurance. “That was Tom Bailey—Cora’s brother, you know.”

“What sort is he?” Christian pursued, secretly astonished at the inspired accuracy of his intuition.

“Well”—replied the other, hesitatingly—“it’s rather hard to say. He got sent down from Cambridge for something or other, and his governor got the needle over it, and put him on an allowance of a pound a week, or something like that, and so what could he do? It’s jolly hard on a young fellow round town to have less money than anybody else. He’s bound to get talked about, if he only owes half-a-crown to some outsider or other, and that makes other fellows turn shirty. But I think he always pays when he can.”

“You like him, then, do you?”

“Oh, yes—I like Tom well enough,” answered Augustine, dubiously pondering the significance of the interrogatory. “He’d be all right if—if he had a proper chance.” With a sigh, he ventured to add: “He’s like the rest of us—that way.”

At sight of Dicky Westland's approach, Christian dropped his inquiries abruptly. "All right," he said, with enigmatic brevity, and turned to his secretary with a meaning gesture. "I want to get away from here—out of the Castle," he murmured to the newcomer, "without a minute's delay. I have a—kind of appointment, and I am already late. If you will get our hats, we will walk out together, as if we were discussing some private matter, and then no one will interrupt us."

This confidence was only partially justified by events. The two made their way unmolested into the open air, and across some long stretches of lawn to the beginning of the series of gardens. It was within Christian's memory that one reached the orchards and the opening upon the heath by traversing these gardens. But in the second of them, where remarkable masses of tulips in gorgeous effulgence of bloom occupied the very beds in which he believed the dahlias must have been last year, there was some one on the well-remembered path in front of him.

A little child of two or three years, still walking insecurely at least, was being led along the edge of the flower-border by a woman in black whose back was turned.

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The infant had caught the notion of bending over the hyacinths, one by one, laboriously to smell their perfume, and the woman indulgently lent herself to the pastime, halting and supporting the little one by the hand.

Christian wondered vaguely what child this could be, before observation told him that the person they were approaching was a lady. He took Dicky's arm then, and quickened their step. "We will be very much engaged as we pass," he admonished him. After a few paces, however, the futility of this device made itself apparent. The lady, glancing indifferently over her shoulder at the sound of their tread, turned on the instant with a little cry of pleasure.

It was Cora who came toward them, now radiant of face and with an extended hand. She dragged the surprised child heedlessly along at her side with the other arm.

"Oh, Duke!" she cried. "I did so long to burst in upon you, wherever you were to be found, and thank you when I heard. It was Sir George Dence who told us. And Eddy, he's quite off his head with joy! He wanted to look you up, too, but I told him to put off thanking you till to-morrow; between ourselves, I don't fancy he'll be seen quite to the best advantage later on to-day. But I know you'll think none the worse of

him for that; and there's a good bit to be done, he says, in the way of pulling the Hunt together again to work like one man. He's begun already promoting the right sort of feeling. He's got Sir George and old General Fawcett and about a dozen more of 'em in the billiard-room, and I told him everything would be all right so long as they didn't sing. On account of the funeral, you know. And—why, you've never seen my oldest unmarried daughter! Look up and say, 'How-de-do?' Chrissy. Why, she's your namesake! Yes, her baptismal name is Christiana or Christina—which is it? We always call her Chrissy. And you haven't told me what an effective family group I make. You never would have believed that I could be so domestic, now, would you?"

She had gathered the child up into her arms, and under the influence of her jocund mood Christian smiled cheerfully. "You are very wonderful as a mother," he assured her, and extended a tentative finger toward Chrissy, who, huddled in awkward and twisted discomfort under her mother's elbow, regarded him with unconcealed repulsion.

"She seems an extremely healthy child," he remarked, and the words were not so perfunctory as they sounded. The robust, red-

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cheeked heartiness of Chrissy raised musing reflections in his mind. If this infant, with its stout mottled arms and legs, had been a boy, it would be at this moment his heir. No one could ask for a finer child—and she was very closely akin to him. And Cora was her mother—and Cora's sister!

“Oh, but where *are* we going to live?” she broke in upon his meditations. “I said to Eddy that I'd lay odds you were thinking of David's Court for us. You know the kennels used to be there before Porlock's time.”

“All that we can arrange,” said Christian, shaking off his reverie, and lifting his hat. “Rest easy in your mind about everything.”

She nodded with an expansive geniality which freely included Dicky as well, and then walked away. It slowly occurred to Christian that she had said nothing about her sister's presence in the neighborhood, although it was impossible to suppose her ignorant of it. Upon consideration, he decided that her reticence was delicate. He felt that he liked Cora, and then uneasily speculated upon the seeming probability that his liking for her was in excess of her sister's.

“Westland,” he said, with a new thought in his busy brain, “you know about geography—about where the different British

colonies are on the map, and what they are distinguished for. I want to know of a good place, a very long way off, where two young men with a moderate capital might do well, or at least have the chance to do well."

"Fellows like that generally go to South Africa, nowadays," replied Dicky, "though I believe it's gone off a bit. It's not as far away as Australia, but it's livelier, apparently. They don't seem to come back as much."

"No; I have a prejudice against that Johannesburg. It is not a good atmosphere, and it is too easy to get into trouble there."

"There are great reports about British Columbia just now. They've found wonderful new gold-fields, and they're a fearful distance from anywhere. It takes you months to get to them, so I'm told. But it depends so much on what the fellows themselves are like. If I may ask, do I know them?"

"It is Augustine Torr that I have in mind, and a young friend of his—Bailey his name is. By the way, a brother of the lady we just left."

"I know *of* him," commented Dicky sentimentously.

"Well, it has occurred to me that these young men, for whom there seems no

specially suitable foothold in England, might accomplish something in the colonies. That is the way Greater Britain, as they call it, has been made—by young men who might have done nothing at all worth doing at home. Life is really very difficult and complicated in this crowded island, unless one has exactly the temperament to succeed. But in the colonies it is different. Men who are of no use here may become valuable there. I have heard that there are many instances of this. And these young men, it seems to me that very possibly, if they found themselves on new ground, they might do as others have done and get on. We do not quite know what to do with them here, but we send them out, and they make the Empire.”

“It’s rather rough on the Empire, though, isn’t it?” said Dicky.

Christian frowned and drew himself up a little. “One is my cousin,” he said coldly, “and the other is the brother of—is the brother of my cousin’s wife.”

There was a moment of silence, and then the secretary, as upon a sudden resolution, stopped. “It’s no good my going on,” he said, nervously, but with decision. “I daresay you don’t mean it, but all the same it’s too much for me. If you don’t mind, I

think I'll turn it up and catch the evening train. I don't mind going to the station in the brake with the servants and the luggage. It certainly won't take anybody by surprise."

Christian regarded him with open-eyed astonishment. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, in obvious candor.

Dicky restlessly threw out his hands. "Oh, I can't stand this Dukeness of yours," he declared. "You put it on too thick. I know Gus Torr, and I know as much as I want to of Tom Bailey, and I know they're no good, and you know it, too—although I don't say they mayn't get on in the colonies. God knows what won't get on there! But when I make some perfectly civil and natural remark on the subject, you flame up at me, and blow yourself out like a pouter pigeon, and say they're—haw-haw!—relations of yours. Well, that be damned, you know! It may do once in a way with outsiders, but it isn't good enough to live with."

"Dicky!" said Christian, in a voice of awed appeal. His brown face distorted itself in lines of painful bewilderment as he gazed at his companion. "Have I done that? Is it as bad as that?" He gasped the questions out in a frightened way and tears sprang into his eyes. "Then it is not you who should catch the evening train, but

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me. I am not fit to be here!" He finished with a groan of bitter dejection and bowed his head.

Westland, as much scared as surprised at the violent result of his protest, moved impetuously to his friend and put a hand on his shoulder. "No-no! No-no," he said, in a soothing voice. "It's all right! I said you didn't mean it, you know. Truly, old man, I *knew* you didn't mean it! Upon my word, it's all right!"

Christian lifted his head, and tried to choke down his agitation. "But you go away from me!" he said in despairing tones. "It is the same as ever! Nothing is changed for me! I do not make friends—much less keep them!"

"But I *am* your friend! You *are* keeping me!" Dicky insisted, raising his voice. An odd impulse to laugh aloud struggled confusedly with the concern the other's visible suffering gave him. "I take it all back. I'm stopping with you, right enough!"

Christian accepted the assurance in a dazed way, and after he had silently shaken the other's hand, began walking on again, studying the ground with a troubled frown. "I am a weak and dull fool!" he growled at last, in rage at himself. "I have not sense enough to behave properly! It is a mistake

that I should be put over anybody else! I make myself ridiculous, like any *parvenu*."

"No—that's all rot," the other felt it judicious to urge. "You're perfectly all right, only—only——"

"Only I'm not!" Christian filled in the gap of hesitation with an angry laugh.

Gradually a calmer view of himself pervaded his mind. "It is more difficult than you think, Dicky," he affirmed, after a pause. "It is not easy at all—at first—to—what shall I say?—to keep feeling your feet under you on the solid ground. The temptation to soar, to think you are lifted up, is upon you every minute. It catches you unawares. Ah! I see one must watch that without ceasing. Oh, I am glad—more glad than I can tell you—that you stopped me. Ah! that was a true friend's service."

Dicky chuckled softly: "It's much nicer, if you can take it that way," he admitted.

"If I am ever anything but nice to *you*," Christian began, gravely, and then stopped as if he had bitten his tongue. "Oh, there is patronage again!" he cried with vexation—and then let himself be persuaded to join in the frank laughter that the other set up.

"Oh, we shall hit it off all right," Dicky assured him as a final word on the subject. "It's merely a question of time. You've got

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to get accustomed to your new job, and I to mine: that's all there is of it. We shall learn the whole bag of tricks in a week or so, and be happy ever afterward."

The joking refrain struck some welcome chord in Christian's thoughts. He looked up, and noted that they were very near the door leading out from the fruit-garden to the heath beyond the wall. Halting, he smiled into his companion's face.

"No one will follow me now," he said with sparkling eyes. "I will let you turn back here, if you don't mind."

CHAPTER XXVII

Christian realized blankly, all at once, as he stood and gazed out over the moor, that he did not know his way.

The spring had laid upon this great rolling common a beauty of its own. Everywhere, on thorns and furze and briars, the touch of the new life had hung emeralds to bedeck and hide the dun waste of winter. The ashen-gray carpets of old mosses were veined with the vivid green of young growths; out from the dry brown litter of lifeless ferns and bracken were rising the malachite croziers of fresh fronds. The brilliant yellow of broom and gorse blooms caught the eye in all directions, blazing above the vernal outburst of another year's vegetation, and the hum of the bees in the sunlight, and the delicately mingled odors in the May air were a delight to the senses. But under this exuberance of re-awakened nature, welcome though it might be, somehow the landmarks of last autumn seemed to have disappeared.

The path which had led along the wall,

for example, was now nowhere discernible. Or had there really been a path at any time?

It was clear enough, at all events, that his course for some distance lay beside this massive line of ancient masonry, even if no track was marked for him. At some farther point it would be necessary to turn off at a right angle toward the Mere Copse—and here he could recall distinctly that there had been a path. But then he came upon several paths, or vaguely defined grassy depressions which might be paths, and the divergent ways of these were a trouble to him. At last, he decided to strike out more boldly into the heath, independently of paths, and try to get a general view of the landscape. He made his way through creepers and prickly little bushes toward an elevation in the distance, realizing more and more in his encumbered progress that his quest was like that of one who should search the limitless sea for a small boat. There seemed no boundaries whatever to this vast tract of waste land.

As he began at length the ascent of the mound toward which his course had been directed, he scanned the moor near and far, but no human figure was visible. No signs could he discover of any beaten track across it; of the several patches of woodland

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beyond, in the distance to the left, he could not even be sure which was the Mere Copse. Below, on the edge of the sky-line at the right, he could see the tops of the towers and chimneys of Caermere. Wheeling round from this point, then, he endeavored to identify that portion of the hill, on the opposite side of the river-chasm, which Kathleen had pointed out to him from the terrace. But, viewed from here, there were so many hills! The hopelessness of his errand became more apparent with each glance round. Despondently, he sauntered up the few remaining yards to the top.

He stood upon the ridge of a grass-grown wall of stones and earth, which in a somewhat irregular circle enclosed perhaps a quarter-acre of land. This wall on its best preserved side, where he found himself, was some dozen feet in height. Across the ring it seemed lower, and at three or four points was broken down altogether. He realized that he was surveying a very ancient structure—no doubt, prehistoric. Would it have been a fortress or a temple, or the primitive mausoleum of some chieftain-ruler in these wilds? One of the openings seemed to suggest by its symmetry an entrance to the enclosure. It was all very curious, and he promised himself that very soon he would

examine it in detail. Some vague promptings of a nascent archæological spirit impelled him now, upon second thoughts, to walk round on the crest of the wall to the other side.

Suddenly he stopped, stared sharply downward with arrested breath, and then, while his face wreathed itself with amused smiles, tip-toed along a few paces farther. Halting here, his eyes dancing with suppressed gaiety, he regarded at his leisure the object of his expedition.

Upon the sunny outer side of the sloping embankment, only a few feet below, was seated Frances Bailey. Her face was turned from him, and she was apparently engrossed in the study of a linen-backed sectional map spread on her knees. A small red book lay in the grass at her side, and he was so close that he could decipher the legend "Shropshire and Cheshire" on its cover.

After a minute's rapturous reflection he turned and noiselessly retraced his steps, till he could descend from the wall without being seen. There was a kind of miniature dry moat surrounding it at this point, and this he lightly vaulted. Then, straightening himself, he strolled forward with as fine an assumption of unsuspecting innocence as he could contrive. It occurred to him to whistle some negligent tune very softly as

he came, but, oddly enough, his lips seemed recalcitrant—they made no sound.

At the obtrusion of his shadow upon the map she was examining she looked swiftly up. For a moment, with the afternoon sun in her eyes, she seemed not to recognize him. There followed another pause, infinitesimal in duration, yet crowded with significance, in which she appeared clearly at a loss what to say or do, now that she realized the fact of his presence. Then she smiled at him with a kind of superficial brightness and tossed the map aside.

“I am fortunate indeed to find you,” he said, as he came up, and they shook hands formally. A few moments before, when he had looked down upon her from the mound, he had been buoyantly conscious of his control of the situation; but now that he stood before her it was she who looked down upon him from her vantage-ground on the side of the bank, and somehow this seemed to make a great deal of difference. The sound of his voice in his own ears was unexpectedly solemn and constrained. He felt his deportment to be unpleasantly awkward.

She ignored the implication that he had been looking for her. “I suppose this must be the place that is marked ‘tumulus’ on the map here,” she observed, with what seemed

to be a deliberately casual tone. "But I should think it is more like a rath, such as one reads about in Ireland—a fortified place to defend one's herds and people in. As I understand it, a tumulus was for purposes of burial, and this seems to be a fort rather than a tomb. What is your idea about it?"

She rose to her feet as she put the question, and turned to regard the earthworks above and about her with a concentrated interest.

He tried to laugh. "I'm afraid I'm more ignorant about them than anybody else," he confessed. "I have never been here before. I suppose all one can really say is that the people who did these things knew what they were for, but that since they had no alphabet they could not leave a record to explain them to us, and so we are free to make each his own theory to suit himself."

"That is a very indolent view to take," she told him over her shoulder. "Scientists and archæologists are not contented with that sort of reply. They examine and compare and draw deductions, and get at the meaning of these ancient remains. They do not sit down and fold their hands and say, 'Unfortunately those people had no alphabet.' Why don't you dig this thing up and find out about it?"

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He smiled to himself doubtfully. "I have only been in possession of it for about three hours," he reminded her. Then an inspiration came to him. "Would *you* like to dig it up?" he asked, with an effect of eagerness shining through the banter of his tone. "I mean, to superintend the excavations. You shall have forty men out here with picks and shovels to-morrow if you say the word."

Instead of answering, she stooped to get her book and map, and then moved with a preoccupied air to the top of the bank. After an instant's hesitation he scrambled up to join her.

"I suppose that would have been the entrance there," she observed, pointing across the circle. "And in the center, you see, where the grass is so thin, there are evidently big stones there. That *does* suggest interment after all, doesn't it? Yet the Silurians are said to have buried only in dolmens. It is very curious."

"I do not find that I care much about Silurians this afternoon," he ventured to say. There was a gentle hint of reproach in his voice.

"Why, you're one yourself! That is the principal point about the Torrs; that is what makes them interesting."

"But what good does it do me to be a

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Silurian and interesting," he protested with a whimsical gesture, "if I—if I do not get what I want most of all in the world?"

"It seems to me that you have got more things already than most people on this planet." She went on reflectively: "I had no idea at all what it meant till I saw these hills and the valleys below them, and the forests and the villages and the castle, and the people coming out from heaven knows what holes in the rocks—all with your collar round their necks. I should think it would either send you mad with the sense of power or frighten you to death."

"I am really very humble about it, I think," he assured her simply. "And there is not so much power as you seem to imagine. It is all a great organized machine, like some big business. The differences are that it works very clumsily and badly as it is at present managed, and that it hardly pays any dividend at all. The average large wholesale grocer's or wine merchant's estate would pay a bigger succession duty than my grandfather's. He died actually a poor man."

The intelligence did not visibly impress her. "But it was not because he helped others," she remarked. "Those about him grew poorer also. It is a hateful system!"

"There is something you do not know,"

he began with gravity. "I said that my grandfather died a poor man. But since his death a tremendous thing has happened. A great gift has been made to me. The enormous debts which encumbered his estates have been wiped out of existence. It is Lord Julius and Emanuel who have done this—done it for me! I do not know the figures yet—to-morrow Mr. Soman is to explain them to me—but the fact is I am a very rich man indeed. I do not owe anybody a penny. Whatever seems to be mine, *is* mine. There are between seventy-five and eighty thousand acres. By comparison with other estates, it seems to me that there will be a yearly income of more than fifty thousand pounds!"

She drew a long breath and looked him in the face. "I am very sorry for you," she said soberly.

"Ah, no; I resist you there," he exclaimed. "I quote your own words to you: 'It is an indolent view to take.' There is a prodigious responsibility! Yes! But all the more reason why I should be brave. Would you have me lose my nerve, and say the task is too great for me? I thought you did not like people who solved difficulties by turning tail and running away. Well, to confess oneself afraid—that is the same thing."

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She smiled thoughtfully, perhaps at the quaint recurrence to foreign gestures and an uncertain, hurried use of book-English which her company seemed always to provoke in him. "I meant only that it was a terrible burden you had had fastened upon your shoulders," she made answer softly. "I did not suggest that you were afraid of it. And yet I should think you would be!"

"I think," he responded, with a kind of diffident conviction, "I think that if a man is honest and ambitious for good things, and has some brains, he can grow to be equal to any task that will be laid upon him. And if he labors at it with sincerity and does absolutely the best that there is in him to do, then I do not think that his work will be wasted. A man is only a man after all. He did not make this world, and he cannot do with it what he likes. It is a bigger thing, when you come to think of it, than he is. At the end there is only a little hole in it for him to be buried in and forgotten, as these people who raised this wall that we stand on are forgotten. They thought in their day that the whole world depended upon them; when there was thunder and lightning, they said it was on their account, because their gods in the sky were angry with them. But to us

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it is evident that they were not so important as they supposed they were. We look at the work of their hands here, and we regard it with curiosity, as we might an ant's nest. We do not know whether they made it as a tomb for their chief or as a shelter for their cows. And if they had left records to explain that, and it does not matter how much else, it would be the same. We learn only one thing from all the numberless millions who have gone before us—that man is less important than he thinks he is. I have a high position thrust upon me. *Eh bien!* I am not going to command the sun to stand still. I am not going to believe that I ought to revolutionize human society before I die. There will be many men after me. If one or two of them says of me that I worked hard to do well, and that I left things a trifle better than I found them, then what more can I desire?"

She nodded in musing abstraction, but answered nothing. Her gaze was fastened resolutely upon the opposite bank.

"I am truly so fortunate not to have missed you!" he repeated after a small interval of silence.

"Why should you say that?" she asked almost with petulance. "You make too much of me! I do not belong in this gallery

at all. I am very angry with myself for being here. I ought not to have allowed Mrs. Emanuel to persuade me against my own judgment. It did not enter into my head that I should be seen by anybody. I was on my vacation—I take it early, because some of the girls like to get away at Whitsuntide—and at Bath I saw in a paper some reference to the state with which your grandfather would be buried, and the whim seized me to see the funeral. I came on my bicycle most of the way, till the hills got too bad. I thought no one would be the wiser for my coming and going. And one thing—you must not ask me to come into the castle again. I am going to the inn to get my machine, and go down to Craven Arms or Clun for the night. I have looked both roads out on my map. Is Clun interesting, do you know?"

"I have not the remotest idea. In fact, there is only one idea of any sort in my mind just now. It is that you are not to be allowed to go away. Have you seen the dungeons in which we fasten up people whose presence is particularly desired, and who will not listen to reason?"

The jesting tone of his words was belied by the glance in his eyes. She frowned a little. "No, there is no reason in it at all.

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What have I to do with these people? They are not my kind. It is the merest accident that you and I happen to be acquainted. If you did not know me now, nothing is more certain than that we should never meet in the world. And our seeming to each other like friends on those other occasions—that had nothing to do with the present. The circumstances are entirely different. There is nothing in common between us now, or hardly anything at all. You ought to understand that. And I look to you to realize how matters are altered, and not to insist upon placing me in a very undignified and unpleasant position.” She had spoken with increasing rapidity of utterance, and with rising agitation. “Not that your insisting would make any difference!” she added now, almost defiantly.

He looked at her in silence. The face half turned from him, with its broad brow, its shapely and competent profile, the commanding light in its gray eyes, the firm lips drawn into tightened curves of proud resistance to any weakness of quivering—it was the face that had made so profound an impression upon him at the outset of that wonderful journey from Rouen. The memory became on the instant inexpressibly touching to him. She was almost as she had

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been then—it might well be the same sober gray frock, the same hat, save that the ribbon now was black instead of fawn. She would have no varied wardrobe, this girl who earned her own bread, and gave her mind to the large realities of life. But this very simplicity of setting, how notably it emphasized the precious quality of what it framed! He recalled that in his first rapt study of this face it had seemed to him like the face of the young Piedmontese bishop who had once come to his school—pure, wise, sweet, tender, strong. And now, beholding it afresh, it was beyond all these things the face which woke music in his heart—the face of the woman he loved.

With gentle slowness he answered her: “The position I seek to place you in does not seem to me undignified. I should like to hope that you would not find it unpleasant. You know what I mean—I offered it to you in advance, before it was yet mine to give. I beg you again to accept it, now when it *is* mine to give. If you will turn, you can see Caermere from where you stand. It has had in all its days no mistress like you. Will you take it from my hands?”

She confronted him with a clear, steady gaze of disapproval. “All this is very stupid!” she said, peremptorily. “Last

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week—it had its pretty and graceful side then perhaps, but it is not nice at all now. It does not flatter me; it does not please me in any way to-day. I told you then, I had my own independence, my own personal pride and dignity, which are dearer to me than anything else. If I had them then, I have them very much more now. What kind of idea of me is this that you have—that I am to change my mind because now you can talk of fifty thousand a year? I like you less than I did when you had nothing at all! For then we seemed to understand each other better. You would not have rattled your money-box at me then! You had finer sensibilities—I liked you more!”

He returned her gaze with a perplexed smile. “But I am asking you to be my wife,” he pointed out.

She sniffed with a suggestion of contempt at the word. “Wife!” she told him stormily. “You do not seem to know what the word ‘wife’ means! You are not thinking of a ‘wife’ at all. It is a woman to play Duchess to your Duke that you have in mind, and you feel merely that she ought to be presentable and intelligent, and personally not distasteful to you; we’ll even say that you prefer a woman towards whom you have felt a sort of comrade’s impulse. But that

has nothing to do with a 'wife.' And even on your own ground how foolish you are! In heaven's name, why hit on *me* of all women? There are ten thousand who would do it all vastly better, and who, moreover, would leap at the chance. You have only to look about you. England is full of beauties in training for just such a place. They know the ways of your set—the small talk, the little jokes, the amusements and social duties and distinctions, and all that. Go and find what you want among them. What have I to do with such people? They're not in my class at all."

Christian sighed, and then sought her glance again with a timid, whimsical smile. "Ah, how you badger me always!" he said. "But I have still something more to say."

"Let me beg that it be left unsaid!" She folded up the map, and began moving along the ridge as she spoke. "It is all as distressful to me as can be. You cannot understand—or will not understand—and it puts me in an utterly hateful position. I do not like to be saying unpleasant things to you. I had only the nicest feelings towards you when we last parted; and this noon, when I saw you in the church, you made a picture in my mind that I had quite—quite a tenderness for. But now you force me into dis-

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agreeable feelings and words, which I don't like any more than you do. I seem to be never myself when I am with you. I have actually never seen you but three times, and you disturb me more—you make me hate myself more—than everything else in the world."

The exigencies of the path along the summit of the mound forced Christian to walk behind her. In the voice which carried these words backward to him the quavering stress of profound emotion was more to him than the words themselves. He put out his hand and laid it lightly upon her arm.

"It is because you feel in your heart of hearts that I love you," he said in a low, tremulous voice. "Can you not see? It is that that has made all our meetings disturbed, full of misunderstandings as well as pleasure. You wrong me, dear—or no, you could not do that, but it is that you do not comprehend. I have loved you from that first day. Oh, I have loved you always, since I can remember—long years before I saw you. There is not any memory in my life, it seems, but of you—for all the sweet things were a foretaste of you, and all the bitter are forgotten because of you. And shall there not be an end now to our hurting each other? For where you go I follow you,

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and I must always be longing for you—and I do not believe that in your heart you hold yourself away from me, but only in your mind.”

She had drawn her sleeve from his touch, and irresolutely quickened her steps. She perforce paused now at a broken gap in the bank, and with books and gathered skirts in one hand, lifted the other in instinctively balancing preparation for a descent. He took this hand, and she made no demur to his leading her down the steep slope to the level outer ground. He retained the hand reverently, gently in his own as they walked in silence across the heath. It seemed ever as if she would take it from him, and that he consciously exerted a magic through his touch which just sufficed to hold it.

With a bowed head, and cheek at once flushed and white, she began to speak. “You are very young,” she said, lingering over the words with almost dejection in her tone. “You know so little of what life is like! You have such a place in the affairs of men to fill, and you come to it with such innocent boyish good faith—and men are so little like what you think they are. And as you learn the lesson—the hardening, disillusionizing lesson of the world—and the soft, youthful places in your nature toughen, and

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you are a man holding your own with other men, and lording it over them where you can, then you will hate the things which hamper you, and you will curse encumbrances that you took on you in your ignorance. And you are all wrong about me! It is because you do not know other women that you think well of me. I am a very ordinary girl, indeed. There are thousands like me, and better than me, with more courage and finer characters, and you do not know them, that is all. And there are the young women of your own little world, who are born and reared to be the wives of men in your place, and you will see them——”

“I have seen them,” he interposed softly.

“But it is not fair!” she hurried on breathlessly. “It is the duty of a friend to hold a man back when he is bent on a folly. And we pledged ourselves to be true friends, and I implore you—or no, I insist! I will not have it. It is too cruelly unfair to you—and—I am going now—no, not that way; in the other direction. We will say good-bye.”

He would not relinquish the hand she strove to drag away. All the calmness of confident mastery was in his hold upon this hand, and in the gravely sweet cadence of his voice. “I love you,” he said. “I shall love no one in my life, or in another life, but

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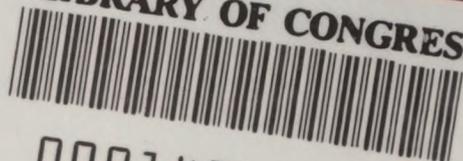
you. I will not live without you. I will not willingly spend a day in all my years away from you. You are truly my other half—the companion, the friend, the love, the wife, without whom nothing exists for me. I am not young as you say I am, and I shall never be old—for in this love there is no youth or age for either of us. Try to look backward now! Can you see a time when we did not love each other? And forward! Is it thinkable that we can be parted?"

Slowly she lifted her head.

"Look at me!" she bade him in a voice he seemed never to have heard before.

THE END

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